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By: JAMIE MERCER

Making a plan that will stand the test

Barry Christopher Blackburn

- **Name: Barry Christopher “Tombstone” Blackburn**
- **Age: 37**
- **Occupation: practicing attorney, adjunct professor of business law at the University of Mississippi**
- **Hometown: Nashville, now living in Olive Branch**
- **Pets: a Boykin Spaniel named Dixie and two Black Labrador Retrievers named Zeuss and Harley**
- **Special Interests: hunting, fishing, traveling, riding his Harley-Davidson motorcycle**
- **Favorite Books: The Bible and “Tuesdays with Morrie: an Old Man, a Young Man, and Life’s Greatest Lesson,” by Mitch Albom**
- **Favorite Movies: “Wizard of Oz,” “Shane,” “Ben Hur,” “Braveheart”**
- **What’s the best thing about living in DeSoto County? “The best things are the friendliness of the people and the excitement of the growth.”**
- **What’s the biggest problem facing DeSoto County? “People move here because DeSoto County’s safe, nice and convenient. I hope we don’t lose the basic ideals that bring people here.”**

OLIVE BRANCH — Barry Blackburn still remembers the advice his father gave him when he was a youth.

“My father told me that education’s something no one can take away from me,” Blackburn said. “So I took the money my parents gave me and put it all in my education.”

Born in Nashville, Blackburn moved to Cleveland, Mississippi, after his mother was killed in a car wreck when he was 10 years old. Blackburn was living with his grandparents in the delta town when his father died in a car accident 10 years later.

“Losing my parents at an early age taught me how important it is to prepare for the future,” Blackburn explained.

At 17 years of age, Blackburn followed in his father’s and grandfather’s footsteps and enrolled at Auburn University. After receiving his bachelors degree in finance, Blackburn earned his masters degree in finance from the University of Mississippi.

Entering the Ole Miss Law School, Blackburn served on the Mississippi Law Journal’s Editorial Board in 1990-91.

Originally planning on becoming a general practitioner, Blackburn’s interest was piqued by a class in estate planning.

“Estate planning was my favorite class in law school,” he stated, “so I migrated toward that field.

“I didn’t want to be in a courtroom all day,” Blackburn continued. “I like things more sedate.”

Blackburn graduated from law school in 1991, earning his master of laws degree in estate planning the following year from the University of Miami.

For the past 10 years Blackburn has practiced law in DeSoto County, first in Southaven and the last four in Olive Branch.

“It’s a noble calling,” he said of his field. “I’m helping people leave a legacy.

“People need to look for the correct type of estate planning,” Blackburn added. “They want to pass their wealth with the least amount of expense.”

Although he handles such high profile clients as football coaches David Cutcliffe (Ole Miss) and Tommy Tuberville (Auburn), and NFL running back Aaron Hayden (Philadelphia Eagles), Blackburn maintains that estate planning isn’t only for the rich and famous.

“It doesn’t matter what their age or how much they have in the bank,” he said. “They may be living from paycheck to paycheck.”

“The bottom line is, everybody needs estate planning,” Blackburn continued. “I’ve never seen a luggage rack on a hearse. You can’t take it with you; you have to either spend it or give it away.”

Because he lost his own parents early in life, Blackburn also encourages, parents to make early decisions about the rearing of their own children.

“People with minor-aged children need to decide who’s going to take care of their children,” he said. “Then, as life changes, they can revisit those documents and make the proper changes.

“If you haven’t told the world what you want to happen to your children, then are you going to leave it up to a bunch of lawyers and judges?,” Blackburn asked. “It’s not that we wouldn’t make the best decision possible, but we don’t know anything about your family.”

Licensed to practice in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee, Blackburn spends his spare time hunting and fishing throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico. He also enjoys relaxing at home with Dixie, his Boykin Spaniel, and Zeuss and Harley, his Black Labrador Retrievers.

“When I was broke and unemployed,” he laughed, “they stayed with me.”