Chief of the Month: Jeff Hill, Tennessee

Each month, the Center for Consumer Protection will provide an article about an Attorney General’s Office Consumer Protection Chief.

I grew up as a member of a newspaper family in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. My father was the publisher of the local paper, the Oak Ridger. My mother is the person in the family with a journalism degree, and, with her considerable skills, she wrote a weekly humor column in the paper—often featuring me. Let me tell you, having all of your friends read about you in a humor column really shapes a person. Oak Ridge was created as part of the Manhattan Project to enrich uranium. So, if my mom’s hilarious stories about my oversized band uniform weren’t enough to keep me humble, being the only kid in class whose parents did not have a Ph.D. in science did. It’s safe to say, I never won a science fair.

Other than working on the Hill in Washington, D.C. for a couple of years between college and law school, I have lived in the Volunteer State my entire life. I joined the attorney general’s office in 1994 after graduating from the University of Tennessee College of Law (a note to Texas: Tennessee was the original UT—the University existed 50 years before Texas was a state). I began my career in a defense division; however, I soon began volunteering to help the Consumer Division doing undercover buys. At some point, they probably realized that I was not going away, so they relented and let me transfer to the Consumer Division at the beginning of 1998. I am grateful to have had my dream job for 20 years now.

When I returned to work after the birth of my first child in July of 2000, I was told that they were taking all of my cases away and I would be working exclusively on the Bridgestone/Firestone tread separation and Ford Explorer rollover investigation. Initially, I was disappointed because I wanted to continue the investigations I was pursuing. However, as usual, I was wrong. Over the course of the Bridgestone/Ford multistate, I was able to work with excellent attorneys from all over the country. Working on that case taught me vital lessons. One of those lessons was: take more paternity leave. In fact, when I came back from the birth of my second son, in 2002, I was named Team Leader of Consumer Protection, Antitrust, and Unauthorized Practice of Law. In 2017, when General Slatery promoted me to Deputy of the Consumer Protection and Advocate Division, I immediately called my spouse to make sure she wasn’t expecting.
Our Division has a robust team of professionals. I am particularly proud of the amount of work that this group produces. Overall, we have an outstanding team. They make work fun. I am quite sure that all of them would say that they are honored to work with me. You do not even have to ask them. Seriously, do not ask them.

I live in Nashville with my wife, Michele, who is the executive director for a non-profit law firm focused primarily on access to health care for low income children. Michele and I met on the first day of law school and have been married for 22 years. We have three sons – Thomas (18), James (16), and Henry (13). Thomas will be a freshman at George Washington University this fall.

It has been a privilege to work for five Tennessee Attorneys General. Our selection process—the Tennessee Supreme Court selects the Attorney General—has produced excellent lawyers to serve in this important role. The office is a world-class law firm, and I am proud to be a small part of it.

It is truly an honor to be selected as Consumer Protection Chief of the Year. Wait, I am being informed by Abigail Stempson and Blake Bee that it is actually Chief of the Month but, who are they kidding, Chief of the Year has historically been implied in the August issue. So, in the immortal words of another Tennessean, “Thank you, thank you very much.”