

# BAR BULLETIN

**KCBA** KING COUNTY BAR  
ASSOCIATION  
*Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886*

This is a reprint from the King County Bar Association Bar Bulletin  
August 2015

## Profile / Gene Barton

### *Journalist... Lawyer... High Roller... & Fan*

By Jim Austin

This month's Profile is a bit out of the ordinary, just like our profiled lawyer.

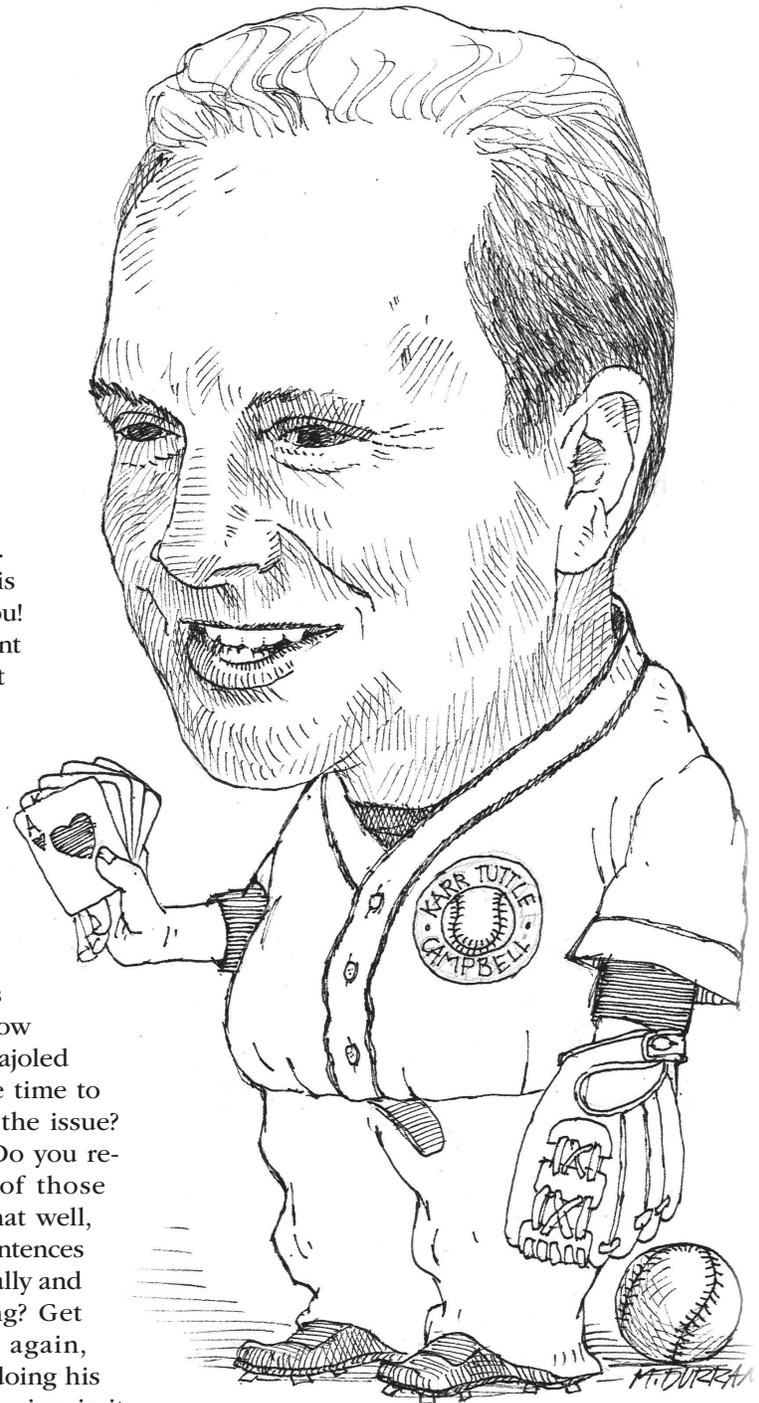
You see, unlike everyone else who has ever been written about in this column, Gene Barton didn't know this was coming. He opened his Bar Bulletin to this page and said, "What the . . .?!?" Because Gene, as the long-time editor of this illustrious publication, had already proofed this page, taking care to make sure that the profile looked and read just right. Only, the profile that Gene edited and submitted for publication in this issue wasn't a profile of himself, but of some other standout of our local legal community.

Unbeknownst to Gene, and as a tribute to him for his ten years of service as Bar Bulletin editor, his friends at KCBA decided to surprise him by substituting this profile in place of the one he thought he was going to see.

I feel privileged to have been given the opportunity to write this column, not only because it gives me an opportunity to tell you a few things about someone I admire, but because it means I will be the one and only person during Gene's decade of service who has managed to write anything for the Bulletin that he hasn't planned, organized, fact-

checked, punctuated, re-worked and fitted. So there, Gene — this one got away from you!

Just take a moment to look carefully at this edition of the Bulletin. Do you notice that this issue, like all others over the past ten years, has a theme (indicated on the stripe at the top of the cover page)? That's Gene's innovation. Notice how many people were cajoled into contributing the time to produce articles for the issue? Also Gene's doing. Do you really think that all of those contributors write that well, with finely crafted sentences that work grammatically and with perfect spelling? Get real — that's Gene again, in the background, doing his thing. And how amazing is it that everything lines up perfectly, without gaps or empty margins? Once again, that's Gene's handiwork. Ben Franklin would be proud.



So, how did Gene come by his editorial skills? Let's review his history. Gene wasn't always the crackerjack

---

attorney that he is today. Once upon a time, Gene had it in his mind that his professional life would be spent as a print journalist. After graduating from the University of Missouri with a Bachelor of Journalism degree, Gene spent 15 years as a newspaper reporter and editor in Oregon and New Mexico.

But then Gene had a revelation. As he recounts: “I had just awakened one wintry morning from a fitful sleep, when a specter appeared at the foot of my bed, with a giant pen in one hand and the scales of justice in the other. The specter bellowed at me, ‘Behold, Gene, take heed. For you the path is not to be one of observer, but of practitioner.’ I knew at that moment that my destiny was to be a lawyer.”

Actually, Gene has never said any such thing — but that’s what happens when Gene isn’t around to fact-check a column.

In any case, after tiring of reporting on events rather than being part of them, Gene headed to the University of Washington Law School. Perhaps it was the years he spent honing skills as a journalist, or perhaps it was his keen intelligence, or maybe just a natural acuity for the law, but in law school Gene nailed it. By the time he received his law degree, Gene had accumulated just about every academic honor that the Law School bestows — Order of the Coif, the Judge James J. Lawless Memorial Award and the Delta Theta Phi Award for academic achievement, and recognition as the Phi Alpha Delta Honor Graduate, i.e., the top

student in his 1996 graduating class. Oh, and not surprisingly, he was Managing Editor of the Washington Law Review.

So, yes, Gene is, certifiably, a smarty-pants. (Note: Gene would have eliminated the excess punctuation in that last sentence, but I get to edit this column, Gene, not you.)

Gene has spent his entire career as a litigation and appellate lawyer with Karr Tuttle Campbell. He’s a Superlawyer, of course — but I probably didn’t need to tell you that. He’s handled, and far more often than not has prevailed, in a wide range of complex cases. When a case presents complicated or thorny issues, and demands a well-organized, creative and clear-headed strategy, Gene is the lawyer you want to handle the case.

Opposing counsel, beware: Gene counts among his skills an expertise at poker. Among the things Gene brings to every one of our firm retreats are playing cards, a poker visor and shades. He knows there will be a poker tournament (he will see to that, if no one else has). And he knows he will come home just a little bit wealthier than when he left.

As lawyers who have litigated with Gene as either co-counsel or as adversary counsel know, Gene is the consummate professional. Although he has succeeded in dozens of trials and appellate proceedings, Gene is most proud of his ability to help clients and adversaries resolve conflicts amicably. As Gene famously has said, “Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can. As a peacemaker the

lawyer has superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.”

Actually, Abraham Lincoln said that, not Gene. But there will still be editing enough for Gene after this column is printed.

As those of us who know Gene are well aware, in addition to the law, there are two great passions in Gene’s life — his family and baseball. If the Mariners are playing an afternoon game, and the score is tied in late innings, odds are that the TV in our firm’s lunchroom will be showing the game, and Gene will have stopped by for a quick refreshment (and by “quick,” I mean “as long as it takes for the game to end”).

Gene’s office contains shrines to both of those passions — family photos alongside Bobbleheads of Mariners past and present, and a (consumed) Edgar Martinez can of Pepsi. Sometimes it’s hard to tell whether an icon belongs to one shrine or the other. For example, there is the touching photo of a newborn child — with a baseball bat and glove in the foreground. (Or perhaps it’s a touching photo of a baseball bat and glove, with a newborn child in the background. I can’t tell.)

Gene brings the same passion that he has for his family, baseball and his law practice to his work on the Bar Bulletin, and it shows in each and every edition.

So, from everyone at KCBA, and from all of your readers: A heartfelt thank you, Gene, for a job superbly done! ■