

BACKGROUND CHECK

Kelly Frey | Bart Pickett



Kelly Frey is a native Nashvillian growing up east of the city in what then was a farming community. He graduated from Two Rivers High School before attending Vanderbilt for college. After graduating in 1973, he obtained a graduate degree in human pathology at Vanderbilt School of Medicine. During his research, Kelly became interested in patent and copyright law due to the technologies he was helping develop. This exposure sparked his interest in law and resulted in his decision to attend the University of Tennessee College of Law. He served on the law review and the moot court board and focused on intellectual property law. When he graduated in 1982, Kelly came back to Nashville to work for what became HG3M.

Kelly started practicing law in a general practice firm, and worked on mergers and acquisitions in the medical and healthcare industry. After a few years, Kelly left HG3M to start his own practice. He had a good client who was developing real estate, which formed the core of his practice, allowing Kelly the flexibility to continue his M&A and IP practice. Over the next few years, Frey grew his firm to seven lawyers. He ultimately decided he did

not like spending his time managing all the many aspects that come with small business ownership.

In 1992, Kelly went to work as general counsel for Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). This was at the beginning of the commercialization of the Internet, so he assisted in the creation of the first digital rights licensing system through consensus negotiations with the publishing industry. The licensing system was eventually adopted by over 90% of Fortune 100 companies. Kelly worked at CCC for five years and then spent the next five-plus years serving as general counsel and head of strategic development for several tech companies during the internet boom days. One such company, Audible.com, transferred the concept of books from tape to digital downloads.

After working as a general counsel for years, Kelly was burnt out. He took a year off and lived in a high rise on a beach north of Boston. Feeling refreshed and needing to do something productive, Frey moved back to Nashville in 2003 and joined Baker Donelson where he stayed until 2011. While there, he helped develop one of the first technology practices in the city.

Kelly worked at a couple of other national firms in town before starting his current role at Nelson Mullins in 2017. He describes his current practice as eclectic. About 50% of his practice is still technology transactional work (including M&A), 25% is ethics and compliance work, and the remaining 25% is entertainment (primarily feature film production).

In his free time, Kelly pursues his

passion of films. In particular, he loves producing films and has produced over a dozen to date. Kelly says a movie is being made every week in Nashville. Nashville has a vibrant community of creatives that he tries to support, as he wants to make sure the city does not lose the creative capital that helps make the city so vibrant.

Kelly has gone to many film festivals throughout the country over the years where his films have been award winners. He enjoys walking the red carpet as it symbolizes the culmination of two years of work for each film in which he is involved.

Kelly has served on the boards and as president for the Nashville Film Festival and the Nashville Japanese Film Festival. He currently serves on the boards for the Greater Nashville Arts and Business Council and the historic Franklin Theatre (where he currently serves as President).

Kelly lives in Franklin with his wife, Patti, and their 8-year-old rescue Daschund, Izzy. The newlyweds share his passion of producing films and her passion for trading equities and derivatives. He has two adult children who live in Boston, a daughter who is a physical therapist and a son who is a lawyer. ■



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