

Michael Wynne
Oct. 19, 2006



Here's Michael Wynne, a very new member of the Rotary Club of Houston. He joined the Club in July, 2006, after being introduced to the Club by a friend. Being a Rotarian appealed to him because of the opportunities for community service, the quality of the RCH programs, and the ideals of Rotary – which he noticed weren't just spoken (as in the 4-Way Test), but were actually embraced and practiced by club members. In case you're wondering about his accent, he said he grew up in upstate New York, Syracuse in particular.

In his few months in the club, Michael's work has required a lot of travel, so he's missed some meetings. However, he already has noticed that the club's Fresh Start Program looks interesting – which is ironic since he spent a number of years as a federal prosecutor, helping to put the very people in prison that the Fresh Start Program now is helping to prepare for life and work after release.

Michael obviously is a very bright young man. He graduated *magna cum laude* from Bucknell U. in 1989 with a B.S. degree in Economics, and obtained his law degree from the Harvard Law School in 1992. He has been an attorney with the law firm of Yetter & Warden, L.L.P with offices in downtown Houston, for about a year. I suspect a young attorney isn't hired by a firm of this size and reputation unless his or her credentials are pretty impressive!

Michael said he spends his work days “talking on the phone and working on the computer.” The work involves long hours of research, collaboration with other members of his legal team, and preparation of documents – all parts of planning and preparation for clients, some of whom are involved in very high profile, extremely complex cases that may take one or more years of work before going to trial. The aspect of the work that appeals to him most is the opportunity to help people who are in serious trouble because of alleged white collar crimes. Making the shift from his previous work as a federal prosecutor to working now as a defense attorney required a substantial change in perspective: As a prosecutor, his job was to protect the public from the actions of

individuals, while the defense attorney's job is to protect individuals from unjust prosecution.

So, what goes on in this guy's head? Well, here are some examples: If you gave him \$10 million to use some way other than on himself or his family, he'd set up a scholarship fund for kids to attend college (Bucknell?), provided they meet criteria for need and academic potential – and, provided they agree to become fluent in a foreign language, preferably Arabic.

If he could magically change anything about himself, he'd want the wisdom to be able to accurately and consistently foresee the consequences of his and others' behavior, and the mental discipline to maintain intense focus for as long as needed on issues needing his attention.

What does he see as his greatest accomplishments so far? The fact that he's continued to learn and grow; he's developing sound legal judgment; he's won some important legal cases; and he's developed a good circle of friends.

What have been the biggest challenges or obstacles he's faced? One, overcoming the huge mountain of debt he incurred while in college and law school. (Relates to the above idea about his use of the magical \$10M.) Two, moving to Houston in 1992 without family or friends for support and establishing a solid network of work and social connections.

Looking into the future, what does he most want to be remembered for? For being a good problem solver who makes a difference in people's lives, and for being a dependable and loyal friend. What would he be most disappointed about if he didn't do this in his lifetime? One, see more of the world, and two, become a state or federal judge.

Now, how does he play? You'll be surprised to know that he plays classical piano, and enjoys listening to music. He keeps in shape with exercising, running, and yoga, and looks forward to spending time with his friends.

In summary, a most interesting guy. Engage him in conversation at the lunch table, and I assure you that you will not be bored. He is an intellectual who can contemplate the problems of humanity, and a lively friend that you can count on. Oh, and if you get charged with a white collar crime, give him a call.