

Legal Legacy

Washburn Family has Built a 60-year Legal Legacy in Holton

By Lindsay Thompson

The White Law Office/Title Abstract Co., Inc., headed by Washburn alumnus **Dennis White, '84**, is recognizing a big milestone this year. The Holton, Kansas, firm is celebrating its 60th anniversary. It's a momentous occasion made even more remarkable because three generations of the White family have practiced law there after attending Washburn University School of Law.

Dennis was a little boy when his father, **Marlin White, BBA '60, JD '63**, graduated from Washburn Law and started the practice. Marlin built a reputation as a winning attorney and a servant leader in the community.

"He was a wise person," Dennis said. "And his wit and humor were exceptional."

By high school, Dennis knew he wanted to follow in his dad's footsteps and study at Washburn to be an attorney. By law school, where he wanted to practice became clear as well.

"I didn't envision anything other than practicing with my dad, under his tutelage," Dennis said.

He joined his dad's practice in 1984 and worked alongside him until Marlin's passing in 2006. Dennis' wife, **Joni White, AA '84, BA '91**, worked with them as the office manager. For a time, it seemed that would be the extent of the legacy; two generations of the White family working together.

Dennis and Joni's son **Kennedy White, BBA '16, JD '19**, was drawn to a career in business. He pursued an entrepreneurial path, encouraged by the close-knit student community and nurturing faculty he found at Washburn.

The summer before his junior year, Kennedy started his own business. Motivated by a dream of helping small local businesses, he launched D18, now called SmartSave. With guidance from faculty like **Rick LeJuerne, BBA '91**, lecturer, School of Business, he operated and grew the utility tax exemption consulting service while he finished his degree.

Even though he had a successful and growing business, Kennedy found himself led toward the law and working alongside his family.

"When I first began the SmartSave venture my junior year, I had no idea where it would lead me eight years later, into the career of my dreams," Kennedy said. "At the time, I just followed my heart where I felt God was leading me and



The White family – (from left to right) Cassidy, BA '18; Kennedy, BBA '16, JD '19; Dennis, '84; and Joni, AA '84, BA '91. Photo by Jeremy Wangler

focused on becoming a valuable resource others could look to for these complex matters. I think that same heart and mindset led me to the practice of law."

"We had no idea Kennedy would go to law school," Dennis said. "He's a business guy. It surprised us even further when he decided he wanted to come up here."

A year after Kennedy graduated from law school, SmartSave caught the eye of a diversified financial services company, B Riley Financial, that wanted to bring him on staff to expand their tax practice. He took the offer. He now splits his time between the business he launched and the family law office.

Dennis is excited about the possibilities for the future. His son-in-law, Jacob Kennedy, is on the team running Title Abstract Company, another family business. Kennedy's wife, **Cassidy, BA '18**, in addition to her work as an account manager for ComPsych, provides part-time assistance with secretarial duties for the practice. And with five grandchildren currently, and Kennedy and Cassidy expecting a baby this year, he thinks there's a possibility of a four-generation legacy at the practice.

"To think we could be celebrating the 90th anniversary of the White Law Office is exciting," Kennedy said, looking forward. "I feel very grateful to be here and excited for the future."