

# DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

## *Perseverance pays off*

JASON ROBINSON FILLED HIS GRANDFATHER'S DREAM AND HIS OWN

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Jason Robinson knew in the eighth grade that he wanted to be a lawyer. Participating in a mock trial is what hooked him.

"I just kind of knew kind of right away. It was just a process I really enjoyed and I never really deviated from that."

A Missouri native from "a small town halfway between Kansas City and St. Louis off of I-70," Robinson's dream also was the dream of his grandfather, whose legal aspirations were sacrificed during the Great Depression. Money set aside for his grandfather's college education ultimately went to feeding a family of 10 siblings.

"He had to work and help his family. Years later, my grandfather told my mom that he'd always wanted to be a lawyer and that was always his lifelong dream," he said.

Following his 2000 law school graduation from Washington University in St. Louis, Robinson's parents told him his grandfather's story and gifted him with a pocket watch that had belonged to his grandfather's father. "Any time I go to court, I carry that



**A music lover, Jason Robinson is a board member of Swallow Hill Music.**

KATHLEEN LAVINE, BUSINESS JOURNAL

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watch, so it's a constant reminder on even those really bad days in court that I'm very fortunate and lucky to live the dream that began in eighth grade."

Living that dream would bring him to Colorado by way of three failed clerking interviews and one case of perseverance at all costs.

Out of law school, Robinson wanted nothing more than to clerk for a federal judge and sent out more than 100 applications across innumerable states. Despite his efforts, he landed only three interviews – two of which immediately didn't work out.

The third interview seemed "aligned with the stars," he said. The judge attended the same law school as Robinson, Washington University, and historically only hired clerks who graduated from his alma mater. The judge also shared mutual acquaintances with Robinson – one of whom wrote him a recommendation letter for the clerking position.

Robinson's hopes were dashed when the judge explained he was deviating from habit and hiring a non-Washington University graduate instead.

Robinson moved to Washington, D.C., to take a job with the Department of Labor. A chance call and recommendation from a friend clerking in Colorado led to an in-person interview in Denver with then-U.S. District Court Judge Edward W. Nottingham in Denver.

## JASON ROBINSON

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**Favorite part of his day:** The 15-minute drive with his six-year-old son every morning. "The conversations I have with my son, Drew, in the car in the morning because they are random."

"I got back, picked up the phone, and he asked if I would give him my all, and I said I would," he said.

Robinson's father helped him move the 1,500 miles from D.C. to Denver over the course of the weekend, so he could start work the following Monday.

Robinson's time clerking for Nottingham gave him experience dealing with environmental litigation under federal law – a section of law that he continues to

practice at Fairfield & Woods PC, alongside complex commercial and business litigation. "I like it, but in an ideal world that would be half my practice and the other half would be random stuff. ... The trend [in law] seems to be moving away from the generalist, which is a shame because that's what's interesting," he said.

Growing up around the arts prompted him to take up the guitar in law school – a creative outlet that ultimately drew him to Swallow Hill Music.

"I always joke that I learned to play guitar in law school. ... I'm not a musician, but I love playing," he said.

Although he discovered Swallow Hill by way of mandolin lessons, Robinson eventually pursued a spot on the organization's board of directors as a way of giving back to something that he says had a profound impact on his life.

Robinson also supports other arts and music organizations in the Colorado area as a member of the Colorado Business Committee for the Arts and Colorado Lawyers for the Arts, and dedicates time to introducing music back into Denver Public Schools, where his son is a student.

Whether living his dream or possibly helping others discover and protect theirs – both inside and outside the courtroom – Robinson hopes his eighth-grade self would be proud.