

# MIKE BECHER

## From Owning the Court to Owning a Business: The Mike Becher Story

Graduate: Class of 1975      Occupation: Owner/Manager of Independent Insurance Agency  
By Matt Messmer, Spring 2010

On March 1, 1975, Mike Becher scored thirty-seven points-before the creation of the three-point arc-in one of the best basketball games in Forest Park history, a triple overtime sectional thriller against Jasper. At the time of his graduation, the southpaw notched the most points in a Forest Park basketball career, ending with a grand total of 1,084 points. Although he no longer holds this top spot, that memorable game still stands as an individual single-game record. The year of 1975 became a year of great achievement for Mike in high school, including leading Dubois County in scoring in basketball and winning the school's first baseball sectional. "Playing basketball and baseball in front of the greatest fans in the world" and having the "privilege of being taught by two great teachers, Jim Peacock and Larry Klein," comprise the highlights of Mike's high school experience. Jim Peacock-his English teacher, baseball coach for four years, and basketball coach for two years-served as Mike's greatest influence while attending Forest Park. An excellent teacher both in the classroom and in sports, Mr. Peacock epitomized the "perfect gentleman. He was always prepared for his job on a daily basis. He taught us true sportsmanship and how to do things the right way. He was the perfect role model."

In the fall of 1975, Mike enrolled at DePauw University, where he played basketball for one and a half years, which allowed him to do some traveling. Realizing that after graduating from college he wanted to return to work in southern Indiana, preferably Dubois County, corresponded with his thinking in high school; he never dreamed he would have a career in insurance but always felt he would live here, in Ferdinand. In January of 1977, Mike encountered his biggest "bump in the road." Transferring from DePauw to Indiana University, Mike "went from playing basketball at a 2,500 student campus while majoring in psychology and living in a fraternity, to no longer playing sports at a 30,000+ campus while majoring in business and living in a dorm." Mike says he "took it day by day, spending a lot of time with friends from high school ... then moving from the dorm to an apartment the next year." Mike believes that "transferring is okay but not recommended. Carefully select your college; make sure it's a right fit for you."

After graduating from Indiana with a bachelor of science degree in business-marketing, Mike began working at the Dale State Agency in June of 1979, his sole career focus since graduating from college. Successfully managing the company-since

gaining ownership in 1984-constitutes a highlight of Mike's post high school experience, along with growing the agency and increasing the customer base since 1984.

Enjoyable aspects of Mike's work derive from spending some time in the office and sometime in the field, visiting customers. Mike "just finds the whole world of insurance fascinating." He enjoys the social interaction and the opportunities of problem solving and saving people money on their insurance. The downfall of the job: long hours. In addition, some people become impatient; for example, in a bad storm where hundreds of people have damage to their homes or cars, they want it fixed right away. Making everybody happy all of the time creates the prevalent challenge.

Mike's day consists of quoting and writing new auto, home, life, and health insurance policies for customers. He also makes coverage changes to existing policies. Managing his "fine employees and answering their questions," going over mail, inspecting homes to determine their eligibility to quote, and going to see customers, making sure their service meets their expectations, makes up a day on the job. If problems arise, he talks to underwriters and claims adjusters. Mike enjoys being the boss. Feeling satisfied with his job, Mike says, "You get to help people every day with some sort of problem of theirs." Mike looks at every day of his job as "a day of opportunity." In his career, he must remember everyone is different. While kind and friendly to all, he must watch what he says. It is easy to offend people; therefore, Mike tries to make a friend out of everybody he meets.

Today Mike loves to spend time with his wife, Carol; his boys, Eric, the oldest son married to April, and Ryan, soon to be married to Ashley; and his one-year-old grandson, Gavin. An avid exerciser, Mike has walked and jogged since 1977. Also a follower of the Cincinnati Reds and Indiana basketball, Mike tells current students, "Pursue what you are passionate about, and you will be successful as long as you work hard and are dedicated to your chosen career. Pray every day and go to church often. You must treasure and appreciate your family and friends." The best tip Mike Becher can give students, "Always work hard and always be honest-never lie under any circumstances."