

THE COLLECTOR

RUPERT M. BARKOFF IS AN INTROVERT BY NATURE, BUT WHEN HE'S PASSIONATE ABOUT SOMETHING HE GOES ALL IN

BY JESSICA TAM

Rupert M. Barkoff, chairman of the franchise team at Kilpatrick Townsend & Stockton, could probably set up his own franchise, since he owns roughly 6,000 cigarette cards and 550 snow globes. But he didn't set out to collect either.

The cigarette card collection began in 1982 as an inheritance from his mother. He was drawn in by their rarity and their beauty. "They're breathtaking," he says.

Originally made to keep a pack of smokes from crumpling, collectible cigarette cards were especially popular in the 1930s. They came in sets of as many as 100, and included themes such as flowers, animals, modes of transportation and kings of England. "Just name it," says Barkoff.

"You rarely see them over here in the United States," he adds. "Occasionally I'll see a mounted collection somewhere. In England you don't see them that much, but they're much more common than they are over here."

Since '82, he's more than doubled his mom's collection, to create what's become "a family heirloom" that is carefully catalogued in albums at home. The one set on display in his Atlanta office features 25 airplanes.

The collection of snow globes, meanwhile, began as a competition.

"I had an associate who had picked up a couple [snow globes] for his then-young child. I picked up a couple, and it started a nuclear arms race. ... It became a level of fanaticism for me."

Barkoff travels a lot for business, and snow globes can be found in almost every airport shop around the world. For a long time, he owned globes from 49 states. "But I couldn't get to North Dakota," he says. Then, thanks to a contact with the North Dakota Securities Commissioner's Office where Barkoff knew one employee who handled franchise registration work, he received the prized North Dakota globe in the mail.

He also owns snow globes from 25 countries. None of Barkoff's snow globes were purchased on the Internet. That would be cheating. But he adds, "One of the problems if you do it yourself is you can't carry them on an airplane because of the fluid. You can only bring them if you check luggage or buy them after going through security." He's now purchasing them for his 10-year-old grandchild.

Born and raised in New Orleans, Barkoff was fanatical about commercial aviation as a child—hence the specific cigarette cards in his office. "I knew every flight that was coming into the New Orleans airport," he says. "I knew every type of plane of all the major airlines."

While he got his start in franchise law representing franchisee associations for such chains as Kentucky Fried Chicken and Jiffy Lube, today the majority of Barkoff's practice is dedicated to a multitude of franchisors, including PoolWerx, Waffle House and River Street Sweets. He also writes and speaks extensively on franchise



law, and teaches the subject as an adjunct professor at University of Georgia School of Law. In 2010, he received the ABA Forum on Franchising's Lewis G. Rudnick Award for lifetime achievement. It had been awarded only once before.

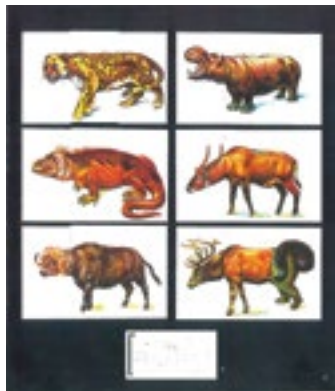
Not bad for a self-described shy person.

"I'm an introvert by nature," he says, "but when I get passionate about something, like cards or my legal practice, I can overcome my ability to be a person that likes to sit in his shell."

So are there any other missing links in his snow-globe collection? It turns out, a big one: China.

"I was there about three years ago and I must have looked in 50 or 70 places and didn't find any," he says. "You'd think China would have thousands there—and it's ironic, since many are made there—so it's a notable gap."

The chase continues. [SI](#)



Barkoff's collection of cigarette cards began in 1982; he now owns roughly 6,000. "They're breathtaking," he says.