



If I Knew Then...
Life Lessons from

LEGENDARY

Texas Lawyers



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Please note that this brochure is solely intended to provide general information only and is not to be interpreted as legal advice. It is not intended to be an exhaustive treatise on these areas of law; rather, you, as a lawyer, will likely need to investigate these legal issues further. Any laws described in this book are subject to change at any time.

Do you ever reflect on how you got to where you are? I do.

I've always been fascinated by how you can usually pinpoint one moment, one action, one person, or one decision that was life altering. For me, making the decision to become a lawyer greatly changed the course of my life.

I grew up in a rural area. My family did not run in the same circles as attorneys. I knew who the local attorneys were only by what I read in the newspaper. I knew what attorneys did by what I saw on television. It was not until I started practicing law that I learned what it meant to be an attorney. It is impossible to capture that feeling and responsibility on film or in a photograph. Some days you feel like you got it all right – that you obtained the best possible outcome for your client. Other days the feeling is just the opposite. It got me thinking ... do the great attorneys ever feel this way?

So we asked them.

TYLA went across this great state and asked some legendary Texas attorneys what made them so great. How they got where they are? What was the life altering moment in their career? We asked these questions in the hope that it would provide an education of sorts or just satisfy our wild curiosities. Their responses are fascinating.

These legends do not look back at their career and regret the mistakes, the loss, or the missed opportunities. Instead, they learned from those moments, they made some adjustments, and they moved forward stronger from having had the experience. Now, in this book – *If I Knew Then... Life Lessons from Legendary Texas Lawyers* – these Texas legal legends are passing on to you some of the wisdom resulting from both their successes and their failures.

Enjoy!

Rebekah Steely Brooker
2014–2015 President
Texas Young Lawyers Association

CHAPTER ONE:

ADVICE FOR YOUNG ATTORNEYS

ADVICE FOR YOUNG ATTORNEYS

Upon graduating from law school, many new attorneys find themselves without much guidance from more seasoned lawyers. In this chapter, several legendary Texas lawyers weigh in on several key questions that arise in the early years of a young lawyer's practice, including, knowing what they know now, what they wish they knew when they first got out of law school, the best advice they received as young lawyers, and the types of things young lawyers should do to be successful. The chapter concludes with personal insight from these legal legends about what they would be doing had they not chosen the law.

1. What do you wish you had known about the practice of law when you first got out of law school?

More than I did, which was next to nothing.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

For the practice of law to be fulfilling, it must be about both helping people with their problems and making a living. Over-emphasizing one of those can lead to a less-fulfilling career. And both of them must be balanced with family commitments.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Law schools rarely teach the care and feeding of clients. The importance of personal relationships between lawyers and clients, and lawyers and other counsel, is not stressed enough. The world's smartest lawyer will starve if she cannot communicate effectively with her clients and the public in general. Young lawyers need to take the time to listen and understand a client's needs and goals and follow their instructions, if they are legal and ethical.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

More opportunity to observe what is going on in the courtroom.

Judge Mary Lou Robinson – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Amarillo

I wish I had known that a lawyer needs to gauge the expectations of his/her client early in the attorney/client relationship. Many times a client has an elevated expectation about his/her legal problem and the solutions for it. The attorney is well served to gauge that expectation and either work to lower or raise depending upon the particular legal situation.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

It is a people oriented business. It is so easy for us to get caught up in the law, but as lawyers we need to remember that the judge, the jury, the Justices on the Courts of Appeals are still people. They have emotions, knowledge, empathy – and they want to hear the story. Inherently good litigators are great story tellers. They master the law, and understand how to use it to present a wonderful story.

Gaines West – Partner, West, Webb, Allbritton & Gentry, LLP, College Station

That as a young attorney, the best thing you can do is to keep quiet, listen, and learn. Be aware of what you don't know. Be nice to court reporters, court clerks, and court coordinators – they can be your best friends in the courthouse!

David Weeks – Criminal District Attorney, Huntsville

In 1980, law seemed the most stable profession. The speed and inevitability of major change within the practice surprised me my first five years. With the benefit of hindsight, I learned to view change as opportunity. Like many lessons, I learned that the hard way.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

How important friendships and networking can be. Stay in touch with your alums from Law School. In the midst of a competitive and often antagonistic profession, find ways to make and keep friends wherever possible.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

That jury trials would disappear because of Arbitration Agreements.

J.A. “Tony” Canales – Partner, Canales & Simonson, P.C., Corpus Christi

I wish that I understood more about the operations of a law firm – the way it measures success and compensation. The attitude of the original law firm I worked for was bad because of their compensation system, and the firm broke up within five years. The firm was set up to be a mess. I should have asked more senior lawyers about how firms operate to avoid working for a firm where there was so much disregard for each other.

Jim Coleman – Senior Counsel, Carrington Coleman, Dallas

Even happy clients don't always say thank you.

Mark White – Member, Sprouse Shrader Smith, Amarillo

It is vitally important to maintain a balance with work and one's personal life.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

The importance of looking at legal problems from the standpoint of the client. Too often young lawyers get so wrapped up in the legal activity that they lose sight of the impact of the legal activity on the client in terms of cost, time spent and the mental stress of being involved in a serious matter. Attention should be paid to some “hand holding” with the client, and an understanding of what the client really wants and needs—and also can afford.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

That law school had done nothing to teach how to effectively communicate with jurors. When I first got out of law school, I didn't realize just how much of an education I still had in front of me. And that was surprising. In law school, through legal aid, I gained some experience with parole hearings, family law, and landlord-tenant disputes. That wasn't enough to really help me learn how to try cases in South Texas courtrooms, certainly.

Ricardo Cedillo – Shareholder, Davis Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc., San Antonio

Provide excellent client service. Know who your client is. Know more than just the legal question being asked. And be very, very, very responsive to your clients.

Terry O. Tottenham – retired partner, Norton Rose Fulbright, Austin

In hindsight, I wish I had known that the law practice would eventually gravitate toward becoming a “business” as opposed to remaining a true profession. I don't know that I would have done anything differently, but it would certainly have been a factor in deciding my career path.

David J. Beck – Partner, Beck Redden LLP, Houston

2. *What was the best advice you received during your first few years of practice?*

Keep your integrity. You only have it until you lose it.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

The best advice was probably to project the efforts that you have made in working on a client's behalf when sending out billing statements. This means detailed descriptions of everything that you have done and the accurate time that it took to perform these actions. It demonstrates to the client that you really have been working for them.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

At my graduation from Baylor Law School, Professor David Guinn said to me “You know more law now than you will ever know. Don't ever stop being a student of the law.” That continues to be excellent advice. I constantly try to study and learn about the new issues that come up in my cases.

Gaines West – Partner, West, Webb, Allbritton & Gentry, LLP, College Station

Remember that practicing law is not about winning at all costs; it is about resolving problems for clients.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Latham Boone once told me to “do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason.”

David Weeks – Criminal District Attorney, Huntsville

Hard work trumps talent. This makes hard work AND talent a lethal combination.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

(1) Your work product will be your best public relations via clients; (2) Focus on each project until completed; and (3) Do not hesitate to ask for help/guidance from another attorney.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

There was a lawyer that told me do not get pigeon holed. Do different things. Learn a lot about different areas of the law and litigation. I believe that advice made me a better attorney. Someone else told me to write down your goals and be very specific as to goals you write down. Make your goals measurable where you can see if you accomplished the goal. Periodically go back and review your goals to see where you are. Make not just monthly and annual goals but also five year goals, and think about making ten year goals. Be specific.

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

“Don’t swim away from the life raft.” I had a client who used this phrase in a number of ways. He used it to describe a situation where a lawyer was in trouble and was being offered a lifeline, but was too panicked to realize it. This is clearly a fault I have come to recognize in young lawyers. Many times a judge or another lawyer will attempt to help someone out of a bad situation. That lifeline may not always be offered for altruistic purposes, and it may not always be a good deal, and it is alright to certainly look before you leap. Nevertheless, many lawyers are so caught up in their own case that they do not see or understand when someone has thrown them a lifeline.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

Just do it.

Judge Mary Lou Robinson – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Amarillo

Don’t act too formal in front of a jury.

Mark White – Member, Sprouse Shrader Smith, Amarillo

Do not be reluctant to say you do not know the answer. Do not hesitate to seek help and advice from senior attorneys. Remember that your client will only tell you his side of the dispute. Be prepared in everything that you do.

Dee Miller and Oth Miller – Partners, Miller Gutzmer Attorneys at Law, Amarillo

My mentor, Allen Crowley, always stressed to me that clients had disputes; lawyers shouldn’t. To respect the fact that an opposing lawyer is trying to do his job, just like you are, and there is no need to get angry if he or she doesn’t do it the way you think it should be done. The practice of law is an art and we all practice in our own way and should respect that as our professional obligation.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

Don’t try to figure out success or advancement. Do your best. And say “no” when you should.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Be nice to everyone. This is corollary to my favorite: Keep your options open. Do not burn bridges. They are hard to cross if torched.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

**3. *How can young lawyers be successful attorneys early on in their careers?
Where should they focus their energies?***

I am fond of the phrase “Do the Work”. Hard work and preparation for anything you do will pay dividends in many areas. First of all, your clients, other lawyers, and the courts notice when you are prepared and knowledgeable of the matters about which you are interacting with them. This creates an impression of integrity and responsibility which leads to a reputation of dependability and honest dealing. These are two of the main characteristics of a successful attorney.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

Focus your energy on doing the best job you can. You are going to make mistakes. You don't want to make them but you're going to make them. You're going to have to accept them, and you can't be beaten down by the mistakes you make. You must persevere. Also, the first thing young lawyers should have on their mind is their reputation is everything. When they go to court, when they're dealing with clients, when they're dealing with partners, if they're saying things that are not necessarily rational, don't make sense, or are said out of anger, then their reputation will suffer, and if your reputation suffers, it's harder to get it back than it was to establish it in the first place.

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

I would recommend that young lawyers take several approaches to being a successful lawyer: (1) find a good mentor lawyer in the area and listen to his or her advice; (2) focus on being a good lawyer, but also participate in bar and civic activities; (3) emulate good, well-respected lawyers.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Get as varied experience as possible in your field. Focus your energy on learning your craft. Attend CLEs, watch “great litigators” try cases. I learned a lot from watching attorneys like Rusty Hardin and Ted Poe. Always adapt what you learn to your personality. Juries spot fakes. Meet people that do the same thing that you do, and forge connections so that you can call and ask questions. Mentors are so important. Look for opportunities to form mentoring relationships. Make connections all over the state. I tried 30 jury trials in 1985, as Chief Prosecutor for the state's first Special Prison Prosecution unit. I learned to try cases by the seat of my pants – that is something everyone should learn to do. I tried some of my first cases in front of Judge Erwin Ernst. He taught me a lot about listening and paying attention when I was in court. Small things can matter greatly in finding the truth.

David Weeks – Criminal District Attorney, Huntsville

The best path to success for young lawyers is to focus on their practice, work hard, do a good job every day, and volunteer for professional and civic service.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Always be on the lookout for ways to get things done. Too many people accept consequences instead of dictating results. Young lawyers need to blaze trails, think outside the box, and work to achieve things others think impossible.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

Learn to listen, seek mentoring with another trusted attorney, return phone calls timely, and complete work timely.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

Listen to your clients. Understand their needs. Communicate with your clients frequently. Yes, they are seeking your advice and many times you will have to explain to them the ins and outs of the law. They need to know that you understand their desires and care about what is important to them. Lawyers tend to boil things down to money, and while money is important, many times a client has other considerations as well.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

If you want to do trial work, work in a firm with small trials where you can do something about it. I tried my first lawsuit right after my first year, and I obtained a hung jury and we settled. I tried cases every week, and I learned how to get along with opposing lawyers and with judges.

Jim Coleman – Senior Counsel, Carrington Coleman, Dallas

Get a reputation of being dependable in the law and civic endeavors. Focus energy on learning instead of money.

Mark White – Member, Sprouse Shrader Smith, Amarillo

Keep your word.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

They should find what they like, and focus their energy there. Don't focus on the practice area that pays the most, or the job that will get you the most accolades, do what you love.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

Be collaborative. Be the person who thinks “team” rather than “me.” And I know that sounds like an old adage, but I think in the practice of law, it’s really important to be known as someone who is a collaborative problem solver. Anybody can come in and say, “this is a problem, that’s a problem.” As I often say, “we know the problem, give me a solution.” So be a problem-solver in a collaborative way. That is an important differentiator.

Terry O. Tottenham – retired partner, Norton Rose Fulbright, Austin

Because there are fewer trials today, a young lawyer wanting to do trial work has to aggressively seek out trial opportunities. That means seeking job opportunities where cases are being tried, such as the District Attorney’s Office. Or volunteering for pro bono opportunities through local Bar Association programs. Or, if with a law firm, hound the more senior lawyers for the opportunity to “tag along” or even to perform menial tasks during a trial. They will eventually get the message that you want to try lawsuits and that you will do anything to have the opportunity to do so.

David J. Beck – Partner, Beck Redden LLP, Houston

4. *If you were not practicing law, what would you be doing?*

I have been a judge for 60 years. I can't imagine doing anything else.

Judge Mary Lou Robinson – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Amarillo

High school girls cross country coach.

Mark White – Member, Sprouse Shrader Smith, Amarillo

I have so many things that I enjoy doing—fly-fishing, ranching, teaching my classes at the Texas Tech law school, watercolor painting, reading, and writing.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

I always wanted to be a lawyer, but maybe a job working on a boat, a ranch, or something with no stress. I'd like to do something where you can see the rewards at the end of the day.

Vance Paton – Attorney at Law, Corpus Christi

I have no idea. Seriously though, I would be a professor. I love “turning on lights” in people's minds. We get to do that as lawyers, and I would love that aspect of being a professor.

Gaines West – Partner, West, Webb, Allbritton & Gentry, LLP, College Station

I am to the point in my life that if I were not judging or practicing law I would be spending more time with family and participating in service organizations.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

I sure liked running record (i.e., vinyl records, cassettes and 8-tracks) stores in the 1970s. But I like being an attorney, I can't think of another career that would let me run my mouth.

David Weeks – Criminal District Attorney, Huntsville

I would have been either a stock/option trader, been involved in real estate finance, or a professional bridge player. Or, I might have made it into medical school, despite Organic Chemistry. I am not saying I would have been highly successful at any of the above.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

Teaching. I would probably teach high school—English, History, Government—and maybe do a little writing.

Ricardo Cedillo – Shareholder, Davis Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc., San Antonio

Athletic Director.

Judge Kyle Hawthorne – Judge of the 85th Judicial District Court, Brazos County

Volunteering for non-profit organizations, working at a bookstore, and spending a lot of time with family traveling.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

Ranching.

J.A. “Tony” Canales – Partner, Canales & Simonson, P.C., Corpus Christi

I would be a federal judge.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

I can't imagine not practicing law. If I had the talent, I'd be a pianist, and if I had the patience, a minister or teacher.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

I would be in business of some kind, probably the oil and gas business.

Tom Morris – Shareholder, Underwood Law Firm, P.C., Amarillo

I haven't the foggiest idea. I have enjoyed my career as a lawyer so much and am so proud of our profession that I really can't imagine myself doing anything else.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

I made resolutions when I was in the Army that I would never work for anyone who had the ability to end my career or my life. When I was in Europe in the 3rd Army, I hated people telling me what to do who couldn't pour water from a boot. I remembered reading about a Jewish diamond merchant who kept his diamonds in a pouch at his belt so that he could always take his business with him. I needed a profession where I was in charge of my life – where I could always take my business with me. I figured it would work with a doctor or lawyer, and I considered medical school. But in the end, I became a lawyer.

Jim Coleman – Senior Counsel, Carrington Coleman, Dallas

Probably teaching, writing, or doing missionary work.

David J. Beck – Partner, Beck Redden LLP, Houston

CHAPTER TWO:
FIRST EXPERIENCES

FIRST EXPERIENCES

First experiences can be extremely daunting, especially in law. As lawyers, we strive for perfection, but we do not always achieve it, especially as young lawyers. As the saying goes “It’s called the practice of law because you are always practicing.” In this chapter we ask our legal legends to share how they approach difficult situations, such as dealing with challenging clients and handling first court appearances. Also, the legends weigh in on how they have learned from their mistakes and challenging situations, and what common characteristics successful lawyers share.

1. What advice do you have for dealing with difficult clients and difficult opposing counsel?

Someone once said that the practice of law would be fun if it wasn’t for clients. There are as many different types of clients as there are types of people. A lot of difficulty can be eliminated in one or more sessions with the client explaining the process and the decisions that will need to be made. Early discussion of such things as discovery, motion practice, the time and cost involved can head off dissatisfaction and disputes. Every effort should be made to involve the client in the decision making process (frequently involves an explanation of things like the lawyers creed items) and strategy moves that will cost, or save, money. It is important to stress to the client the importance of discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the opponent’s position. Too often the client will not understand and will think you have surrendered and are not fighting for his position unless you carefully explain the need for such discussion. Sometimes the chemistry just isn’t right with a client and you are better off terminating the relationship and offering to help the client find another lawyer.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

With difficult clients, a lawyer must be very clear, putting advice and information in writing, and asking co-counsel or an associate to join meetings and conversations to ensure that misunderstandings do not arise. Also, you must “stick to your guns” and not be pressured into taking ill-advised positions. With difficult opposing counsel, always remember that the goal is not to get even somehow but to advance your client’s interests while maintaining high standards of professionalism. Keep the client’s interests foremost, and leave ego out of it. In litigation, fight hard, but don’t scrap, and help a difficult opponent’s endearing qualities shine through to the judge and jury.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Do not take the bait from difficult opposing counsel. Ignore them to the extent possible. Do not lose your own ethical and professional compass. With a difficult client, explain how the difficulty is increasing the client's cost and decreasing the likelihood of success.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

Well, you can never control other people's actions. You can control how you react to their actions. You have to remind yourself of that. Plus, clients are not paying attorneys to be hotheads. They are paying attorneys to be deliberate and to give measured advice. And if you are emotional, it is difficult to give that advice. Plus, if you have someone that is difficult on the other side, frequently you can turn the way they act against them. You should always think, "Is this something that I can use against them? Are they giving me an avenue that I can attack either the theory of their case or how they are presenting their case?"

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

Be yourself. Don't become difficult just because others are difficult with you. And be prepared for difficulties. Handle the situation just like you did before you became a lawyer. Let's face it—litigation is difficult. We're hired to deal with difficult circumstances for disagreeable people.

George Bramblett Jr. – Senior Counsel, Haynes and Boone, Dallas

In dealing with difficult clients and opposing counsel, first, do not let clients or other lawyers entice you into ethical problems by their demands or conduct. Second, meet personally, face-to-face with whoever is being difficult. Personal meetings go a long way to solving most problems.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

It really depends on what makes them difficult. With control freaks, ascertain how they want things done. If you can ethically and responsibly do things their way, do exactly that. If the client is a profoundly negative person, there is nothing you can do to change them. Just be prepared on their cases. That way, you will look better than other lawyers who are also dealing with negativity.

This brings us to the abusive client. In a perfect world, I would tell you "Life is too short, get rid of them." But it is not a perfect world. Do your best to cope with them as long as you can. Seek guidance and counsel from a mentor. It does not usually end well but you will be glad they are gone eventually. Did I mention "Life is too short?"

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

Hold your ground, but don't let them make you a difficult person. Try to ferret out WHY they are difficult and see if knowing that helps you counter the difficulties with reasonable solutions.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

Patience and counting to ten before responding.

Judge Kyle Hawthorne – Judge of the 85th Judicial District Court, Brazos County

Do not get mad (or at least don't show it if you are) or respond in kind. In other words, think before you hit "send." A lawyer can be firm in his or her position without getting personal. Make sure your position makes common sense. Do not hesitate to rethink your position if you realize your foundation is weak; but, if you are right, maintain your position in a professional manner.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

As far as difficult clients go, understand why the client is difficult. If the client is difficult because of the stress and the worry and the pressure of the situation that he or she finds himself in, there's a certain approach for that that requires you to, for want of a better term, just have a good bedside manner. If the client is difficult because of some personality disorder, punt. Life's too short. Don't invest the emotional capital trying to help somebody that you're not going to be able to help, because a client has to be able to help himself first.

With regard to difficult opposing counsel, the biggest lesson I've learned is probably something that I knew all along, which is that courtesy and an even-tempered approach to things work better than tit-for-tat retaliation. I learned it the hard way because a lot of my practice has turned out, especially in the second half of my career, to be cases where I'm from out of town and I'm a complete stranger in the courts. The louder they yell, the softer you respond. The ruder they become, the more polite and courteous you become. Not only does it work with judges, I've also seen it work tremendously well with juries.

Ricardo Cedillo – Shareholder, Davis Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc., San Antonio

Be patient. Do not lose your composure.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

First, identify the problem client *before* you accept representation. There are usually red flags, such as the potential client's record with other counsel, multiple litigation, and general reputation. Second, if you only learn that a client is "difficult" after you accept the representation, make certain you discuss all important strategic and tactical decisions with the client, and document the client's participation and acquiescence in those decisions. In the event of a bad result, you want evidence that your client was fully informed and participated in the critical decision-making. Third, as for "difficult" opposing counsel, ignore their antics and don't play their unprofessional game. Eventually they, or a court, will recognize who the real lawyer is and that will inure to your benefit.

David J. Beck – Partner, Beck Redden LLP, Houston

2. *What advice/tips do you have for a young attorney who is handling their first hearing? Trial? Deposition?*

In every hearing and trial, your credibility is on the line with the judge, and in trials, with the jury. As many lawyers as there are, judges still remember the good – and the bad. In most adversarial depositions, the witness has been warned not to say anything hurtful. The goal is to get the witness to tell the truth anyway.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Listen. Preparation and outline are great, but not if they get in the way of following up on what happens. Always answer the questions of the court, even if you think they are off the mark (and don't convey that impression if you do). In a hearing, don't overstate your position or case law and deal with your own weaknesses.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

As a first year lawyer I was sent to county court wearing a brand new poplin suit and I was standing near the probate judge when he spit tobacco all over my suit. He said, "Son, let that be a lesson to you. Never get between a judge and his spittoon." So first of all, perhaps I should pass that advice along. With regard to your first hearing, check with a partner or another associate, or someone who has been before that judge and find out all the idiosyncrasies of the court. Be prepared and be punctual. For trial, preparation is the key to begin with. If you have the luxury of taking a more experienced attorney with you, then use that option. If not, find time to watch all or parts of trial being held in that judge's court. I always try to be deferential and courteous to everyone in the courtroom if possible, particularly the judge. My first trial was a capital murder trial that I thought an older lawyer was going to try. I showed up and ended up putting on most of the witnesses and arguing the case. I do not recommend trial by fire for your first trial. I would recommend sitting in with more experienced lawyers in their trials so you get an idea of which direction the wet cow patties are flying in the court room. Very similar to trial, preparation is key to successful depositions. Make sure you are familiar with all of the rules dealing with depositions, particularly objections. Third, watch witnesses and listen to their answer. If you have a list of prepared questions, do not read them by rote without analyzing their answers, or lack of. It's amazing what you pick up in facial expressions, body language, and non-responsive answers. Make sure you follow up on your questions and not let anything left hanging. I would recommend the same thing with depositions as with trial. Pick the most experienced lawyer in your firm and go to depositions with them. In both depositions and trial, a lawyer will have to rely on their training and experience.

Frank L. Branson – Law Office of Frank Branson, Dallas

You must be prepared and know your case intimately. Again, I think that hard work on the matter before the event will go a long way in demonstrating your competency before all parties and persons involved. I am not a great fan of “theatrics” or “drama” in legal dealings. I prefer the demonstration of a command of the facts of the case and the law which applies to those facts.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

Be prepared. It’s really that simple. Practice your presentation. Run your arguments by a fellow associate. I like to use Power Point presentations however, even if you don’t actually use them in your argument, the fact that you took the time to prepare and simplify your argument is very helpful. Always prepare an outline for a deposition. And you can always add to your questions as needed.

George Bramblett Jr. – Senior Counsel, Haynes and Boone, Dallas

IMITATE and then OWN IT! Here is what I mean. Find others who have been great at what you are about to do, and imitate what they have done, but not by losing your own personality and strengths. Ultimately, being genuine is one of the most important traits you carry into every trial and hearing. SO you want to learn from others, but make it personal in how you do it.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

(1) Preparation, Preparation, Preparation; (2) Do not script too much – be alert to surprise developments and listen carefully; (3) Be true to yourself; and (4) Always maintain your composure.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

Seek advice from senior lawyers if applicable and be fully prepared. This includes all phases of litigation, first hearings, depositions, pre-trial conferences, and trials.

Tom Morris – Shareholder, Underwood Law Firm, P.C., Amarillo

First, be prepared. There is no substitute for preparation.

Hearing: I think making your best points succinctly and quickly is more important than covering the waterfront and trying to make too many points in a short time.

Deposition: You probably will have an outline or a list of questions. The biggest failing I have seen in inexperienced lawyers is that they don't listen to the witness and analyze what the witness is saying and then frame the next questions based on the answers. There is a great tendency to focus on your questions or outline and ignore leads that the witness gives you in the answers. It is important that you not be a slave to an outline or list of questions.

Trial: Be yourself. Be natural. Be sincere. Be courteous (don't jump on a witness until the witness has made the jury, the court and everyone listening realize that the witness is being evasive or is waffling about the truth or is being very self serving.) Juries and judges generally like and respect courteous lawyers and do not consider them weak or ineffective. Above all, remember that you are selling a story (your case) and not yourself.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

Be prepared. Know the law. Know the facts.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

3. *What is the biggest mistake you see young attorneys make in their first 5 years of practice or what was your biggest mistake in your first 5 years of practice?*

Losing credibility. Your word is your bond.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

Generally, I think the biggest mistake young lawyers make is in not trusting themselves. As an example, I think young lawyers tend to read too much from prepared materials in court. They go to a hearing, after working all night and preparing a brilliant argument, and they argue their position by reading it off of a piece of paper. In trials, whether it's an opening statement, witness examination, it's never good to be tied to an outline. You have to be flexible enough to listen to the question or adapt to the situation, and respond on your feet.

I was forced into becoming a good listener. I started my formal education not knowing how to read the English language. I'd ask the teacher to explain something to me and I knew that I better listen really hard, because this is my one chance to get it – nobody in my family could read English at that point, so if I was going to learn it, I had to remember what somebody told me. Through that I think I developed an ability to listen and react. It's an important skill because a witness may be telling you things that are terrific, but you have to listen to be able to respond. If you just go to the next question on your outline, you may have wasted a great opportunity.

That's not to say I don't prepare outlines – I prepare several outlines. But I walk into Court or a deposition with a sheet of paper folded into three sections so that you essentially get six pages. It fits in your pocket really easy. There's been a ton of work done, but it gets distilled to bullets that I can put in my handwriting, and 90 percent of the time, I don't even take it out. Being tied to an outline can get in the way of your common sense and your judgment. And that's really what the client's paying you for, is your judgment.

Ricardo Cedillo – Shareholder, Davis Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc., San Antonio

You cannot go down every rabbit trail. Brief and argue only points that matter.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

Be prepared. Yes, I've said it again. After a couple of years (and success), don't let up on your preparation. And most of all, don't underestimate your opposition. That's a huge mistake.

George Bramblett Jr. – Senior Counsel, Haynes and Boone, Dallas

Whether you are a trial lawyer or a transactional lawyer, do not object or be obstreperous merely because you can. The fact that you exercise reason and restraint is not a sign of weakness.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

Young lawyers make a mistake by being impressed by more experienced lawyers who are overly aggressive or who practice “sharp” lawyering. That can lead to their following the wrong example of how to be a professional, ethical, yet competent attorney. Following the wrong example can lead to poor results for clients, a poor reputation in the profession, and can color the entire profession in the public mind.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Let’s start with my biggest mistake. I was 25 and arrogant. It had not yet occurred to me that I was not destined for the United States Supreme Court. And I had not yet been hit over the head with a 2x4 often enough to have a better perspective about my place as one of about 50,000 lawyers in Texas. This overly generous view of my own talents and importance caused me to be very difficult with staff. I was long disabused of my silliness in this regard but it was very painful one Friday afternoon when, in the absence of any senior lawyers that day, I was directed to prepare and seize a vessel (which I had never done) and had to find someone on staff to, in essence, bail me out. I could give you names more than 30 years later if that tells you how tough the lesson I learned was and how I did in fact learn it! Arrogance is a problem but laziness and complacency is more deadly to a career.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

They lose the forest for the trees. The trees are important, and details should be known and understood fully. But one cannot lose sight of the big picture as well. Most young lawyers are great at details or they wouldn’t have made it through law school, but the big picture is what ultimately drives the results.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

Not admitting you don’t know everything and not talking like a person but sounding like a law dictionary.

Judge Kyle Hawthorne – Judge of the 85th Judicial District Court, Brazos County

The two biggest mistakes I've seen in inexperienced lawyers make is posturing and lack of preparation. Inexperienced lawyers are too prone to take indefensible positions, undercutting the validity of stronger positions. And inexperienced lawyers are too likely to think inspiration will come when the moment arises, rather to prepare extensively for every contingency. If there is one essential to a good hearing, or trial, or argument, it's preparation.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Not evaluating the merits of the dispute which can cause a client to expect unrealistic results. Making the client's problems his or her personal problems. Do not take on more work than he can reasonably accomplish. Accepting the client's version of the facts as absolute. Accepting any client that comes into his office.

Dee Miller and Oth Miller – Partners, Miller Gutzmer Attorneys at Law, Amarillo

In a trial, feeling that you have to cross examine every witness on every point of the witness's testimony. Frequently, "No questions" is the best cross examination. The worst thing you can do is to give the witness a chance, under the guise of cross examination, a chance to repeat damaging testimony against your client. Your cross examination should only be on that part of the testimony where you can score some points.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

Well I think probably the biggest mistake I made, and I see young attorneys making now, is I took myself very seriously. . . . Sometimes I became too focused on the small issues, and I forgot the big picture. You have always got to be able to stand back, look at the big picture and see that things that look debilitating at the time are not in the long run that important. We used to tell people that trying a lawsuit is like doing surgery. You're going to have a client that's going to get cut up, you are going to have capillaries cut; you just don't want a major artery cut where your client bleeds to death. In almost every trial when you put up a witness for cross, there will be bleeding from the capillaries. As long as that's all you get you are generally OK. But as a young attorney, sometimes it's hard to distinguish between what's a minor bleed and what's a major bleed.

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

4. *What qualities do the best attorneys you know share?*

Accommodating, fair, not petty, and trustful.

J.A. “Tony” Canales – Partner, Canales & Simonson, P.C., Corpus Christi

Flexibility—the trial process is not completely predictable. Organized. Articulate. They know their case. Engaging. Not rude. They don’t waste the time of the court/jury.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

They are hard workers, knowledgeable about their area of practice, trustworthy and dependable, and friendly.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

The best lawyers I know have a compelling desire to win within the rules and understand that preparation is key. They have expansive imagination during discovery and preparation of demonstrative evidence, and during trials. The best lawyers I know believe they are practicing law because they believe they can help their clients. They are hard to put in a corner. They have the imagination, tenacity and skills to make most rooms round.

Frank L. Branson – Law Office of Frank Branson, Dallas

Good attorneys have a strong work ethic and like what they do. They are able to learn from their mistakes. To learn from your mistakes you have to admit your mistakes. If you get an attorney that’s always right, in the long run they generally do not become an “A” attorney. We’re all going to make mistakes. You have to admit them and learn from them and move on.

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

In my view the best attorneys are diligent in staying current on the law, ethical and courteous to all, including opposing counsel and parties, and they participate in bar and pro bono activities.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

The best lawyers are not always the most glib or the best-spoken. They are the best-prepared. They are willing to consider all the issues—and have generally. And they are prepared to address their weak points and their strengths.

The best lawyers have a plan and can adapt when necessary. The best lawyers tell a story and the story is important. The best lawyers listen.

The best lawyers have another quality that must be noted: they have an appreciation and respect for risk. In other words, they understand and accept the risks of their cases.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

The ability to work hard is number one. Hard work is irreplaceable. Also the best attorneys genuinely care about things that matter (people, family, life). Somehow those two manage to coexist in the really successful lawyers.

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

Compassion and having people skills.

Judge Kyle Hawthorne – Judge of the 85th Judicial District Court, Brazos County

(1) Ability to listen; (2) Ability to facilitate and work with others; (3) Integrity – one's internal compass ensures one's integrity; (4) Dedication – work hard and be prepared; (5) Vision – ability to see trends in the practice; and (6) Adaptability – open to change.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

The one quality the best lawyers share is preparation. There is simply no substitute for knowing a matter – a fact pattern, a record, the case law – inside out. A close second is communication – to judges and juries alike. Judges are busy enough that they want lawyers to cut to the chase. There's nothing worse than a brief written as a whodunit, so that you can't figure out what's happening till the end. From the moment a lawyer begins to speak or write, it should be apparent to all, in the clearest terms – not table-thumping rhetoric and not beating around the bush – that the client is right and the opponent is wrong.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

The best lawyers are always prepared. They are prepared on matters large and small. So if something new comes up, they are able to deal with any contingency. The best lawyers are fearless. They understand the process and have confidence; they can accept a loss or set back without fear. It's a great asset in a trial lawyer.

George Bramblett Jr. – Senior Counsel, Haynes and Boone, Dallas

The best attorneys I know, whether trial or transactional, combine preparation, professionalism, common sense and the ability to keep their eyes on the actual goal. They know what is important and necessary to their clients and what is merely window dressing or icing on the cake and they know how to reach that goal in a professional manner.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

It is a wonderful profession in its purity. The best lawyers share qualities of being ready and being human. By “being human,” I mean that a lawyer should not be a jerk for jerk’s sake. Some lawyers do things that are plain nasty, and it doesn’t get you anything. Stipulating to facts that you know the other side can prove is human nature.

Jim Coleman – Senior Counsel, Carrington Coleman, Dallas

True legal scholarship, total preparation, and professional courtesy. There is no place for Rambo tactics.

Tom Morris – Shareholder, Underwood Law Firm, P.C., Amarillo

Respect for their fellow attorneys and clients. Giving a part of their time and talents to helping the less fortunate who can not afford attorneys. Being a mentor to young attorneys and setting an example for fairness and good character.

Dee Miller and Oth Miller – Partners, Miller Gutzmer Attorneys at Law, Amarillo

The ability to practice law ethically, the ability to be persuasive in what they say, what they do, and the way they present the case and the ability to “cut to the chase” – or stick with what is important and not get lost in trivial.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

Integrity. Honesty. Know the law.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

CHAPTER 3:
LIFE LESSONS

LIFE LESSONS

In this chapter, we learn about the Legends' personal philosophies, approaches to finding a balance between work and family, personal achievements, and legal heroes. Enjoy!

1. What is your personal philosophy or approach to the practice of law?

Use good judgment. The legal basis for approaching a problem is the starting point. But applying good common sense to a problem and understanding the goal and how to reach it makes a lawyer effective.

Lynne Liberato – Partner, Haynes and Boone, Houston

Be prepared, be thorough, don't do anything you wouldn't be willing to tell the person you most admire, and give it your best effort every time.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

Lawyers have the privilege to provide for their families while making a difference both in the individual lives of their clients and society as a whole. Conduct yourself honorably in your practice. Represent your clients ethically, diligently and with respect, and treat opposing parties ethically and respectfully.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Remember your oath, work hard, and do your best, every day. Most jobs don't require you to swear to do your best. Practicing law does.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

I love and respect our profession. I endeavor to demonstrate my reverence for the profession in all I do, every day.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

Work hard, do a good job, and GO HOME!

Mark Lanier – Partner, The Lanier Law Firm, Houston

Prepare early, prepare often.

Judge Kyle Hawthorne – Judge of the 85th Judicial District Court, Brazos County

Be fair to all parties; Attempt to settle disputes.

J.A. "Tony" Canales – Partner, Canales & Simonson, P.C., Corpus Christi

(1) Understand your client's goals. (2) Formulate a strategy to achieve those goals. (3) Be prepared for all contingencies. (4) Achieve that goal in the most cost effective manner. Remember despite all the professional platitudes we espouse, we are in a service business.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

The joy of being a lawyer is that you are doing something significant. You are resolving a dispute and doing so in a civilized way.

Jim Coleman – Senior Counsel, Carrington Coleman, Dallas

Love the law, respect the courts, use professional courtesy, and enjoy professional fellowship.

Tom Morris – Shareholder, Underwood Law Firm, P.C., Amarillo

Be kind, compassionate and understanding to all parties but respect one's client to the fullest extent of the law.

Dee Miller and Oth Miller – Partners, Miller Gutzmer Attorneys at Law, Amarillo

I am so humbled to have the opportunity be a part of a proud and great profession. I think of the great lawyers who have gone before me and those I have had the pleasure to practice with, and just hope that those who come behind can have such a wonderful experience.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

2. What do you do to find the balance between work and personal life?

Good luck. I'm not very good about this. Everyone is different. But I really love what I do.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

I work when I go the place where I do my work. When I leave the place that I do my work, I do things that are not work-related. This is not a hard thing to do, and I can assure you that not being cognizant of when you need to stop working will cause you to work all of the time and lose the things which are really important in your life—your family, your friends, and your sanity.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

Everyone has a different way of doing that. I'm always reading a book. Usually the book has zero to do with the law. It's either a novel or history. I exercise 5 or 6 days a week. I take trips with my family. My kids are up and gone now, but we try to get together and vacation together 2 or 3 times a year. Every evening, I try to spend special time with my wife. We eat dinner together every night. We talk every night. And I try to stay in touch with old friends and family members that are important to me. That's my anchor.

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

I don't get much sleep! I just try to prioritize in both arenas and integrate them as best I can.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

Balancing the practice of law and a family is difficult at best. In both instances others depend on you and look to you to fulfill commitments. It seems to me that each lawyer and his or her family, particularly their spouse, have to reach some type of agreement about the balance and how to handle the demands on a lawyer's time. Absent that agreement there will be constant friction between a lawyer and his or her family because the time of lawyers is subject to matters completely out of the lawyer's control, such as judges and dockets, and other deadlines which simply cannot be avoided without significant and sometimes disastrous consequences.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

I don't compartmentalize. I try to remember that both affect each other.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

Accept that you practice life to have a personal life and your law practice fuels your personal life.

Judge Kyle Hawthorne – Judge of the 85th Judicial District Court, Brazos County

I think the practice of law is something that is really hard to separate from everything else you have going on in your life. There may be some jobs where you put your eight hours a day, and then you go home, and you succeed in leaving all your work at work. Being a lawyer is not something that I can easily turn off. And in my case, I have never wanted to.

I don't think you need to separate or look for a separation. Technology makes it easier to work remotely, but you still have to make time to devote your undivided attention to your family. If you want to balance your personal life and work life, get up early. When your day gets started at 4:00 o'clock a.m., you can get a lot done. You can get it all done. That may not be what young lawyers would want to hear, but it is a solution, and it has always been my solution.

Ricardo Cedillo – Shareholder, Davis Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc., San Antonio

I disagree with the premise of this question. Recognizing how hard it is to be a lawyer and the commitment it takes is the first step to finding internal harmony, if not balance. Work hard when you are young and become as good as you can—be indispensable to senior lawyers and your clients. You can do this in a relatively short time and, once you do, you have more control over your life. And, the more control you have over your time and how you spend it leads to professional and personal satisfaction, which are inextricably intertwined.

Lynne Liberato – Partner, Haynes and Boone, Houston

This is perhaps the biggest challenge that lawyers face. Can you maintain an active practice and spend quality time with friends and family? I never mastered this dilemma, but the best advice I received on this topic was: If you are at the office and are not being productive, do not waste that time muddling around, go home and accomplish something good for your spouse and kids.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

Go to work early so you can have the late afternoon and evening to participate with your wife and children in their activities.

I also put a picture of my wife and children on the corner of my desk to remind me that I not only have an obligation to my profession and to my client but also to those who love me dearly.

Dee Miller and Oth Miller – Partners, Miller Gutzmer Attorneys at Law, Amarillo

I have always had time for my family and things I enjoyed doing outside the practice of law. The old saying that “the busiest people have the most time” seems true to me. There were times when my work infringed on my family or my pleasure, but mostly I have had the good fortune to get my work done and be able to have an enjoyable family and personal life. If there was a magic formula which allowed me to do that I do not know what it was.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

Read books outside the law.

J.Q. Warnick, Jr. – retired, former U.S. Magistrate Judge, Northern District of Texas, Lubbock

3. *Who are your legal heroes and why?*

My legal heroes/heroines are those hard-working individuals who get up every day and head into the office to do the work of helping families, small businesses, and good hard-working people in whatever areas of the law they practice. These attorneys are not Top Ten Lawyers, not featured in the legal publications, not making presentations at legal conferences, or making million dollar recoveries, but they simply “do the work”.

Gary R. Terrell – Partner, Key & Terrell, LLP, Lubbock

I don't have particular ‘legal heroes’ because so many persons in the legal profession and judiciary have been trailblazers in establishing and preserving the Rule of Law. One that immediately comes to mind is John Adams for his defense of British soldiers charged with crimes for shooting colonists in the episode termed “The Boston Massacre” just before the American Revolution. His actions cost him a great deal personally and professionally, but he apparently never regretted his decision because his representation of the soldiers was the right thing to do.

Justice Phil Johnson – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

My legal heroes are those that successfully do what they love, and nothing else.

Gaines West – Partner, West, Webb, Allbritton & Gentry, LLP, College Station

Jack Pope, who was my first employer as a lawyer. I was his briefing clerk. He was a great judge. Some people are really fitted to be a judge, and he is one of those people. He cared about the system. He always wanted to make the system work better. He took what he did very seriously. He wanted the system to be effective for everyone—poor people, rich people. He tried to simplify how cases are tried. And he was persistent over a long period of time. He stuck with it and accomplished a whole lot.

Page Keeton and I argued and briefed two court of appeals cases together. Like Judge Pope, he was a happy warrior. He really enjoyed what he did. Keeton just loved the law. He would talk about it constantly. His breadth of knowledge, especially of tort law was remarkable. He was just a lot of fun to be around.

Frank Douglass at my law firm. I was very fortunate because he mentored me in how to manage a firm. I tried three oil and gas cases with Frank to verdict. I would do the simple fact part, and he would do the experts, and the more technical part. Frank was also a happy warrior. He enjoyed practicing law. He had a tremendous work ethic.

What all of these men had in common is that they took what they did very seriously but did not take themselves seriously. They could make fun of themselves; they had a sense of humor. So I was just lucky to be exposed to all three. And I think young lawyers, to the degree they can get a mentor, should get a mentor. And if they have questions and do not know what to do, they should go to that person and ask questions. I've done that with Jack Pope my whole legal career. And it has been invaluable for me.

Steve McConnico – Partner, Scott Douglass & McConnico, LLP, Austin

While I have many lawyers who I have learned so much from and admire, the true legal heroes are those who created our system of justice and those who fought for civil rights. Of those I have known, Judge David Hittner and Chief Justice Frank Evans have meant the most to me. Both gave me great opportunities and were mentors when there were no women senior to me in the legal profession. Allie Levy was my colleague and confidant for many years and boosted my practice and morale when I needed it most. And Anna Babin, president of the United Way, reminded me of the goodness in the world and kept my cynicism in check.

Lynne Liberato – Partner, Haynes and Boone, Houston

Jim Coleman, Fletcher Yarbrough, Judge Barefoot Sanders, Judge Pat Higginbotham, Mike Tiger, and Morris Harrell.

Judge Barbara M.G. Lynn – U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas, Dallas

I had several mentors at our firm from whom I learned greatly: O.J. Weber, John Rienstra, John Bell, and Jim Weber. All helped me in different ways on my path. I had a good friend, David Bryan, who gave solid counsel on the practice. All are gone now. My true legal hero though is Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most remarkable lawyer of his time and certainly one of our greatest leaders, if not the greatest. He loved the law by the way.

Bob Black – Shareholder, Mehaffy Weber, Beaumont

I have a long list of legal heroes. One is Fred Bartlit – I think he is one of the greatest trial lawyers in the history of America, for so many reasons. Generally, I admire his approach, his preparation, his ability to think on his feet, and his trial skills. It is surprising how many people consider themselves trial lawyers, but they have not mastered the rules of evidence. Fred is a master at the rules of evidence. He knows how to approach a witness better than anyone I have ever seen. And by that, I mean that Fred will never truly beat up a witness until he has the jury wanting him to beat up the witness. He develops it slowly enough and gets good cause so that in the end, the jury's saying, "Yeah, that guy got what he deserved," as opposed to "Man, I feel sorry for that witness." He knows when to stop and not belabor a point – juries always say that they don't understand why a lawyer went on and on. Fred has a really good approach and balance. Harry Reasoner, another legal hero, has those some qualities. Another legal hero is Jack Paul Leon. He embodied so much of what I think a lawyer ought to be. Other lawyers I've tried cases with that I admire and I try to emulate would include Don Flexner and Lee Godfrey. They are all great human beings and terrific lawyers. As a young lawyer, identify your legal heroes and strive to duplicate their best qualities.

Ricardo Cedillo – Shareholder, Davis Cedillo & Mendoza, Inc., San Antonio

(1) Marshall Boykin – As an attorney his pursuit of excellence was exemplary and his benevolence to humanity was evident in his legal practice and in his everyday life.

(2) I love Justice Breyer. I have enjoyed listening to him, reading his book and respect his knowledge and service to our legal system.

Lucinda Garcia – Partner, Wood, Boykin & Wolter, Corpus Christi

I have hundreds, if not thousands, of legal heroes and they exist throughout our State and in every segment of our Bar. They are the men and women who take the time to mentor younger lawyers. They teach at State Bar conferences. They lead youth groups and head up the local Chamber of Commerce or Heart Fund. They represent the needy without any expectation of payment. Their word is their bond and you can trust them to do the right thing even when no one is watching.

Judge Andrew S. Hanen – U.S. District Judge, Southern District of Texas, Brownsville

Henry Strasburger was one of if not the best trial lawyer I have ever seen. You could see him through his window just sitting and smoking a cigarette. When asked what he was doing, he said he was “trying the case.” I also really liked him as a person. One story: A colleague followed Henry into his office after hours and noticed a small package drop from the door. He later asked what was in the package. After making him promise not to tell, Henry told the story of winning a wrongful death case involving a traffic accident. Henry later learned that the widow of the deceased was hoping to send her child to college with the winnings. In the box was a set of silver wings from the boy, who became a pilot in the service after Henry paid his way to college.

Jim Coleman – Senior Counsel, Carrington Coleman, Dallas

My first legal heroes would be some of the law faculty at UT, including Dean Charles McCormick, Professor Page Keeton, Professor George Stumburg, and Professor A.W. Walker, Jr., because of their outstanding scholarship and teaching ability. Among judges, I would include Chief Justice Calvert, Chief Justice Joe Greenhill, and Chief Justice Nathan Hecht. All of them were outstanding scholars of the law and provided great leadership on the Texas Supreme Court.

Tom Morris – Shareholder, Underwood Law Firm, P.C., Amarillo

I was fortunate to have a firm that was full of legal heroes: Leon Jaworski, first and foremost. I would say some of the people I worked with, Jim Sales, for example, was the epitome of a lawyer... David Beck, Charles Boston. Boston was my immediate mentor at the firm, and he was just a fantastic lawyer and of unquestionable character... As for what set them apart, I'd say the very high standards that they had for how lawyers are to practice law, how lawyers treat other people, how lawyers conduct themselves in the courtroom, how they treat opposing counsel with professionalism. Just a high standard of ethical conduct.

Terry O. Tottenham – retired partner, Norton Rose Fulbright, Austin

Heros are not difficult to find in the legal profession. They are the men and women who take on the difficult and controversial challenges of their time and accept the responsibility to assure that justice is done.

Dee Miller and Oth Miller – Partners, Miller Gutzmer Attorneys at Law, Amarillo

Allen Crowley, my mentor. He was a great trial lawyer, president of the State Bar of Texas and active in the community. He was a great inspiration and role model for me.

Kleber Miller – Senior Counsel, Shannon, Gracey, Ratliff & Miller, LLP, Fort Worth

Chief Justice Pope, Chief Justice Greenhill, and Chief Justice Calvert, because of their great leadership of the Supreme Court of Texas. Judge Roger Robb, for whom I clerked. Stanley Neely, who taught me to practice law. Justice Antonin Scalia, for his wit, eloquence, and enormous contributions to the law.

Chief Justice Nathan Hecht – Texas Supreme Court, Austin

I have two lawyers that I admire immensely. The first is John Adams, who in 1770 defended British soldiers after the Boston Massacre when anti-British feelings were at their peak. Nevertheless, he defended them because he believed in the right to effective counsel for the accused. The second is my former law partner, Leon Jaworski, who as Watergate Prosecutor, clashed with then-President Richard Nixon over the tapes of conversations recorded by the President. After Jaworski successfully argued before the U.S. Supreme Court that Nixon was required to turn over the tapes, on August 9, 1974, President Nixon resigned. Jaworski established the principle that not even a President is above the law.

David J. Beck – Partner, Beck Redden LLP, Houston

