Steve Benesh can be reached by email at steve.benesh@texasbar.com.

**ABOVE:** Some of Steve's finds along the creek.
PHOTO COURTESY OF STEVE BENESH

# *Making a Point to* LEAVE A LEGACY

**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, MY WIFE, JENNIFER, AND I DECIDED TO SELL OUR HOME IN THE CITY AND MOVE OUR FAMILY TO A SMALL TOWN.** Ultimately, we bought a house on acreage near Dripping Springs, where we live today. One of the things that attracted me to our property was the little spring-fed creek that runs through it. Soon after moving, I discovered that I wasn't the first person to be attracted to the creek; I began finding arrowheads along its banks. (More accurately, they are "points" because they predate the bow and arrow in Texas.) From the abundance and variety of the arrowheads I have found, it is clear that Native Americans camped and hunted along the banks of the creek for thousands of years.

One of the things that is remarkable about these arrowheads is how little I know about their makers. The "historic" era in Texas began with the arrival of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca and his companions in 1528, and the Comanches and other Plains Indian tribes didn't cross the Red River into Texas until well after that. But the people who crafted the arrowheads along the creek lived and died thousands of years before the arrival of Cabeza de Vaca and the Comanches … and no one knows what they called themselves, what languages they spoke, what their familial and societal patterns were, and what religious beliefs they held. All I know about these first people are the beautifully crafted artifacts they left behind. They are a gift, a legacy, handed down through the millennia by past stewards of this land to me, its current steward.

As I find and marvel at these "points," I sometimes wonder how I will be remembered, what the legacy of my life will be, and what I will leave behind that will give people pause to consider their own life's purpose. Likewise, as attorneys, I think it behooves each of us to give thought to what we will leave behind for the betterment of our profession, for those who will practice law after us. Surely our legacies should be more than satisfied clients and successful trials and transactions.

I believe there are several things we can do to cement a lasting legacy of our legal careers. First and foremost, we can actively seek out and mentor less-experienced attorneys. Lawyers emerge from law schools knowing the law, or where to find it, but knowing little about the practice of law, the obligations of professionalism, dealing with clients, life-work balance, and service to the public and the profession. And it is up to us, each of us, to teach them!

In addition to making a conscious effort to mentor the lawyers with whom we work every day, there are many ways to find someone to mentor, or to be mentored. A number of local bar associations and affinity bars around the state offer mentorship opportunities and programs. Several Texas law schools pair alumni with recent law graduates. American Inns of Court chapters are located in 13 Texas cities, with mentorship a centerpiece of their mission. In addition, the Texas Young Lawyers Association has produced an outstanding series of *Ten Minute Mentor* podcast segments, which can be found at tyla.org/resource/ten-minute-mentor/.

Beyond mentorship, each of us should look for opportunities to make a lasting impact in the lives of others. We can dedicate our time to providing free legal services to the underserved through pro bono work. We can advocate for important legal issues and changes that benefit our profession and society. We can support legal causes and contribute to legal funds that are aligned with our priorities in the law.

However we choose to give of our time and legal talents, we should make it a point to leave a legacy behind for other attorneys. As William James said, "The great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it."

**STEVE BENESH**
President, 2024-2025
State Bar of Texas