



Doug Alexander with his Sector 9 at his office in downtown Austin.

URBAN SURFER

How an Austin attorney's oceanic pastime translates to land.

WITH FOUR WHEELS AND A PLANK SEPARATING HIM FROM THE PAVEMENT, DOUG ALEXANDER ZIPS AROUND AUSTIN, carving paths and enjoying the freedom that comes with his ride—a 5-foot-4-inch Sector 9 skateboard. “Curiously enough, it’s almost like flying. It’s this wonderful sensation,” said Alexander, an appellate attorney with Alexander Dubose Jefferson & Townsend.

Alexander’s activity is a throwback to his youth, when he was an avid surfer in Santa Barbara, Calif. He started the water sport at age eight, learning balance and technique on a finless foam “surfie.” The California native was a regular at the beach until 1975, when he swapped his time on the Pacific coast for the Texas life, eventually

studying at the University of Houston Law Center. While he tried to surf the Lone Star State shores on occasion, he found the conditions to be less than desirable. “The Texas coast is a little bit more challenging in terms of finding good waves,” laughed Alexander.

After graduating and obtaining law licenses in both California and Texas, jobs and family took him back and forth between the two locations—at one point allowing him to hit the California beaches before heading to the office each day. But when he made a permanent move to Austin in 1983, he was far from the ocean and the opportunity to surf.

Years later, Alexander’s wife, Stacy, bought him a skateboard to fill that void, and he quickly transitioned from riding waves to cruising the streets. Alexander says skateboarding and surfing are similar, especially because he has a long skateboard, created for gliding from place to place.

He makes it a priority to schedule some weekend hours on the asphalt, frequenting a favorite tree-lined trail in his former Tarrytown neighborhood. “It goes down a hill, levels out, and then goes up another hill,” he explained. “I’ll do that for an hour. It’s just a back and forth, back and forth, back and forth type of deal. It has that particular configuration that really works.”

Alexander’s skateboarding hasn’t always been just for fun. For around seven years, he made the choice to go carless, depending on buses, bikes, car2go—and his board—for mobility, including commutes between his home and downtown office, about 3.5 miles apart. “Backpack on my back, helmet on my head, I just charted this curious course,” he said.

While Alexander doesn’t do trick riding, traveling to work by board proved to be a kick. His preferred route included a fairly treacherous jaunt under a bridge on Lamar Blvd., where, he says, timing was everything. Alexander would monitor the stoplight, leap on his skateboard, and fly down the hill, just far enough in front of traffic to jump back on the sidewalk before the traveling vehicles caught up with him. “My wife gave me the skateboard,” he said. “But once I started commuting to work, she began to second-guess the wisdom of that decision. She thought that was absolutely crazy. But it was just too much fun.”

The thrill-seeker has not given up his surfing roots completely; he skimboards when he visits Santa Barbara and enjoys talking about his aquatic adventures. And while the move to a new neighborhood and acquisition of a car have changed Alexander’s needs for, and his style of, skateboarding, he still finds it to be just as amusing.

“It’s instant gratification,” said Alexander. “It allows me to have similar recreation at age 60 that I had when I was eight.” *HANNAH KIDDOO*

King of the Garden

How an East Texas lawyer's love of tomatoes has grown—and thrived—for nearly 20 years.

WHEN T. JOHN WARD WAS A LITTLE BOY GROWING UP ON HIS FAMILY'S FARM IN BAILEY, he could often be found at the garden, plucking big red tomatoes off the vine and taking bites of them as if he were eating a cheeseburger. He was known to devour enough tomatoes to give him a rash. When asked why he likes them so much, Ward said, "It's part of my DNA."

Ward, a former U.S. district judge, is a partner in the Longview firm of Ward & Smith. While his small hometown might be dwindling toward nonexistence (with a recent population count of just under 300), Ward's love for tomatoes is as present as the sun that helps dozens of plants thrive on his East Texas property each summer. He started growing them about 20 years ago and in the seasons since, has succeeded at producing reliably plentiful and tasty crops—a somewhat difficult feat that many vegetable gardeners aspire to achieve.

The first step is determining when to put the tomato plants—which are annuals—into the soil. This year, Ward sought to avoid any unexpected late freezes from the lingering winter and broke ground the first weekend of April. He also has several plants in containers so that he can start them early and move them in and out of the greenhouse if the temperatures are still fluctuating, "to get the jump on most people." When the weather gets warmer, he shifts to his large garden.



As most experienced tomato growers know, it is important to have well-fertilized soil. To accomplish this, Ward mixes a compost material with the native dirt on his property. This year he had 12 yards of compost delivered. After he plants them, Ward makes sure the tomatoes—as well as his squash, cucumbers, peppers, corn, cantaloupes, blackberries (for the grandchildren), eggplant, onions, spinach, and lettuce—get enough water from soaker hoses. "When you've got so many plants, hand watering is not a really good option," he said. Ward also tries different fertilizers and soil additives but maintains that gardening success is "just a matter of getting out there and doing it."

Ward typically lets the tomatoes ripen on the vine as long as possible to get the boldest and best flavor. With the harvested fruits, he'll make fresh salsa or a batch of gazpacho, which is one of his favorite tomato dishes to prepare. Although he used to sell up to 100 pounds of juicy red globes to a private club, nowadays, Ward gives most of his tomato harvest to family and friends, such as Austin lawyer Don Davis and Houston lawyer Joe Jamail to whom Ward brings a big box of tomatoes each year when in town for the State Bar of Texas Annual Meeting.

The number of tomato plants Ward has on his land varies from season to season. He's had up to 40 plants, and this year he has about 25. He grows a number of varieties, with his current favorite being the huge pink Brandywine heirloom, which has a sweet, tangy flavor. Later this summer, Ward will try out a heat-resistant variety called Solar Fire that he had little success with previously. "This year, I'll have a planned attack and plant that heat-loving tomato mid-June, and maybe I'll have tomatoes real late in the season," he said. "That'd be nice if it works." *LINDSAY STAFFORD MADER*

TEXAS PEOPLE



Robert L. Hobbs

*U.S. Attorney's Office,
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Appointed U.S. Marshal for the Eastern District of Texas by President Barack Obama.



Richard Alpert

*Tarrant County Criminal District
Attorney's Office, Fort Worth*

Appointed to the Texas Forensic Science Commission by Gov. Rick Perry.



Kathleen Weir

*Baker Botts,
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Selected as the 2014 Pro Bono Attorney of the Year by the Tahirih Justice Center.



John Cuellar

*Las Tres C's Inc.,
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Appointed chair of the Texas Aging and Disability Services Council by Gov. Rick Perry.