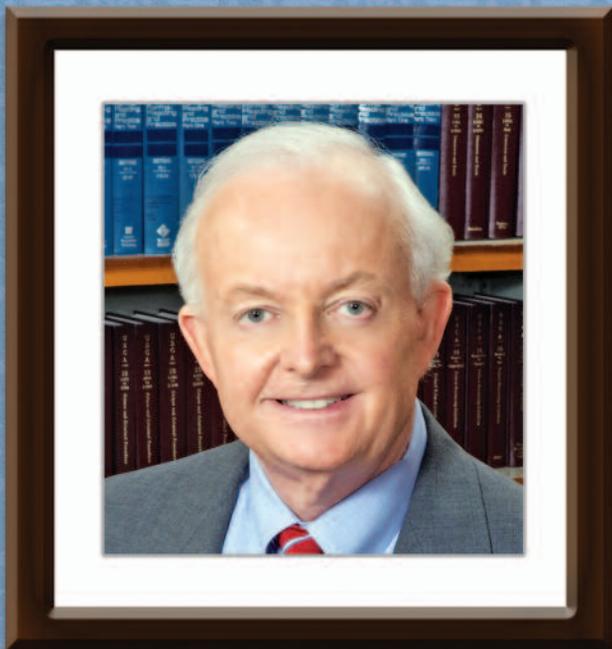


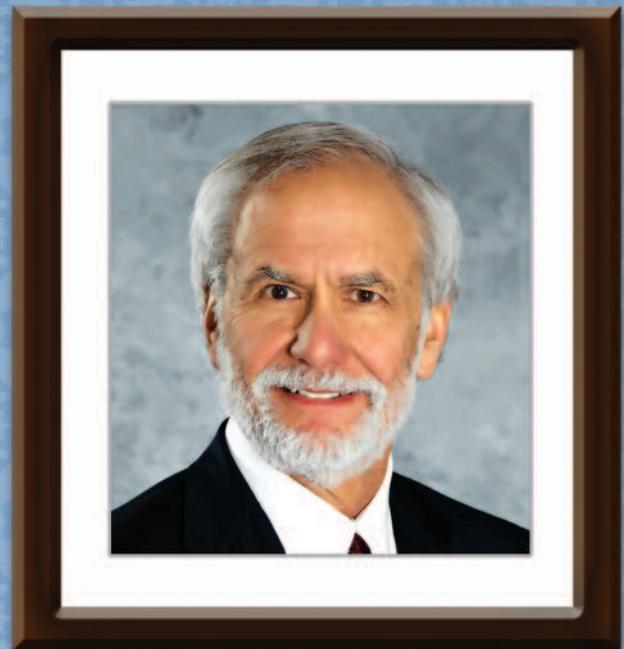
STATE BAR *of* TEXAS ELECTION 2011

President-elect Candidates Discuss the Issues



Guy Choate

San Angelo



Buck Files

Tyler

The *Texas Bar Journal* asked 2011-2012 State Bar of Texas president-elect candidates **Guy Choate** of San Angelo and **F.R. "Buck" Files, Jr.** of Tyler to share their perspectives on issues facing the State Bar of Texas. (Biographical information was included in the March issue, p. 196, and is available at www.texasbar.com.) Votes for the State Bar of Texas president-elect can be cast by paper ballot or online from April 1 to May 2, 2011. The deadline to cast ballots is May 2, 2011, at 5 p.m. CST.

Why do you want to serve as president of the State Bar of Texas?

CHOATE Lawyers have stories to tell and the president of the State Bar of Texas is the best person to tell their stories. Every day, lawyers do things big and small that provide justice to Texas citizens. Lawyers are not the problem with this country; we are one of the principal reasons we have the freedoms we enjoy. I look at the law like I look at my country. When right, to be kept right; when wrong, to be put right.

We will find ourselves faced with challenges we didn't seek and can't control. The members of the Bar recently rejected a referendum put forward by the Texas Supreme Court. Discord and divisions arose that we will avoid in the future. We can eliminate those divisions and restore trust in the Bar. Attorneys are entitled to know that their Bar works for them and with them. They are entitled to understand not only the decisions of its leadership, but also the decision-making process. They are entitled to, and will receive, an absolutely open, responsive, and transparent Bar association.

I want to encourage the broadest possible cross-section of lawyers to participate in Bar functions and self-government. We have an integrated Bar. That simply means you must belong or you can't practice law. The alternative is a legal community that is controlled by the whims of politics and the Legislature or some appointed board. I have seen that in other states and we do *not* want to go there. We can govern ourselves, but with that privilege comes the responsibility to make our Bar responsive to attorneys and the public.

FILES When you love the profession and have been active in the programs of the State Bar, the opportunity to serve as president presents the ultimate challenge for additional service at a higher level. As president, I would be committed, enthusiastic, and energetic. I believe that my experience as a practicing lawyer, an educator of lawyers, and an active volunteer in State Bar efforts has prepared me to understand the issues of concern to lawyers and to the workings of the organization. I appreciate the need for understanding differing perspectives and I value opportunities to help develop useful approaches and solutions in challenging situations.

Of the issues facing the legal profession, which three are most important to you and what role do you believe the State Bar should play in addressing them?

CHOATE For political and economic reasons, it is becoming more difficult for lawyers to earn a fair living. The Bar has taken steps toward assisting with employment opportunities and business development. It is time to get more involved.

Young lawyers just starting their careers and attorneys who find themselves in a situation where the economy or changes in the law have led to a loss of practice need to have a resource at the Bar to help transition back into a successful practice. Inexpensive or free legal research, supportive Bar sections, meaningful mentor programs, and networking with respect to legal opportunities must be crucial elements of the Bar's mission. When the economy takes a dive, legal fees and lawyers are in the first wave of cuts. New hires are slashed and longtime relationships severed. The Bar must consistently support the independence of legal representation and oppose efforts to remove professionalism from the practice. Replacing and outsourcing attorneys is a reality that exists; the Bar needs to monitor these practices carefully and oppose them when appropriate professional representation is challenged.

Attorneys must regain their rightful place in the American system of justice as defenders of our Constitution and system of government. We have been demonized for political reasons that have nothing to do with what most lawyers do every day to help their clients and make our system of government, laws, and commerce operate. America is successful because we are a country of laws where people can be confident that if they enter into a contract, there will be a way to enforce it if it is breached; if someone injures me, there will be a remedy for my loss; if I am accused of criminal conduct, I have a right to an attorney who can help me navigate areas I know nothing about. Defending and explaining these ideals is a crucial mission of the Bar.

The practice of law is demanding. It should not be painful and soul-killing. Depression, burnout, substance abuse, and despair are issues that affect a significant number of attorneys. When faced with these issues, the Bar should be proactive, knowledgeable, and understanding. We must offer a safe harbor for attorneys facing these issues that will allow recovery and rejuvenation without the stigma too often associated with the maladies of mental health issues. We need to establish methods to protect clients, while at the same time offer redemption for attorneys and a future in the practice of law. Some of the most selfless attorneys I know have made it their place in life to assist their fellow lawyers facing many of these issues. The Bar should walk arm-in-arm salvaging careers and lives.

FILES 1. *Making the State Bar more relevant for lawyers and improving and demonstrating its value for all practicing lawyers.* In every office that I have visited while campaigning, I have heard concerns voiced about the recent referendum — and the comments are not positive. The State Bar needs to respond to these lawyers. We must consider what can be done to address the apparent disconnect between the Supreme Court of Texas, the leadership of the Bar, and the members of the Bar. The

leadership of the Bar, even now, is reaching out to lawyers across the state to assure them that the State Bar will listen to them. It is critical that the leaders of our State Bar continue to do this. Listening is a part of leading. On the other hand, it is encouraging that so many lawyers took the time to study the proposals and to vote. We need to find positive ways to continue this level of engagement.

2. *Addressing the impending crisis in funding for legal assistance to the poor.* During the last session of the Legislature, we received \$20 million to offset the loss of income from our IOLTA accounts. The State Bar has recently contributed \$700,000 to keep our legal assistance programs going. We have been fortunate to receive *cy pres* funds on an occasional basis. It is a foregone conclusion that the Legislature, during this term, is going to cut funding for the programs that provide legal assistance to the poor. Although the State Bar will continue with these programs as best it can, it must communicate to the people of Texas that this is fundamentally a societal problem and not a lawyer problem.

3. *Maintaining our State Bar CLE as the best in the nation.* The State Bar fills a hugely important role in providing high quality CLE to Texas lawyers. It must continue to allocate funds for research and development if we are going to continue to develop new programs and new methods of delivery for our CLE. CLE is going to be delivered in new and innovative ways. We need to remain ahead of technological changes to serve our lawyers well.

Each of you has served the profession in a number of capacities at a number of levels. Which of these experiences has best prepared you to lead the State Bar of Texas?

CHOATE While not directly associated with the State Bar, I felt I did service to the Bar by working numerous sessions of the Texas Legislature in an effort to make certain that our legislators had access to information vital to the civil justice system. In 2005, we worked tirelessly to raise the salaries of district judges only to see it almost derailed at the last moment. All segments and sections of the Bar worked hand-in-hand to allow competent professionals to afford to serve their community. Attorneys have to be a voice at the Legislature. We are not immune from its work and can be a casualty if we are not vigilant.

The most intellectually stimulating job I had with the Bar was my service on the Pattern Jury Charge Committee. As a member and chair of that committee, I had the opportunity to work with some of the brightest minds in Texas. Every meeting was like a complex charge conference with lawyers and judges much smarter than me, but without the stress of potentially

losing your client's case. The product was satisfying and the process was enjoyable.

Without doubt, however, my most fulfilling service to the Bar was those weeks and months as spokesperson for the Bench and Bar during the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS) crisis in Eldorado and San Angelo. Child Protective Services (CPS) made the decision to remove more than 400 children from the Yearning for Zion (YFZ) Ranch. We didn't choose the crisis, but it was ours to deal with. We had no idea of the international attention this would bring to our community. As a State Bar director, I was asked not only to be a spokesperson, but also to act as a liaison to the press from around the world. We worked 20-hour days for weeks. Many days, I would take upward of 300 phone calls. Who got into the courtroom? What could they bring with them? What access was available for interviews? All these questions and hundreds of others had to be dealt with in a fair and efficient manner. Our message was simple and direct: The lawyers of Texas are here to provide justice to Texas citizens. The politics of the situation were not an issue. Texas lawyers stood up and it was a humbling opportunity to carry that message with the whole world watching. I was never more proud of Texas lawyers than during that crowded hour.

FILES 1. *My service as a lawyer.* I first represented clients as a lawyer in the U.S. Marine Corps, where I had already learned about leadership and the importance of teamwork and self-discipline. When I returned to Texas, I served as a prosecutor for more than three years and was first assistant criminal district attorney for Smith County when I left to become a defense lawyer. As such, I have represented clients who have been charged with almost all of the offenses that are prosecuted in the state and federal courts in Texas. As the president of a law firm that has five shareholders, one of counsel, and sixteen support staff, I am in the mainstream of Texas lawyers. I understand about the business side of the practice of law and am sensitive to how much it costs just to open the doors each day. I can relate to the vast majority of lawyers who have these same concerns.

2. *My service on the State Bar Board of Directors.* As a member of the State Bar Board of Directors from 2004 to 2007, I became familiar with and developed an appreciation for all of the programs of the State Bar and the role that our volunteers play in the work of the State Bar. Importantly, I gained insight into the difficulties facing the Bar. I also valued the opportunity to know and work with the wonderful professionals at the State Bar who make the leadership of the Bar and all of the volunteers look good.

3. *My service in a breadth of areas.* I am currently in my third year as chair of the State Bar Continuing Legal Education Committee and my fourth year as a member of the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. I have previously served as a member or chair of the Criminal Law Advisory Commission and as a

member of our district's grievance committee. I have served as co-chair of a State Bar task force and have had the opportunity during all of these activities to work with lawyers and judges from all over Texas. These experiences have given me insight into the concerns of lawyers and the challenges and issues of importance to the organization.

How would you describe your leadership style?

CHOATE My leadership style is simple: How best can I serve those I am honored to lead? How can I help them be the best they can be? What can I do to contribute to their success and happiness? What can I do to build consensus and provide leadership? We won't always agree, but when we don't, everyone with an opinion deserves to be heard.

If those around me are doing well, I won't have to worry about how I am doing. The president of any organization should be the person most accessible and available to every member. It is important to me that every Texas lawyer feels comfortable bringing issues directly to the president. That is their right as a Texas lawyer and I will do everything in my power to respond to every inquiry.

FILES Whether I am the president or chair of an organization, or simply a member, I strive to be a consensus builder. I am a good listener and want to hear what others are thinking. As chair of the State Bar's CLE Committee, it is my practice to go around the table asking for the thoughts of the members of the committee as to any issue that is before the committee. And I go one step further: I ask for input from the CLE staff. Before any decisions are made, everyone has a chance to speak his or her mind — and to listen to the thoughts and insights of the others. For me, it works. I find that it leads to more informed and better decisions.

The economic downturn continues to affect the legal community. What can the State Bar do to assist lawyers during these difficult times?

CHOATE Unfortunately, the downturn in the economy is not the only reason lawyers have had a hard time making a living. A political attack on causes of action and an unwillingness to pay attorneys to defend those unable to afford a lawyer, together with a willingness to allow the corporate practice of law, have all coincided with an anemic economy to make it difficult for lawyers to make a decent living.

The Bar can be a clearinghouse for new ideas on law practice management and cost controls. Mentoring programs can be enhanced and the opportunity to network can be enabled by providing list serve opportunities and access to inexpensive or

free legal research and materials. Free or low-cost CLE should be available for lawyers who find themselves unemployed or underemployed. Enhanced assistance with bookkeeping and other services necessary to the operation of a law office can be provided through the sections.

The Bar must be the voice for Texas lawyers. We are much more than a trade association, but in some sense we have those same responsibilities to our membership. We can do a better job of putting lawyers together with clients and service providers who can provide work or assistance with law practice management and file control. The "value added" of competent legal representation is an important message that can be best delivered by the State Bar.

FILES During these difficult economic times, the Bar must give lawyers full value for every dollar that they spend with the Bar. This is not a time for raising dues or charging additional fees. On my watch as chair of the CLE Committee, we have increased the breadth and quality of online and podcast presentations in order that Texas lawyers can satisfy their MCLE requirements in their offices or homes without having to leave to attend one of our traditional courses. This is one example of what the Bar has done and it should be a model for other programs.

One of the State Bar's core missions is to ensure access to the justice system. What can the State Bar and individual lawyers do to ensure access to justice for Texans?

CHOATE For years, I have supported the implementation of a meaningful state program that would systematically provide access to justice in the civil and criminal systems for all Texans. With the budget crisis, that goal now seems further away than ever. Texas lawyers have to fill the void. The Bench and Bar must work together to ensure that people understand their rights and a mechanism exists to find counsel when those rights are ignored. The law is vastly more complex than it was when I started practice. The Bar should provide free CLE for attorneys willing to enhance their skills to provide pro bono work. The Bar should provide the IT platform for list serves among lawyers willing to mentor one another in fields they are not comfortable with. Finally, we need to be the voice of Texas lawyers, explaining to the public the importance of access to justice for all Texans.

Legal aid is an important function of access to justice. With the budget constraints facing the nation and our state, these services will be low-hanging fruit to the budget axe. Within the constraints of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Keller* opinion relating to lobbying by an integrated Bar, we need to stand firm for funding in these areas. Texas citizens are entitled to these services.

FILES The State Bar cannot “ensure” access to justice for Texans. What we must do, though, is to try to serve as many of the poor as we can. The State Bar must listen to the professionals — the lawyers who staff our legal aid clinics. They tell us that technology is one area where assistance is needed during these hard times. Even the most remote counties can be accessible with a wireless card, a laptop computer, and a printer. With this equipment and with minimal resources, legal aid clinics have been opened in Willacy, Hays, and Kerr counties. Individual lawyers must continue to do the pro bono work that has helped to make the system work. Those with available time would do well to take advantage of any slowdown to provide their services to the many Texans in need.

What should the Bar focus on to ensure it is relevant and meaningful to members?

CHOATE The best way for the Bar to be relevant is to involve members. We want people inside the tent! There are a thousand ways to serve the practice of law and we have to take actions and behave in a way that attorneys in Texas equate serving the practice with participating in Bar activities. Working in Bar activities ought to be the least exclusive and most accessible thing any lawyer can do. Some have the perception that the Bar caters to big firms or elected officials or judges or pick your poison. Both candidates this year should dispel that notion.

Every lawyer in Texas is important to the Bar. Every idea has merit and we need to listen. I would put a section on the face of the Bar’s website soliciting suggestions and complaints. Every one would be submitted to the Board for every meeting. That said, complaints and suggestions are not enough. We need involvement. Ideas and input are part of a two-way street. We have to do the outreach and attorneys need to respond. If elected president, I will work to establish a dialogue with Texas lawyers so they feel they are heard and encouraged to participate in the process.

FILES Many lawyers are not fully aware of how relevant our State Bar is to their practice; some complain about having to pay dues. Without an integrated bar, legal practice would be regulated and policed by the Legislature, something few lawyers would relish. For the State Bar to be more relevant and meaningful to its members, it must have open communications with the lawyers of Texas — and be prepared to listen to what they are saying. It should be easy for any lawyer to determine the appropriate person to talk to at the State Bar if they have a problem or wish to express a view. The Bar can do better in this regard and implement a program that would allow lawyers to call or email the Bar to express their concerns or obtain information and have a reasonable expectation of getting an answer.

Our website should be clear, intuitive, and return appropriate targeted search results so that the resources and information the Bar offers can be accessed readily.

What is one action the State Bar could take to help the public understand the justice system and the roles lawyers and judges play in that system?

CHOATE Social networking is the future of communication whether we like it or not. Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, and a hundred other websites and applications are going to be a bigger and bigger part of our lives. I don’t email my clients under 25, I Facebook message or text them. To reach this generation, we have to use their means of communication. Fortunately, this type of social networking is relatively inexpensive and extremely effective. The good news and bad news is that it demands content and lots of it. We need to enlist our members to provide that content and tell our story in an effective and meaningful fashion that is relevant to them.

Attorney outreach in schools and service clubs is a critical element of our message. The Bar can enhance the materials provided to attorneys willing to meet with these groups and carry the message. The Bar can work with the judiciary to assist them with bringing the message of the importance of jury service and the role of attorneys in our society. A consistent message, delivered in an entertaining fashion will be heard.

Actions are louder than words. When lawyers are seen doing the right thing and protecting the rights and privileges of Texas citizens, the Bar needs to tell that story and establish a system and a conduit to collect and distribute those stories. For years we have provided content to classrooms and community organizations. This is a never-ending process that has to be maintained. If attorneys volunteer, this can be a win/win for those who want to use it for practice enhancement. The Bar has been doing a good job in this regard and maybe the best answer is more and better.

FILES Polls tell us that lawyers are not held in high esteem by many of our fellow citizens. Criminal defense lawyers are acutely aware that whatever we are doing now isn’t good enough; otherwise, people would not continue to ask, “How can you defend a client whom you know to be guilty?” We must do a better job of educating the public through the efforts of lawyers who are willing to appear as speakers for schools and civic organizations, write columns for local newspapers, and be available for local radio and television appearances. Local bar associations should be proactive and be an accessible and responsive resource for the media. When we comment on current issues or respond to questions, we can provide perspective

as well as information about legal topics and convey the essential role of the legal system and the value of our work.

How do you think the State Bar is doing at policing the profession? What could the State Bar do to better educate the public about the lawyer discipline system and how it works?

CHOATE The attorney discipline process is a constant work in progress. The Bar must vigilantly monitor the effectiveness of the process as well as the perceived effectiveness of the process. While the public needs to see enforcement of disciplinary rules, the Bar must be aware of the potential for destroying a reputation based upon untrue or unfair allegations. At the same time, lay people with legitimate complaints against attorneys should never feel that their grievance has been shunted aside behind the “good ol’ boy” network of an unfeeling and uncaring State Bar.

The consolidation of the grievance process and shift away from local control has probably done something to enhance the perception that there is less cronyism, but at what cost? These are issues that should be revisited frequently and in a context that is open and transparent. All of these matters should be subject to input from all segments of the Bar and a real effort should be made to get input from layman. It is difficult to get this input because the only people with the slightest interest are people already caught up in the process. I would propose an expansion of the various committees that deal with the process and an assurance that attorneys from all parts of the Bar are represented.

I have a friend who is a physician. She is fond of saying that there are more bad lawyers than there are bad doctors. While I doubt that is true, I do agree with her on one point. We discipline more lawyers and do a better job of taking care of our issues. The disciplinary system’s first obligation is to help lawyers make sure they understand the lines and get help in avoiding crossing them.

FILES The State Bar is handling ordinary grievances well. Betty Blackwell is an excellent chair of the Commission for Lawyer Discipline and Linda Acevedo is equally excellent as chief disciplinary counsel. Lawyers who have violated the rules are sanctioned and those who are the subject of frivolous complaints are not being subjected to the disciplinary process. As far as educating the public, this is a communications issue. The Bar can show by statistical data that we are taking care of business.

In Texas, barratry is a real and growing problem. Unfortunately, barratry is not “ordinary.” The State Bar is not empowered to issue subpoenas or compel testimony in the investigation of barratry complaints, and law enforcement officers and prose-

cutors are reluctant to pursue these cases. I have proposed that there be CLE presentations at the civil trial and personal injury courses of the State Bar on the subject of barratry.

What can the State Bar do to enhance ethics and professionalism among Texas lawyers?

CHOATE The Texas Lawyer’s Creed is a good starting point for dealing with one another. The goals set out in the Creed are good templates for how we deal with one another. For years I sat on the Court Rules Committee and sometimes it felt like we were discussing the number of angels on the head of a pin while trying to decide how to enhance professionalism and ethical behavior. The long and short of it was that whatever rules we crafted, no rule would work if lawyers wouldn’t embrace them and judges wouldn’t enforce them. Harsh rules demanding ethical behavior are considered fair or draconian based upon whose ox is getting gored. We should recognize those attorneys who exemplify the type of behavior we seek to emulate. Positive reinforcement works.

PUBLIC NOTICE

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS LAREDO, TEXAS

APPOINTMENT OF FULL-TIME UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas is soliciting qualified applicants in order to appoint a full-time United States magistrate judge for its Laredo Division. The current annual salary of the position is \$160,080. The term of office is 8 years.

A full public notice for the position is posted in the office of the United States District Clerk at Brownsville, Corpus Christi, Galveston, Houston, Laredo, McAllen and Victoria. The notice is also available on the court’s website at www.txs.uscourts.gov.

Application forms and more information may be obtained from the court’s website at www.txs.uscourts.gov or at the District Clerk’s Office in any division of this district. Applications may be submitted in person or by mail at the Office of the United States District Clerk; Southern District of Texas; 1300 Victoria St., Suite 1131, Laredo, Texas 78040, Attn: Magistrate Judge Merit Selection Committee. All materials must be received by **5:00 p.m. on May 9, 2011**.

All applications will be kept confidential, unless the applicant consents to disclosure. Applications will be examined only by members of the merit selection committee and judges of the district court. The committee’s deliberations will remain confidential.

The Legislature is considering a barratry bill. These cases are difficult cases to pursue, and as a result, district and county attorneys do little to enforce them as they are viewed as victimless crimes when good lawyers eventually handle the claims. It will require the volunteer services of our members and commitment on the part of the Bar to effectively police this behavior. We must do this to protect the public and our profession.

FILES In 1989, the Supreme Court of Texas and the Court of Criminal Appeals promulgated the Texas Lawyer's Creed: A Mandate for Professionalism. Except when lawyers are running for a Bar office, it is seldom mentioned. It should be promoted by the State Bar, be well-known by every lawyer, and be readily available to the public. The State Bar should work with the Judicial Section and with the Texas Center for the Judiciary to see that trial and appellate judges expect lawyers to comport themselves in accordance with the Creed. An ethical approach to life is instilled early and must be cultivated throughout life. While the Bar cannot make an individual ethical, we can refuse to reward unprofessional lawyers and uphold as examples those who exemplify ethical and professional ideals.

What is your favorite TV or film representation of a lawyer? Why?

CHOATE I think most lawyers of my generation would choose Atticus Finch as a favorite lawyer. His honesty and commitment to the law and fairness are things as a child I could relate to and appreciate. Atticus loved his family and was respected in his community. Even those who hated that he was defending someone they reviled understood his role and respected his decision to embrace it. Every lawyer likes to believe that when faced with a real moral crisis, they would behave as Atticus did.

My other favorite is Henry Drummond as portrayed by Spencer Tracy in *Inherit the Wind*. Drummond is a thinly disguised Clarence Darrow from the Scopes Monkey Trial case. Drummond made it clear he had come to Tennessee not to challenge religion, but to open minds. He would challenge inconsistencies he found in the Scripture and then make a point with Biblical text.

Like lawyers often do, Drummond engaged in mortal courtroom combat with Matthew Harrison Brady, the William Jennings Bryan character, and then sat on the porch and swapped war stories from better days when they shared a common cause. Drummond was a dear friend to Brady's wife, and when Brady died, eulogized him to the cynical reporter, the H.L. Mencken character. "There was much greatness in the man. ..." Drummond was wise enough to understand and embrace the inconsistencies in our life and law. He understood as we all should the distinction between adversary and enemy. He was there to fight

for the weak, the poor, and the weary. He is truly a wonderful character arising from fact as much as fiction.

FILES Lt. Marty Greenwald in Herman Wouk's novel and movie *The Caine Mutiny* and in the Broadway play *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*. Lt. Greenwald was appointed to represent Lt. Steve Maryk, who was prosecuted for the offense of mutiny. Although Lt. Greenwald neither liked nor respected Lt. Maryk, his representation of his client — and, especially, his cross-examination of the government's witnesses — was brilliant. Regardless of personal feeling, a good lawyer represents the client wholeheartedly.

If a college student sought your advice on whether to pursue a legal career, how would you answer?

CHOATE About two or three times a year, I am approached by college students inquiring about law school and a life in the law. First, I make it clear that they are two very different things. Law school is an excellent education whether one chooses to practice law or not. A life in the law is a much more important decision and involves deeper inquiry. The first thing I tell college students is don't become a lawyer because you think it will be a good job or a way to make a lot of money. Like most businesses, some lawyers do well and others not as well. There are a hundred reasons for this, few related to actual talent, brains, or ability.

There are easier ways to make a living than being a lawyer. If you don't really have a calling to the profession, choose another. I never tell anyone that they should not be a lawyer, just as I would never tell someone they shouldn't be a teacher or a priest or a social worker. One of my favorite movies is *A League of Their Own*. When league star Dottie tells manager Jimmy Dugan that it just got too hard, he replied, "It's supposed to be hard. If it wasn't hard everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great." Some days I feel that way about the practice of law, and anyone considering it has the right to know that.

FILES I've been there and done that. Our daughter sought my advice on this issue after she had been a reporter or editor for 18 years for two major newspapers. I strongly encouraged her to go to law school. She did so and is in her second year of practice in San Francisco — and loves it. I would encourage a young person to volunteer in a law office and to talk to lawyers in differing types of practice before going to law school to see what the practice actually entails and to get an idea of whether it is really a fit for them. And I would tell them not to expect to make a lot of money, but rather to expect to work very hard

for their clients and to make their services available in their community for those in need. Practicing law can be greatly fulfilling, and it demands much of you. I love it, and think it is a great privilege.

How important are your community activities to balancing your life as a lawyer? Which of your community activities have you found most fulfilling?

CHOATE Community involvement should be an important part of every lawyer's life. For all the lawyer jokes, the public still expects attorneys to be leaders in the community and we are turned to for guidance, judgment, and, perhaps most important, a deep commitment to the good of one another. Being part of the community is the best way to carry the message that lawyers care.

My wife and I have been involved in our city since we were married. We are both from San Angelo and it is a place that is close to us. We have worked for the American Heart Association, the American Cancer Society and other national organizations. We became involved in local therapeutic riding programs for several years. We chaired the major fundraisers for several years. We also support local dog and cat rescue organizations and have opened our home to several rescued animals.

When it became apparent in our family that dyslexia was going to be an issue, we got involved with a local organization that supported reading programs for dyslexic children. This has proven to be an important and fulfilling opportunity. Angelo State University has a writers' conference every year and we have been supporters and sponsors since it began. My band plays for a variety of local charities. The people willing to put themselves out there and do the hard work of making these charities succeed deserve our support and every member of the band is more than happy to pitch in.

Nothing does more for the image of our profession than to be caught doing the right thing. Still, that alone is no reason to be involved in community service. Service is its own reward and, in our community, usually a lot of fun.

FILES When I was a younger lawyer, I thought that — except for family and church — the practice of law was all that I needed. I was wrong and have come to appreciate the importance of life outside of the practice of law. I have had wonderful experiences working in the community. For seven years, I served on the board of East Texas Symphony Orchestra, I have served on the session at the First Presbyterian Church in Tyler, and I love being on the board of trustees of Austin College in Sherman, where I am completing my eighth year and have been elected

for another four-year term. Every year, I return to the school and teach the fraternity and sorority officers and all the pledges about the collateral consequences of hazing. Interacting with these students is fun and tremendously rewarding.

What do you do for fun?

CHOATE I grew up in a ranching family and live in West Texas. We still have a ranch not far outside of town. We keep a number of horses to operate the ranch. My brother and I, with other friends, have had a good time roping and working at the ranch on horseback. As I have aged, my pursuits have become a bit tamer. I still enjoy taking my dad to the ranch, keeping an eye on things, and helping my brother out when he is short handed. Our kids were pretty much raised at the ranch.

Mostly, these days, I have a band with five other friends that keeps me busy. I love to sing and play. The better the audience, the better we play. We practice and play at a historic building my wife and I have refurbished in downtown San Angelo. (My wife's grandfather was a Greek immigrant. He had a café downtown that we have refurbished. We make it available for community events and charities.) Practicing and playing our music is a natural progression of using the building downtown. Music requires you to live in the now. You can't worry about next week's trial or you won't hit the next measure's note. Great therapy.

FILES I love to exercise every morning. My wife, Robyn, and I travel to California and New York regularly to see our children and our granddaughter. We try to take a vacation every other year and go someplace special. We love seeing new places, and I get to indulge my passion for photography. ✪