

# A TEXAS PERSPECTIVE, A GLOBAL CITIZEN

## *C.E. Rhodes Takes Office as TYLA President*

By Ellen Carnes

**A**s a child, C.E. Rhodes played a game. He would close his eyes, spin a globe, and pick a place he hoped to visit or someday live. At night, he would lie in his backyard and stare up at the stars, dreaming about the world beyond his small town.

In the intervening years, that world has become smaller. Rhodes has been able to visit more than 25 countries, from Argentina to Russia to Saudi Arabia. Now the U.S. Operations and Compliance Counsel to Baker Hughes, Inc. in Houston, Rhodes believes every Texan is a global citizen and every lawyer is a leader — a perspective he plans to bring to his year as president of the Texas Young Lawyers Association (TYLA).

C.E. Rhodes visits the  
Pyramids of Giza in Egypt.





“We live in a global marketplace. Texas residents and citizens are very diverse, hailing from many different countries. Texas companies are increasingly doing business with foreign citizens and companies. In order to provide the best advice to our clients, it is imperative that Texas young lawyers are knowledgeable of the economic, social, and political events around the world, as well as the different cultures, customs, and local practices,” Rhodes said. “Texas is a global leader on many fronts, and I want TYLA to continue to be the leader among young lawyer organizations around the world in educating our communities on both domestic and international legal issues.”

Rhodes has already taken on a leadership role in TYLA. A director since 2004, Rhodes served as the 2009–10 chair and as an executive committee advisor to the Community Education/Consumer Affairs Committee, which created the award-winning project *R U Safe? Protecting Yourself in Cyberspace*. As co-chair of the Member Services and Outreach Committee, Rhodes helped write *Office in a Flash* and *Justice 101: The Client's Guide to Litigation*. He was instrumental in producing TYLA's Emmy-award winning video, *They Had a Dream*

*Too: Young Leaders of the Civil Rights Movement*. In 2007, Rhodes was the recipient of the Joseph M. Pritchard Outstanding TYLA Director of the Year Award. He will be sworn in as TYLA president during the State Bar Annual Meeting in Houston later this month.

“I didn't know any lawyers personally when I was growing up; the only lawyers that I saw were on television,” Rhodes said. “I knew, however, that by becoming a lawyer, I would be in a position to help my family. Over the years, their support has been invaluable.” The oldest of four children, Rhodes grew up in Evington, Va. He has a close relationship with his father, a minister and retired mail carrier, and his mother, a retired library secretary. “When I was in high school, I spent a lot of time in the high school library where my mom worked. I am very thankful for those laughs and moments we shared during my adolescent years. She was truly my best friend. My dad has always been a tremendous source of wisdom and gives great advice,” Rhodes said.

With the help and encouragement of his family, Rhodes received a prestigious Jefferson Scholarship to attend the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, where he majored in history and played for the Virginia Cavaliers football team. After graduation, he attended Emory University School of Law in Atlanta.

“The best advice I recently received as a young lawyer was to view yourself as a corporation,” Rhodes said. “Think about your brand, your objectives and goals, protect your reputation, and have a board of advisors to help guide you.” Different viewpoints are important to Rhodes; his personal board of advisors is populated with mentors ranging from his high school basketball coach to his TYLA colleagues to attorneys and friends he admires.

In law school, Rhodes had many experiences that helped hone his brand, including a clerkship with the Manhattan District Attorney's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia. Rhodes came to Houston when he joined Haynes and Boone, L.L.P. after graduation. “I loved the firm and the people. I learned to practice law the right way from extremely bright and skilled lawyers. Also, I was amazed at how diverse the city was. I believed Houston — and Texas — were places that rewarded hard work and didn't care where you were from or what you did before you arrived. Texans and the local bar community embraced me. If you're here now, you're a Texan.”

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After six years as a litigator at Haynes and Boone, Rhodes joined Baker Hughes, Inc., a top-tier oilfield services company with 58,000-plus employees in more than 80 countries. Rhodes began his career at Baker Hughes as investigative legal counsel, where he traveled the world conducting internal investigations and assessing the company's risks under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. He then became division counsel for the Baker Hughes Drilling Fluids division, acting as general counsel for that division's worldwide operations. In his current role, Rhodes is responsible for all of the day-to-day legal issues that arise out of the company's operations in the United States, and supervises an attorney who is responsible for the Gulf of Mexico and Trinidad. He also serves on the company's U.S. Region Leadership team, where he, along with management, help formulate strategic business goals for the organization.

Rhodes jokes that, before moving to Texas, he thought “gas was something you pumped and oil was something you checked in your car.” But Rhodes relished the opportunity to expand his horizons. “I am thrilled to be part of a dynamic organization in an industry that I had very little exposure to before becoming a lawyer,” he said. “I love the fact that I am constantly learning.”

Baker Hughes has given Rhodes the opportunity to travel to many different places, including Africa, Asia, Europe, the

Middle East, and South America, and see sights he dreamed of as a child — the Pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China, Red Square, and Machu Picchu. “I have been able to do business and make friends with people from all over the world and different walks of life. I believe life is really about the relationships you develop with the people you meet. My life has been enriched because of those international relationships. People across the globe have more things in common, like our values, than differences,” Rhodes said.

The key to Rhodes’ practice is trust. “Your value as a lawyer is measured by the amount of trust you are able to earn from your clients. If your clients trust you, then you get invited to the early strategic meetings to help them avoid the many legal pitfalls that lie ahead,” Rhodes said. “In addition, your clients are more likely to be honest with you and give you all the facts — good and bad — because they understand that you are trying to help them. Lawyers are similar to doctors in that we need clients to be honest and provide us with all relevant information so we can correctly diagnose the problem. Clients make decisions and lawyers advise and counsel clients on risk. The client decides whether the legal risk outweighs the benefit to the business.”

“C.E. is a lawyer of great legal skill that he successfully couples with his outstanding practical judgment. Most important, he is an individual of the highest moral character who implicitly conveys a quiet confidence while building meaningful personal and professional relationships,” said Alan Crain, senior vice president and general counsel to Baker Hughes. “We’re both pleased and honored to have this man of great integrity as a key member of our legal team.”

Rhodes believes that most people have an innate sense to do the right thing, which is one of the reasons that drew him to community service and TYLA. Former TYLA president David McAtee II took Rhodes to a TYLA event when the two worked together at Haynes and Boone — and Rhodes was hooked. “C.E.’s been a leader from day one. We saw right away that he needed to be involved in TYLA,” McAtee said. “He’s one of the friendliest people you’ll ever meet. He seems to know everyone everywhere he goes. He’s exuberant and enthusiastic. One of his best qualities is his ability to get people excited about whatever he’s excited about.”

“C.E. is very organized and very professional and has a very good heart,” added Natalie Cobb Koehler, immediate past president of TYLA. “C.E. is incredibly on-task, which I think comes



C.E. Rhodes and wife, Daj, recently celebrated their third wedding anniversary.

from being an in-house attorney. He has an extremely high level of professionalism, but is also a very caring and sweet person.”

Outside of the office, Rhodes loves to travel with his wife, Daj. The pair recently celebrated their three-year wedding anniversary, but they have known each other for more than 10 years. “We’re complete opposites — and it’s a great thing,” Rhodes said. “We view things differently and are always challenging each other to go beyond our respective boxes. Admittedly, my box is a lot smaller than hers — she has gone skydiving twice, something I have no desire to do.” Rhodes is also a serious foodie with an impressive knowledge of the Houston restaurant scene (he generates an annual list detailing his gastronomic adventures). He also tries to make it to at least one University of Virginia football game a year with his former teammates.

Rhodes plans to bring his sense of global perspective and his tireless energy to his tenure as president of TYLA. His upcoming TYLA projects include an initiative to help young criminal law practitioners, a potential partnership with the Florida Young Lawyers Association to engage in-house counsel, and a public service project to raise awareness of human trafficking — a problem not only in Texas but around the world. “I’m very excited to work with [incoming State Bar of Texas president] Buck Files to strengthen relationships between the Bar’s leadership and the many lawyers in our great state and around the world,” Rhodes said. ★