
FOR THE LOVE OF COUNTRY

As we continue to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the State Bar of Texas, in November we also observe Veterans Day to honor the men and women who have selflessly protected our country. The *Texas Bar Journal* wants to recognize—and thank—the many lawyers who have served in the U.S. armed forces. And while we couldn't reach out to all of the attorneys in Texas who have played a role in safekeeping our great nation, we did connect with several who graciously shared their insights, experiences, and stories.

INTERVIEWS BY HANNAH KIDDOO, LINDSAY STAFFORD MADER AND PATRICIA BUSA McCONNICO



KERWIN B. STONE

Kerwin B. Stone served as a captain in the U.S. Air Force from 1970 to 1975, completing a tour of duty during the Vietnam War and continuing his family's history of military service. A Stephenville native, he received his law degree from the University of Texas in 1977 and is now a partner in Moore Landrey in Beaumont.

Tell us about when you joined the service.

I joined the Air Force ROTC when I began college in 1965. My first Selective Service card in 1965 had classified me as "1A," which meant that I was already in the pool from which guys were being drafted. Enrollment in college a week later entitled me to a student draft deferment. My family has a long history of military service, and even though the Vietnam War was just beginning to escalate in 1965, I knew that I wanted to serve my country in the military and carry on that family tradition.

Why did you choose this military branch?

Air Force was the only branch of ROTC available at my college; otherwise, I would have probably joined the Army.

Did you find that there were a lot of attorneys in the military or that many soldiers talked about wanting to become attorneys?

No, attorneys in the military were rare and of no relevance whatsoever to most of us; the only time I even saw one, over my five years of active duty, was to prepare a will before shipping out.

Has your military experience influenced the way you practice law?

Yes, absolutely. Being in the military taught me the principles of duty, honor, and loyalty, which are lacking in many attorneys, particularly among the younger ones. In a war zone, you counted on your fellow warriors to guard your back; in practicing law, your back is often the target.

Do you see similarities in being a soldier and being a lawyer?

Not really. As an Air Force officer, I would follow orders regard-

less of whether I thought the person giving them was qualified to do so. As a lawyer, I have a larger degree of independence.

What legal issues do veterans face that the public might not be aware of?

Most issues have to do with obtaining benefits for veterans that are true entitlements earned as a result of military service and not handouts to people who think that the government owes them a living simply by virtue of being in this country. Every veteran puts his or her life on the line when taking the oath of service, and many veterans indeed make deep and lasting sacrifices.

What does being a veteran mean to you?

Despite the derision and insults that Vietnam veterans had to endure when we returned many years ago, I take great pride not only in having served my country honorably during a time of war but also in helping to keep that sense of pride alive in other veterans with whom I come in contact. Being a veteran is a very large part of who I am, and I hope that I have passed my values to my children and grandchildren. Veterans are builders and shapers of our communities.



DAVID R. OLIVAS

A year after graduating from law school, Navy Reservist David R. Olivas was deployed to Afghanistan, where he spent time in Mazar-e-Sharif, Balkh, Kunduz, and Bagram. His tour of duty ended on Jan. 5, 2014, and the 35-year-old currently resides in Flower Mound, practicing criminal law as a Dallas County assistant district attorney.

Tell us about when you joined the service. What went into your decision?

I was going to school at my parents' desire instead of my own. I wanted to travel and work, so I thought I'd join the Navy. I decided to tell my parents about my intent to drop out of college and join the service. My dad was eating enchiladas and had just taken a bite when I stated, "Guys, I think I'm going to join the Navy." He stopped chewing and looked at me with complete shock.

Why did you choose this military branch?

I chose the Navy for many reasons: I wanted to leave Texas; I loved the uniform; the Navy would teach me a foreign language; and I knew I would get to see the world. I left Texas for training; I got to wear the Navy Blues; the Navy taught me some Arabic; and I became fluent in Spanish. As fate would have it, I was stationed in San Antonio for nearly eight years. I did, however, get to deploy with the British and Dutch navies. After almost nine years, I quit active duty, joined the Navy Reserve, and moved back to DFW to attend Texas Wesleyan School of Law's evening program. The Monday after graduation from law school, my chief told me I was on the short list to deploy. One year later, I was stepping off a plane in Afghanistan.

Did you find that there were a lot of attorneys in the military or that many soldiers talked about wanting to become attorneys?

In the Navy, we have what's called a sea-lawyer. This individual usually knew it all and let everyone else know it.

Has your military experience influenced the way you practice law?

Leadership, devotion to duty, and time management were the biggest tools the Navy taught me. These tools have allowed me to manage my caseloads and separate what is important and what is not. My leadership experience influences how I look at cases, associate with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, and treat everyone with the same level of respect. We were taught to become consummate professionals. I strive to maintain that reputation.

Do you see similarities in being a soldier and being a lawyer?

We know when to speak and, most important, when to keep quiet.

If you could give someone a piece of advice before joining the military, what would it be?

No one will look out for your interest better than yourself. The military will use you for everything, so learn your job, do it well, and use the military for everything you can—education, training, and certifications.

What does being a veteran mean to you?

To me, a veteran is reliable. We do our job right and work efficiently.



COL. TERRI R. ZIMMERMANN
Terri R. Zimmermann has served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve since 1989, earning a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal following active duty from 1993 to 1996 and a certificate of commendation during active duty mobilization in 2008. A certified judge advocate and military judge, she is the Reserve counterpart to the chief defense

counsel of the Marine Corps, as well as a shareholder in Zimmermann Lavine & Zimmermann in Houston.

Tell us about when you joined the service. What went into your decision?

I decided to inquire into what the Navy and Marine Corps had to offer lawyers during the summer between graduation from college and my first year of law school. I was tempted by the possibility of financial assistance, but after learning about the Marine Corps judge advocate program, I was hooked and signed up even though I didn't get a penny toward law school.

Why did you choose this military branch?

I wanted to be able to look myself in the mirror knowing I did not shy away from the physical and emotional challenges that becoming a U.S. Marine involved. I got to do amazing things like learn to fire various weapons, conduct an amphibious landing, fly in helicopters, and survive the gas chamber.

Has your military experience influenced the way you practice law?

Absolutely. There is an emphasis in the military on values and doing the right thing for the sake of doing the right thing—not because someone is watching. We also stress giving a full effort to every task we take on, especially when it's difficult. Finally, attention to detail is important in the military because, literally, someone's life may depend on it. There are plenty of opportunities to cut corners or take the easy way out when practicing law. My parents raised me to be honest and hard-working, but the Marine Corps reinforces those values on a daily basis.

What legal issues do veterans face that the public might not be aware of?

Probably the most far-reaching legal issue I see regularly is the stigma of an other-than-honorable discharge on a veteran. When civilians are consistently late for work, don't follow the direction of their supervisors, or perhaps overly imbibe in alcohol, they get fired. Then they go out and look for another job. However, when service members commit those same actions, it is considered misconduct and they face judicial as well as administrative consequences. A federal conviction, as well as a dishonorable, bad conduct, or other-than-honorable discharge can make veterans significantly less employable than their civilian counterparts. This is sometimes very unfair.

What does being a veteran mean to you?

I believe that taking an oath to serve and agreeing to put the needs of the country ahead of one's personal and professional well-being is one of the most noble acts one can take. Being a veteran means putting values into action and working with others to make the world a better, safer place.



TOM MORRIS

In November 1941, Tom Morris enlisted in the U.S. Navy Air, and about a week later, the Imperial Japanese Navy launched its surprise attack on a U.S. naval base in Hawaii, marking the United States' entrance to World War II. He flew a Helldiver bomber and Hellcat fighter plane in battles in the Pacific. Morris,

who turns 95 this November, has been a litigator in Amarillo for more than six decades and practices as a shareholder in the Underwood Law Firm.

You were a student at the University of Texas School of Law when you enlisted. What went into your decision to join the service and why did you choose the Navy?

All of my age group was facing the draft, even those of us who were seniors in law school. I did not want to be a ground soldier. During the Thanksgiving break of 1941, I went to Dallas and interviewed with the Navy recruiting office. I liked what I heard, particularly the statement that if I signed with the Navy, I probably would not be called to report to duty until I finished my senior year in law school. I filled out the application, passed the physical, and was sworn in that day. On Dec. 7, 1941, I was sitting in the law library when the librarian came out from her office and said the Japanese were bombing Pearl Harbor. That changed the complexion of everything. The following week, I received a call from the Navy to report to duty at the Grand Prairie Naval Air Station on Jan. 2, 1942.

Do you think your legal education influenced your thoughts or experiences in the military?

No, except that I wanted to stay in touch with the law and carried several legal textbooks with me all the time I was in the service. I remember one was *McCormick on Evidence*, and when I returned to the law school, one of my good friends and patrons was Dean McCormick.

Did you notice any impact of WWII on the legal profession upon returning home?

I finished my senior year, graduated in 1946, and was hired by the law school as an associate professor. That probably was because returning veterans were flooding the law school and Dean McCormick was scraping the barrel for new professors. In the fall of 1946, we had more than 300 entering law students, more than half of whom were veterans.

Do you see similarities in being a soldier and being a litigator?

There are similarities in that both are combative, but the military combat is deadly and litigation is civil, at least with most lawyers.

What does being a veteran mean to you?

I did my duty. People talk about the "greatest generation," but for WWII, the nation was mobilized and 99 percent of the people—military and civilian—were simply doing what they had to do.



COL. MICHAEL FINN

In 1974, Michael Finn enlisted as a private first class in the 2nd Armored Division at Fort Hood. Having served as a witness at courts-martial, Finn was interested in the law, and in 1978, he entered the University of Texas School of Law. After graduation, he returned to active duty as a judge advocate at Fort Hood and later became a Civil Service attorney-advisor in the same legal office. All the while, Finn continued in the Army Reserve and culminated as a Civil Affairs officer, where he served for 28 additional years in between stints of active duty and deployment to Bosnia, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

What went into your decision to join the service and why did you choose the Army?

My father was serving as a master sergeant in Germany when I was born in 1954 at the military hospital in Heidelberg. He was participating in an exercise, so when he found out I had arrived, he deliberately drove into an area that had been declared contaminated with radiation, was duly declared dead, and was allowed to return to Heidelberg to see me. I grew up participating in a lot of his unit activities. I always knew I would join the Army someday.

Has your military and war experience influenced the way you practice law?

Many traditional law students, with no experience of anything but school, become extremely intimidated by the Socratic method and the pressures of law school. No matter how a veteran is verbally out-manuevered by a law professor, he or she can think, *OK, pal, you're the smart one here. Let's see you lead a patrol on the inter-German border at midnight in freezing rain.* This sense of self assists in keeping one's equilibrium at a stressful time.

How has the JAG Corps changed over time?

JAGs today are integral parts of Brigade, Division, and Corps staff. Gone are the days of judge advocates who never went to the field and have no idea how to fire or disassemble a weapon.

Do you see similarities in being a soldier and being a lawyer?

Both the lawyer and the soldier are mission-focused, which brings the approach of a lawyer preparing a case and a planner preparing to invade a country much closer than you would expect.

What does being a veteran mean to you?

For 40 years, I was there, trying to get in on whatever this country was doing—sometimes succeeding, sometimes not—but always ready to do the good that our armed forces perform on behalf of this country. Apart from being a husband and a father, my service is what I am most proud of in life. **TBJ**

To read more from Finn's interview, including thoughts on his most memorable case, legal issues faced by veterans, and making the decision to join the military, go to texasbar.com/veteranfinn.