

G. David **SMITH**

HOMETOWN: MULESHOE

POSITION: PRINCIPAL IN SMITH AND LEE LAWYERS IN ROCKWALL
BOARD MEMBER: DISTRICT 1 SINCE 2021

INTERVIEW BY **WILL KORN**
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MY INITIAL PASSION WAS TO BECOME A DISC JOCKEY GOING INTO COLLEGE. I just could not lose my West Texas twang, so that made the radio biz a not-so-likely profession. While on the debate team at Odessa College, our coach introduced me to some lawyers in town. During that time, I worked as a carpenter while putting myself through school. After working all day, I would sometimes stop at a bar frequented by those lawyers. It was there I heard their courtroom stories and got hooked. Inspiration arose from the fact that I was always tired, hot, and sweaty after a day's work while they were in suits and having a grand time. It was a lawyer's life for me after those experiences!

HELPING PEOPLE WHO CANNOT HELP THEMSELVES WAS WHAT MY MOM TAUGHT ME GROWING UP. We didn't have much, but she always found a way to help others even when we were having a hard time getting by. Because of her and what she taught me, along with the influences of those Odessa lawyers

and others, I am what I call a street lawyer. Our office is on the street and accessible to all. We not only practice personal injury but also help those who show up and don't have a place to turn regarding a myriad of legal problems. It is very rewarding in so many ways. I am thankful to have the opportunity to do what we do.

DO IT TO HELP. DO IT TO SERVE. DO IT WITH PASSION. Never be afraid to ask for help. Never be so cocky that you don't ask for help. This came from those lawyers in Odessa—they were my mentors and teachers. They taught me how to practice honorably and were always willing to help.

ONE OF THE SMARTEST PERSONS I KNOW, CHAD BARUCH, SUGGESTED I BECOME A STATE BAR OF TEXAS DISTRICT DIRECTOR. I have great respect for him as a lawyer and a person. His encouragement ended up being a great gift I will never forget. He showed me what could be done through the bar and motivated me to run.

I AM REALLY FINDING A LOT OF CHALLENGE AND REWARD IN WORKING ON THE AFFORDABLE LEGAL SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE. I think there is more that can be done to make legal services more readily available to those who cannot afford them. I would like to see a statewide, comprehensive operation where attorneys provide pro bono services to those who cannot afford a lawyer.

COMMUNICATING TO BAR MEMBERS ABOUT WHAT THE BAR DOES AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT for the bar to remain independent is essential. Before becoming involved in bar functions, I was leery of the bar. After getting involved, I found out how wrong I was in my perception. All directors need to work hard on communication to the bar membership to increase knowledge and awareness of the importance of the bar, its independence, and its service to members and the public.

I THINK THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS NEEDS TO KEEP FOCUSED ON MAINTAINING INDEPENDENCE, POLITICAL NEUTRALITY, AND SERVICE TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE BAR. The board is doing a good job with that now and needs to keep it up. The top issue facing attorneys is the same facing the state in many aspects, and that is the struggle to find common ground to serve the common good for all. I am proud to say our board of directors works hard to meet those needs on behalf of all the attorneys in Texas.

MUCH HAS BEEN DONE IN THE PAST THREE YEARS TO SPREAD THE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE BAR'S WORK. I also think the board has addressed many difficult issues with a spirit of compromise and unity in purpose. The work done by the bar presidents and board chairs I have served with demonstrates a commitment to foster that forward movement. **TBJ**