

THE HONOR OF A LIFETIME

My personal journey with the State Bar of Texas began in 2010 when my wife, Charla, and I both accepted jobs with the Taylor County District Attorney's Office. A co-worker asked us to attend an Abilene Young Lawyers Association meeting. I had never even heard of this affiliate of the Texas Young Lawyers Association, but we went because she made it sound so fun. In no time, I met several other young lawyers who were also learning what life as a lawyer was really like. They had great advice about local judges and their rules and the do's and don'ts of everyday practice. They offered unconditional support and advice simply because I was a fellow lawyer. I immediately loved the camaraderie of AYLA and all that it was about.

A few years later, a former president

of our local affiliate suggested I run for a TYLA director position. I had absolutely no interest. He insisted, though, and I respected his opinion enough that I took his advice. At my first meeting I was overjoyed to find a larger, more active organization like AYLA, full of servant leaders trying to make a difference in the world around them. It was the most dynamic group of people I had ever encountered. I met people from every practice type and every region of Texas. Most impressive was that each genuinely desired to help fellow lawyers and their communities. I spent the next few years engaged in TYLA projects, and I can proudly and unabashedly say that our work saved lives and empowered fellow lawyers.

My time as a "young" lawyer is now coming to an end. Soon, I will be just another "middle-aged" lawyer like my

friends who have "aged out" before me. I leave having learned the following lessons. First, we are in this together. I have learned from lawyers all across the state, and even the nation, that we are all looking for virtually the same thing. We want to engage in meaningful work that provides a respectable income to support our families and our lifestyle. There are major challenges ahead in the near future. If we are to maintain what we have worked so hard to achieve, we must stick together.

Second, we are only as strong as our weakest link. When we know of a lawyer who is struggling professionally, with drug or alcohol addiction or with mental health issues, we must take the initiative and give him or her the needed support. The media will not focus on the hundreds of thousands of lawyers who do a great job every day. They will focus on the one struggling to competently represent his or her client. I personally hope we are the kind of people who will help because help is needed, but if not this, then help because our public image is contingent upon us ensuring that our weakest link is capable of doing the job effectively.

Third, bar service is a privilege to be cherished—not a chore to be endured. Over the course of six years, I have become keenly aware of the challenges our profession faces. I have seen firsthand the great efforts the bar staff goes to to ensure our lives are about serving clients and not overburdened by the administrative work they do for us every day. Most importantly, I have learned how amazingly effective our profession can be when we are united on a common front. If we stick together, our ability to change our own lives and the lives of those around us is limitless. Through bar service, one not only gets to see it from the driver's seat but also gets to take the wheel for a short time. Don't miss your chance to drive.

Thank you for my opportunity to take the wheel for a little while. I hope I have steered us in a good direction, and I look forward to where we will go under new leadership. It has been the honor of a lifetime.

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