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EIGHT **THINGS TO** **KNOW ABOUT** **e-filing** **IN TEXAS**

+
HONORING OUR
VETERANS

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.