

Certification Matters

Interview with Gerry Goldstein – 40 Years of Board Certification

Board Certified in Criminal Law (1975) & Criminal Appellate Law (2012)

Q: Take me back to 1975. What can you tell me about your legal career and the legal industry back then?

A: I graduated from the University of Texas School of Law in 1968. I knew that I wanted to go into criminal law, because I wanted to go into a field that excited me; 46 years later I still find it very exciting.

To break into a field of practice it was all about word of mouth as there was very little you could do at the time to establish or qualify yourself to the public.

The Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association was active at the time. That was one way to at least associate with experienced colleagues in our field. When TBLS started the Board Certification program in 1975, it was on everybody's minds and lips. We saw this as an important milestone for us. Young lawyers like myself were able to participate in the learning experience, educational process, as well as the examination process that older, more experienced lawyers gave us to test our mental abilities across the board. It was fascinating.

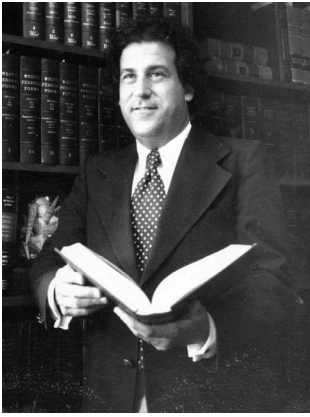
Q: What was the first Board Certification exam like?

A: We had no idea what the first examination was going to be like. There had never been an exam before us, so it was a frightening prospect. Some of us hadn't taken an exam in six years and others hadn't taken an exam in 30 to 40 years.

During the first exam, you looked across the room and you saw people your parents' age. It was a real thrill to be a part of that class. Sure you're still a young lawyer, but being in that same class showed that you had the training and expertise to be recognized by the best, and had camaraderie with others in your chosen field of practice. It's an amazing class of folks. It was a challenge for all of us, but being Board Certified was a means for a young lawyer to gain recognition from his or her peers, and that was important because there wasn't another mechanism to do so.

Q: How has being Board Certified impacted your career?

A: As a young lawyer looking for opportunities, Board Certification opens doors that you otherwise might not have had. I've met and associated with people as well as became involved with cases that I would have never had an opportunity to enjoy. Some of us



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Work hard,
understand
that your
word is worth
more than
any victory,
and enjoy
yourself.



that took the first exam together became best friends and remain close friends today. It was a very unique experience.

Q: 40 years is a long time to be Board Certified. How did you do it?

A: It is flattering to anyone to be recognized. Nobody is going to keep doing what they do unless it's something they enjoy. Whether I'm addressing a class, jury or appellate court, I get a thrill out of it, which makes it a lot easier to go through this process. I still enjoy the idea that peers are recognizing that I am still competent in my specialty areas.



Q: What has been the highlight of your career?

A: I suppose it's the next court room I am going to walk into or the next appellate panel I am addressing. Since the first exam, we had remarkable cases and I had some remarkable luck.

You don't win all the cases, but the bottom line, you're still excited about your current and next case. The Board Certification process gives young lawyers the self confidence, knowledge and a badge, which you've earned amongst your peers, to step into a court room with older, more experienced lawyers. At 71, that is the highlight of my career.

Q: For all those attorneys and paralegals that are newly Board Certified, what advice do you give them for a long and prosperous career?

A: Work hard, understand that your word is worth more than any victory, and enjoy yourself. I think those young lawyers entering or beginning to practice criminal law are living in an exciting time. It's their turn. They're the only voice for those individuals who find themselves in the criminal justice system.

There are so many things brave young lawyers can do to make our system better. Standing up when our justice system is being abused may not be popular and may not be the most profitable avenue for young lawyers to tread, but in the long run, when all is said and done, the willingness to do what is right will serve them very well.

Q: What would you like to say to TBLS on its 40th anniversary?

A: Thank You. My hat's off to you, and keep it up!