

Certification Matters

Q&A with New TBLS Board Chair David Dickson

“Board Certification continues to play an important part in the changing legal industry.”



I feel very humbled. This program is important for the public and for attorneys in our state.



Q. You’ve been elected as the new Board Chair of one the largest legal Board Certification programs in the country. How do you feel?

A. I feel very humbled. This program is important for the public and for attorneys in our state. We’re focused on enhancing the quality of legal representation in an increasingly competitive marketplace. I’ve been involved with this program for more than 30 years and am continually impressed with TBLS members’ accomplishments. There are some great attorneys who’ve served as Board Chair, the last being Hal Moorman.

Q. What can members expect from TBLS in the coming years?

A. They can expect to see new specializations — beyond the 22 for attorneys and 7 for paralegals that we offer now. For example, we just authorized a new specialization in Construction Law. We’re working on several others, such as Property Owners Association Law. Members also can expect TBLS to be constantly reviewing — and revising, when needed — the specialization qualifications that attorneys and paralegals must meet.

Q. How has Board Certification impacted your career?

A. It’s been hugely beneficial. I became Board Certified in 1983 in all three areas of real estate law — Commercial, Farm & Ranch and Residential. In my dealings with attorneys from all over the nation and internationally, I’ve found that when you tell them you’re a real estate lawyer from Waco, Texas, it doesn’t mean a lot to them. But when you tell them you’re Board Certified, it really makes a difference in how they see you and your legal abilities. For example, I was recently dealing with an attorney in Vancouver. When he learned that I was Board Certified, he became much more receptive to my advice, and his overall responsiveness improved. This shows the positive impact that Board Certification can have.

Q. What’s one of your proudest achievements of your career?

A. I’m proud to have been elected to the State Bar of Texas Board of Directors. I also served two terms as chair of the Professionalism Committee. I received a Presidential Citation in 2010 for serving as chair and for leading the effort to implement “Transition to Practice” and “After the Bar Exam” programs for new lawyers. And of course, I am proud to be TBLS’ new Board Chair.

Q. How would you describe the current Texas legal industry?

A. The Texas legal industry is in a time of transition. Clients expect a lot of bang for their buck, and lawyers have to adapt to meet new client expectations. Board Certification continues to play an important part in the changing legal industry. Lawyers are trying to distinguish themselves from the competition, and nothing signifies a lawyer’s abilities in a specific area more than Board Certification.

Certification Matters



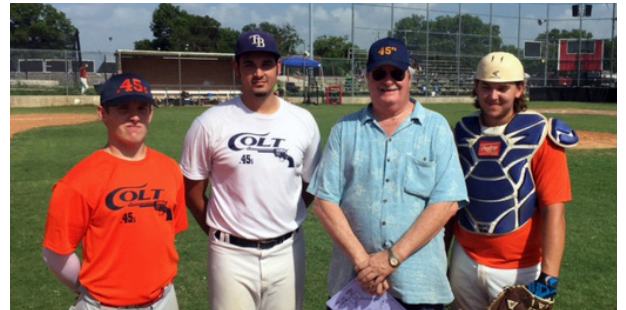
Sherm
Winniford
was my first
mentor right
after law
school, and
he really
inspired
me to do
my best.



Q: What do you like to do on your spare time?

A. Every summer, I manage a semi-professional baseball team — the Colt 45's. We've been using this name for about 10 or 12 years now as a tribute to the Houston Astros, who formerly were known as the Colt 45's. I was a kid when the Houston team was first organized. It became my first local team, so the name really means something to me. Our Colt 45's team is part of the Waco Semi-Pro Baseball Leagues. You can learn more about us on the leagues' [Facebook](#) page.

I also play bass in an all-lawyer rock band called The Unnaturals. Our front man is Noley Bice, former general counsel at Baylor University and an Elvis impersonator. We always have a great time playing together.



Colt 45's from left to right: Jason Larance, Cale Rice, David Dickson and Clayton Carberry



"The Unnaturals" include, from left, Paul Marable, Noley Bice, Tommy Brashier, Pat Nunley (on drums), and David Dickson.

Q: Who has been a mentor that has helped you throughout your career?

A. I've been very fortunate to have worked with some great lawyers. Sherm Winniford was my first mentor right after law school, and he really inspired me to do my best. Sherm taught me that although legal work is very serious, I shouldn't take myself too seriously. I was mentored specifically in real estate law by Pat Beard, and also by John F. Sheehy Jr., who was Board Certified in Commercial and Residential Real Estate. Both were excellent real estate lawyers.

Q. What are your thoughts about TBLS' new Board Members?

A. We have a great board. The members are all very committed and very involved. They take their roles quite seriously, and I'm looking forward to working with them and receiving their input.

Q. What would you say to an attorney that's considering Board Certification?

A. Quit considering it, and just do it! I encourage attorneys to apply for Board Certification, to follow the instructions closely, and to contact staff members with questions about the application process. TBLS staff members have a lot of ideas and experiences. We want to help you succeed!