

Frank E. Stevenson II to receive DBF Fellows Justinian Award

By Chuck Snakard

There is no known tape of Frank's debut as a country-western disc jockey, but his performance, a last-minute desperation pinch-hit when the regularly scheduled DJ failed to show up at KJIM "Redneck Radio," so impressed the station manager that he offered Frank a permanent job on the spot. Frank was a summer employee and he responded that he needed to return to college to complete his undergraduate studies. "Frank," the somber manager said, "college isn't for everyone."

Frank grew up in Fort Worth, a high school classmate of a previous Fellows Justinian Award recipient Tom Leatherbury (commercial radio experience yet to be disclosed.) He did go on to finish college—the good race was not to be run in a broadcast booth—and graduated magna cum laude from Amherst College and received a law degree from the University of Virginia Law School. He joined Locke, Purnell, Boren, Laney & Neely (now Locke Lord) in 1980, bringing not only the wit and adaptability that nearly brought him fame as a disc jockey, but also the ability to relate to clients and their needs, to analyze their problems and find solutions. Frank was nominally a member of the real estate section, but his practice extended to administrative and regulatory matters, public law, and policy and transportation. He drafted significant legislation and regulations and testified before, and worked with, legislative bodies in Austin and Washington, D.C.



Paul Wageman, former chairman of the North Texas Tollway Authority, an organization Frank represented throughout his career, wrote, "I worked closely with Frank during a period of profound challenge and transformation for the agency. Frank's creativity, steadiness, work ethic, and character were indispensable to achieving the NTTA's objectives. His devotion to his clients and fulfilling their goals is remarkable. It is fitting that the Dallas Bar Foundation bestow on him its highest award."

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His career embraced collegiality, the ability to disagree without being disagreeable, civic engagement, and a willingness to find value (and pleasure) in activities that are not billable. His vision for the legal profession has always been one of optimism—that all lawyers share a sense of duty to the community at large, a set of immutable values (often overlooked in our age of self-actualization), including compassion and inclusion, and an altruistic nature waiting to be called forth. In a jaundiced world, idealism can be a heavy burden, for some a modern cross to bear, but Frank carries it lightly. He deeply believes in the goodness of human nature and the possibility that humans can accomplish great things for the common good. He once wrote, “We are not autonomous, disassociated free agents, but instead representatives of an organization that places high demands on us.” He worked tirelessly and effectively to meet these demands.

A list of Frank’s accomplishments is humbling to read. His professionalism and legal expertise have been recognized in numerous accolades including being listed as one of The Best Lawyers in America; a Top Rated Lawyer AV Preeminent, Banking and Finance Law and Transportation Law by American Lawyer and Martindale-Hubbell; and one of the Best Lawyers in Dallas by D Magazine. The Dallas Bar Association (DBA) awarded him the Morris Harrell Professionalism Award.

He served as President of the State Bar of Texas, President of the DBA, and President of the Western States Bar Conference (a consortium of the state bars of the 15 most westerly states). He is a fellow, and formerly Chair, of the Dallas Bar Foundation and is a life fellow of the Texas Bar Foundation and the American Bar Association. He is a former Chair of the State Bar Board of Directors. He is on the Board of the College of the State Bar of Texas and a member of the Texas Center for

Legal Ethics. He received the DBA’s JoAnna Moreland Outstanding Committee Chair Award.

Additionally, he was a Member of the American Bar Association House of Delegates; a Member of the ABA Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services; a member of the State Bar of Texas Pro Bono Work Group; the President of the DBA’s Community Service Fund; a member of the Commission to Expand Civil Legal Services (appointed by Texas Supreme Court); a member of the DBA Committee to Finalize Statement on Minority Hiring, Retention, and Advancement; the Chair of the Campaign for Equal Access to Justice sponsored by the DBA and Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas; and a co-Director of DBA’s Evening Ethics Program. He has been a frequent speaker at the DBA’s Summer Professionalism Program; the Entrepreneurs in Community Lawyering (ECL) orientation; and other DBA events. He has chaired multiple DBA committees, acted as mentor in the DBA E-mentoring Program to disadvantaged high school students, and won two awards from the region’s legal-aid provider.

He was especially proud of his role as the Chair and co-founder (with Justice Douglas Lang) of the DBA Transition to Law Practice Program (now known as STEER) (an instructional program for beginning lawyers); as the Chair and developer of the DBA Summer Law Intern Program (a minority legal internship program); and as the founder of the Texas Opportunity & Justice Incubator (TOJI), a nationally recognized legal incubator training lawyers for modest-means practices.

Frank’s commitment to service extends beyond the legal field. He was President of the Sammons Center for the Arts in Dallas and a Director of the North Dallas Chamber of Commerce and of the Children’s Choir of Greater Dallas. An Eagle Scout, he served as Assistant Scoutmaster

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for his son's troop. He has remained active with his alma mater as the President of the Executive Committee of the Amherst Alumni Council and in numerous other capacities, receiving the college's Medal for Eminent Service in 2009. He was a member of the Parents Board of Bucknell University, his son's alma mater, and of the President's Visiting Council for Austin College.

Frank served as Vice President of the Board of Trustees for Grace Presbytery, Presbyterian Church (USA) and is an elder, an adult Sunday school teacher (there is a line for his classes), and a committee chair at Northridge Presbyterian Church, where his faith reinforces his belief that if each of us gives of ourselves, we can make the world a better place. Roger Quillin, his long-time pastor, described Frank as "a curious man, an honest man, a clever man, a humble man, a generous man, a faithful man, a courageous man."

Frank and his wife Helen have three children, Caroline, an attorney with Goodwin Proctor in Boston; Louise, an environmental toxicologist at Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Knoxville, Tennessee; and John, a mechanical engineer and principal with The Projects Group in Fort Worth.

He is a loyal friend and a highly entertaining and enjoyably self-effacing companion.

Bryan Garner, with his usual succinctness, captured Frank perfectly. Frank, he wrote, is "a paragon of lawyers: sensible, well-informed, unpretentious, hard-working, generous, and unfailingly sensitive to the needs and feelings of others. He has dedicated his career to serving others, much to the benefit of his many clients, his many friends, and his community. A connoisseur of living well, he is a poet at heart: he appreciates the noble and profound application of ideas to life."

But perhaps the final word on Frank should come from one of the country-western groups whose records he left behind in the broadcast booth many years ago. This from Lady A (formerly Lady Antebellum):

I wanna do something that matters
Say something different
Something that sets the whole world on its ear
I wanna do something better
With the time I've been given
And I wanna try to touch a few hearts in this life
Leave nothing less than
Something that says I was here

Frank Stevenson has done something that matters; we will remember he was here. And we are lucky for that.

The Fellows Luncheon will be held on Wednesday, October 25, 2023.

**Tickets can be purchased at dallasbarfoundation.org or
 by calling Elizabeth Philipp at (214) 220-7487.**

Chuck Snakard and Frank Stevenson were Partners at Locke, Purnell, Boren, Laney & Neely.

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