

Lewis Sifford to Receive Esteemed Professionalism Award

BY ANDREW M. JONES

Dallas attorney **Lewis R. Sifford** has been named recipient of the 2020 Morris Harrell Professionalism Award. The award is presented annually by the Dallas Bar Association and the Texas Center for Legal Ethics and Professionalism to exceptional attorneys who, through their conduct and character, best exemplify professional traits that other attorneys admire and should strive to emulate.



Lewis Sifford

Sifford has practiced law in Dallas since 1973. He is the founding member of Sifford, Anderson and Company, P.C. He is an accomplished trial lawyer, having tried more than 150 cases before civil juries, with matters ranging from commercial litigation to catastrophic personal injury and death. He has also maintained a successful dispute resolution practice, in which he has arbitrated disputes regarding pharmaceuticals and medical devices, securities matters, and many more. Further, making use of his authoritative knowledge of professional ethics, Sifford has served as an expert witness in many diverse legal matters.

While balancing the rigors of his practice, Sifford has also been a prolific educator, serving as an adjunct instructor to both SMU and Baylor law schools, where he has focused on trial advocacy and legal ethics. He has delivered more than 300 continuing legal education presentations, and he is especially known for his ethics courses, the subject being among his favorites.

Among his numerous professional achievements, Sifford is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), a prestigious organization comprised of experienced, accomplished trial lawyers and judges. Among its purposes is the promotion and preservation of civil jury trials, which the organization advocates through numerous educational platforms. He has been honored with two prestigious

ABOTA awards: the Mark P. Robinson Lifetime Achievement Award given by the ABOTA Foundation, and the National ABOTA Lifetime Achievement Award given by National ABOTA. Sifford is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, which seeks to promote standards and ethics for trial practitioners. He is also a Fellow of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. He received the DBA's Texas Trial Legend Award in 2018 and has been named to Texas Super Lawyers and Best Lawyers in Dallas many years over. Sifford was most recently honored as the 2019 Baylor Lawyer of the Year in recognition of his legal ability, achievements as a lawyer and contributions to the legal profession.

One of Sifford's most memorable cases was a long-running matter in Pampa, Texas about 40 years ago, where as a young lawyer he defended a hospital that was in the process of closing its doors after serving the Pampa community for some 50 years. The hospital was facing a malpractice case, Sifford recalled, and he worked very closely with the hospital administrator in her early 80s who had also worked as a nurse for the hospital for decades.

"She was very emotionally engaged with the suit and felt strongly that the hospital had done nothing wrong," he remembered. The nurse worked tirelessly with Sifford in preparing the case, and she became a motherly figure to him. Sadly, she died unexpectedly on the eve of trial.

"It was one of the most emotional cases I have ever worked on," Sifford said, and he was very saddened that the nurse was unable to see the trial to its conclusion, which resulted in a defense verdict. "Hundreds of people in the community came to the courthouse to hear the verdict and to provide an outpouring of support" in memory of the hospital administrator and to the hospital that had served the town for decades.

Sifford completed both his bachelor and law degrees at Baylor University in five years. Sifford completed his studies on an expedited schedule to honor his father, who was facing a terminal illness. Sometime after he had graduated, his mother was asked how long her son had been a lawyer. "Since he was two years old," she told the friend, no doubt commenting upon his advocacy abilities demonstrated at that tender age.

"He is one of the kindest, most gracious and thoughtful people I've ever known," said longtime colleague **Jennifer "Jenny" Stephens**, who has worked with Sifford as a partner and in other professional capacities for some 20 years. "He was my number one mentor among the many lawyers I've worked with or against," Stephens noted. "I

have never met a lawyer better able to boil down complex facts in such a simple, understandable way," she said, adding that "he is funny and always able to lighten things up with a good joke." Most importantly, Stephens said, Sifford treats everyone with respect, including the shoeshine man at the ground floor of his office, whom she noted Sifford has befriended and treats like family.

"Lewis personifies the ideals of the Morris Harrell Professionalism Award," said DBA President **Robert Tobey**. "So many people talk the talk, but Lewis Sifford walks the walk. Lewis is a shining example to all of us to be better lawyers who value ethics and professionalism above all else."

Asked what sort of advice he would give other lawyers, especially younger ones, Sifford said: "of all the things a lawyer can strive for, having integrity is best. If you have no integrity, nothing else matters. When lawyers represent their clients with integrity, success will follow." Sifford also encourages lawyers to reach out to others facing difficult times. "It's not enough for us to simply let someone know that we are there for them; we must proactively find ways to actually help others who are facing difficult times, whether that means sharing a meal with them, helping with their workload or simply providing an empathetic ear."

Congratulations to Lewis Sifford, recipient of the 2020 Morris Harrell Professionalism Award. **HN**

Andrew M. Jones is Co-Vice Chair of the DBA Publications Committee and can be contacted at andrew.jones@lionresources.com.

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