



What I’ve Learned: Harry J. “Skip” Philips, Jr.

Vital Statistics

Age: 69

Position: Partner at Taylor, Porter, Brooks & Phillips L.L.P.

Born: Born in New Orleans—Raised in Baton Rouge

Parents’ Occupations: Father—Captain with EBR Sheriff’s Office; Mother—Homemaker

Spouse: Colleen (42 years in April)

Graduated High School: Catholic High School, Class of ‘68

Graduated college: LSU, B.S. ‘72

Law School: Paul M. Hebert Law Center, J.D. ‘83

TBRL: Where did you grow up?

SP: I grew up in Baton Rouge. Our family lived in New Orleans twice, both for short times, and we settled here when I was in the first grade.

TBRL: When did you first decide that you wanted to be a lawyer?

SP: I was working for the Louisiana Attorney General’s Office as an investigator in the Criminal Division and assisting L.J. Hymel with trials around the state. It was L.J. who first encouraged me to seriously consider law school and my wife Colleen who really encouraged and supported my interest.

TBRL: Tell us about your first court appearance.

SP: I argued an exception before Judge Steve Alford in the 19th JDC. Judge Alford listened attentively, then read his ruling from a legal pad as soon as I sat down. My first trial was before Judge Frank Foil.

TBRL: Who were your mentors early in your career?

SP: In the practice of law, my early mentors at Taylor Porter were Frank Middleton, Tom Phillips, Arthur Abercrombie and Gene Groves. I also enjoyed working with Gerald Walter and Paul Spaht during a summer clerkship in 1982.

TBRL: Do you have a story to share from early on in your career?

SP: Within a year of admission, I argued a workers’ compensation case before the Louisiana Supreme Court. I worked on the case for Gene Groves during a summer clerkship, and Gene allowed me to argue it. At the end of the argument, we declared victory and adjourned to Galatoire’s for lunch. The court did not agree with my position.

TBRL: What is the focus of your current practice?

SP: Mostly, my practice involves litigation, including appellate work. But, I still advise clients about governance, ethics and conflicts of interest.

TBRL: Tell us about your most interesting case so far.

SP: A hotly contested lender liability case in Monroe. Trial started with jury selection on 9/10/01 and continued on 9/11.....We were in Monroe for eight days. Did not turn out well.

TBRL: If you had not become a lawyer, what would you have been?

SP: If I had not become a lawyer, I likely would have remained in law enforcement.

TBRL: What is the best advice you have received?

SP: “Don’t get into a fight with a pig. You’ll both get dirty and only the pig will enjoy it.”---Tom Phillips

TBRL: What is the best lesson you have ever learned?

SP: I learned (very early) in the Army that “you can delegate authority, but you can never delegate responsibility.”

TBRL: Did you have any jobs growing up?

SP: I was a clerk at a convenience store not far from my home.

TBRL: What is something that your parents taught you that has stayed with you through the years?

SP: Be respectful of others, do what you say you will do and accept responsibility for your actions.

TBRL: What is something that most people do not know about you?

SP: I was the youngest person ever commissioned as a deputy sheriff in EBR Parish.

TBRL: *If I could, I would...*

SP: Do it all over again, only better.

TBRL: *What do you like to do in your spare time?*

SP: I enjoy being with my family, especially our grandchildren, and watching the Tigers play.

TBRL: *If you could have dinner with anyone (dead or alive), who would it be and why?*

SP: Dwight Eisenhower (challenges of leadership of a coalition force during WWII); Thomas Jefferson (building a nation); Huey Long (just because.....)

TBRL: *Do you have any quotes that you live by?*

SP: "Let us not become weary in doing good."...Followed closely by: "Leadership is the art of getting people to do what you want them to do because they want to do it."

TBRL: *What is the last book that you read?*

SP: *The Road to Assisi* (biography of St Francis) (reading now).

TBRL: *You are happiest when...*

SP: When Colleen and I are doing things with our family, or when I am working on an interesting case, or when I get to do something at the Children's Hospital or Cristo Rey.

TBRL: *What is the greatest lesson you have ever learned?*

SP: Relationships and how you treat people (especially in the practice of law) are important. The world is very round (and very small). As Maya Angelou said, "People may not remember what you say or do, but they will always remember how you made them feel." ■



INTERVIEW BY LAUREN HADDEN

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