

*The Oil, Gas and Energy Resources Law Council of the State Bar of Texas periodically prints articles profiling Past Chairs of the Council. Due to the hard work and dedication these Past Chairs provided both to the Council and to the practice of oil, gas and energy law in Texas, the Council felt that recognition of these Past Chairs was due. The following Past Chair profile is of H. Philip “Flip” Whitworth (1947-2022), who was Chair of the Council during its 1989-1990 term.*

Flip was born February 25, 1947, in Smithville, Texas, to Harry Philip Whitworth and Edna Widén Whitworth. Flip’s father Harry was a longtime lawyer and prominent lobbyist. Flip was a lifelong resident of Austin, Texas, attending Casis Elementary, O. Henry Junior High, and Stephen F. Austin High School, from which he graduated in 1965. He proudly wore #14 while pitching for the baseball team and playing quarterback for the Mighty Maroons of Austin High.

Flip obtained a B.A. with honors from The University of Texas in 1969 and a J.D. with honors in 1972. He was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity and made many lifelong friends while at UT. Flip’s devotion to the Longhorns is evidenced no better than his missing only four Longhorn home football games from the time he was six years old until he was in his early seventies. One of the four missed home games was on the same weekend that Flip’s son Scott Whitworth had his wedding engagement party, a fact that as Scott recalls was not lost on Flip.

In 1977, he joined Scott, Douglas & McConnico, one year after the firm's founding. According to Scott Whitworth, Flip’s work ethic during his early years at the firm had him at the office every day of the week. During those times, Scott recalls accompanying Flip to the office and watching him engage in his only indulgence - putting Sweet’N Low and milk in his coffee – which he only did on weekends. Four months before Flip’s untimely death, a law firm partner visited Flip at his Austin home to see how he was doing. Flip’s response was that he “wasn’t busy enough”, as if he could not wait to get back to the office and into the action. An early mentor to Flip at the firm was Wally Scott. Known for his outsized personality and as a raconteur, Wally was the center of attention at any gathering. Flip would accompany Wally to events and stand back to enjoy the show, often reminding Wally of the punch line of his frequently told but always entertaining stories. Flip’s law partner and friend Mark Hanna recalls that “Flip loved to tell stories. But Flip usually played a small role in the stories he told. He loved telling stories about other people, his friends, his clients, and especially Wally Scott and Frank Douglass, the founders of our firm. In Flip’s stories, Wally was the exuberant, confident, funny one. Frank was the straight man - prepared, serious, and always equipped with a well-timed one liner. In telling those stories, Flip was praising two of the lawyers who had helped him build his career and reliving the early history of our great firm.”

Flip eventually became the hiring partner at Scott, Douglass. Flip was especially focused on mentoring younger attorneys, many of whom are still at the firm today. Past Chair of OGERL Carroll Martin recalls being recruited to the firm by Flip in 1980 and being the first non-lateral associate hired. Flip built the firm’s formal recruiting program on law school campuses, as well as its summer clerkship program. Due in large parts to Flip’s efforts, the firm grew from its initial six lawyers to its current roster of over 40 lawyers. When Flip stepped down after 25 years as

hiring partner, the firm gave him a memento that said simply: "To Flip: You have made us what we are."

Preferring administrative hearings to district court litigation, Flip focused much of his practice at the Railroad Commission of Texas and the General Land Office. He aimed towards solving problems, more with collaboration than bluster, knowing that his adversary today may well be his co-counsel or a referral source tomorrow. Attorneys who accompanied Flip to the RRC or GLO offices could expect to be there a long time, as Flip would drop in to seemingly every staff office to say hello.

Flip served as chairman of the State Bar of Texas Oil, Gas, and Mineral Law Section (1989-90), the Travis County Bar Association's Oil, Gas, and Mineral Law Section (1986), and the Oil & Natural Gas Exploration and Production Committee of the American Bar Association's Section of Natural Resources, Energy and Environmental Law (1994-96). He co-chaired the Southwestern Legal Foundation's 42nd Institute on Oil and Gas Law and Taxation (1991).

Flip taught an Oil and Gas Law Workshop, "Texas Railroad Commission Regulation of Oil and Gas Operations," at UT Law School in the Fall of 1987. Beginning in 2010, Flip was a frequent guest lecturer at UT Law School's Oil and Gas Courses and Oil and Gas Seminars, taught by Professor Ernest E. Smith and Flip's longtime law partner Elizabeth N. Miller.

In 2016, he was selected for the prestigious Ernest E. Smith Lifetime Achievement Award by the Texas Journal of Oil, Gas and Energy Law. Flip enjoyed speaking at numerous seminars and institutes across the state on subjects relating to oil and gas regulatory matters. His published articles ran the gamut of oil and gas topics, with an emphasis on practicing before the RRC and the ever-evolving field of how to deal with horizontal wells from both legal and regulatory perspectives.

Outside of his law firm and family life, Flip was an avid golfer. Flip would often play 18 holes of golf after work a few days a week, followed by 36 holes on Saturday, and another 36 holes on Sunday (after church, of course). He was a longtime member of St. David's Episcopal Church in Austin, having held numerous leadership positions there including Chancellor (1983-86), member of Vestry (1983-86) and Stewardship Co-chair (1984).

Mark Hanna speaks not only on his own behalf, but on behalf of his law firm and everyone that knew Flip by stating that "I personally benefitted from Flip's gracious nature. Flip helped me learn oil and gas law, how to serve clients, and how to enjoy a law practice. He was also one of my best friends. We were, and I was, lucky to be in Flip's orbit."

