

Name: Don High
Court: Collin County Court at Law #6

- 1 What current or past judge do you most want to inspire your approach to judicial excellence, and why?

Judge Curt Henderson. He was always current on the law, treated both sides fairly, had good judicial decorum and yet struck a balance wherein he was approachable off the bench by all the lawyers. I can personally say that he was an inspiring mentor to me and other young lawyers in the county.

- 2 What has been the greatest accomplishment in your legal career? In your personal life?

Legal career: I took a case to the Court of Criminal Appeals in Austin, was granted review on three writs of error, the court ruled in my favor on all three in an en banc opinion and published it. The result of this case changed the law on arrest warrants in the State of Texas.

Personal: When I arrived in Collin County in 1988 I had an unexpected break-up with my fiancée and had to begin my career in this county with a broken heart. To my credit, I was able to survive this and have built a wonderful life here. Fortunately, God has blessed with me with the perfect wife!

- 3 What, if anything, would you change to improve the procedures and efficiency of the court you are seeking?

Since this court has been vacant for four months I don't know what to expect in the way of its workload. However, I do know that I want to take trial announcements on either Thursday or Friday and let the attorneys know who will be going to trial on Monday. This prevents their unnecessary work on the weekends. I certainly have experienced my share of that during my twenty years of practice.

- 4 Do you feel that ALL citizens have equal and adequate access to justice in our county? How would you improve that access?

All citizens may not have equal access to our justice system but when they enter the doors of my courtroom they will all be treated equally.

- 5 Collin County tracks indigent defense dollars ordered by each judge. What effect would that reporting have on your decisions to order that the county pay for a defendant's defense?

My years of representing indigent defendants should serve me well in this area. The fact that it is tracked should have no impact.

- 6 What do you perceive as the greatest obstacles to justice in Collin County?

We are a growing county and our courts are crowded. We need to work with the commissioners and hope that they are sensitive to our need for more courts.

7 Incarceration is the most expensive criminal sanction available. How would that fact affect your sentencing decisions?

I will consider all options at all times but the rule of law will always prevail.

8 Without commenting on a specific case or type of cases, should Collin County explore more or different types of alternative sentencing? What do you think works? What would you like to try?

This is case specific however I will say that the root cause of most criminal conduct involves drugs or alcohol. I certainly would entertain any and all options to help address any addiction issues, whether that includes faith based initiatives, AA, or other in-house or outpatient treatment programs.

9 Recently a Dallas judge made the news when he replaced a white juror with a minority one in a capital trial where the jury was all white and the defendant was not. Do you believe it is important for a minority defendant to have a jury that contains minority members?

I am reluctant to comment on this question. However, I do believe that Batson v Kentucky is good law.

10 When a judge's sense of justice appears to be at variance to the strict application of the law, what approach should an ethical judge take to resolve the conflict?

This would have to be a special set of circumstances on which I cannot comment without knowing the specific facts.

11 Do you believe that our system of partisan election of trial judges should be continued? How can it be improved?

Yes. It is improved by an informed electorate regarding a candidate's qualifications and experience for the bench they are seeking.

12 Tell the voters one thing about yourself that isn't on any website, nor discussed at any forum.

One of my greatest legal challenges and triumphs was a five year case against American Express which resulted in a favorable settlement and my client's subsequent appearance on the Oprah Winfrey and Leeza Gibbons shows as a guest on the subject.