

Looking Back With Pride

Longtime TSBPA Executive Director Reflects on Board and Personal History

By Anne McDonald Davis

As the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy (TSBPA) celebrated its centennial in 2015, the profession recognized TSBPA's widely respected Executive Director **William Treacy** for his 25th service anniversary. Once quoted as saying, "Our philosophy is compliance over condemnation, prevention over punishment, and the public interest over the public intimidation of CPAs," Treacy has seen everyone justly served by that approach over the years.

"Our board regularly receives positive feedback," he asserts. "That tends to be unusual for a state agency. I believe the compliments we receive from the public are a testament to the board's ability to serve the public and licensees with respect and courtesy."

The executive director is pleased to report that the number of complaints continue to diminish over time, largely due to a proactive approach. For instance, the board sends upcoming CPE requirement reminders and early warning notices to licensees. As a result, many disciplinary actions are dismissed on the basis of voluntary compliance. Proactive programs such as CPE ethics requirements and peer review also impact compliance. With an ever-increasing volume of licensees, Treacy is gratified there isn't a corresponding increase in disciplinary actions.

He comments: "The board has always done a superb job of administering the Act and Board Rules, even with limited resources. In recent years, the board has been very fortunate in the way it has received resources; this has greatly enhanced our effectiveness. TSBPA prides itself on standing as a model for other boards of accountancy around the country."

Treacy has observed a definite correlation between the board's



reputation and accomplishments, and the relationship that exists with TSCPA. "Considering the caliber of the sincere, dedicated CPAs and public members who are appointed, our agency has a very bright future," he smiles. "When there are more applicants willing to serve than there are positions available on the board, we can be assured that the excellent quality of the members will continue."

Those who've had the opportunity to meet Treacy and work with him over the decades know that the slight lilt in his voice can be traced back to his Cork City, Ireland, birth. A naturalized U.S. citizen since young adulthood, he tries to find time to return to the Emerald Isle for regular visits.

He recalls: "Growing up, we didn't have the means or opportunity to do much sightseeing. Some of my older siblings had never seen some parts of Ireland. On a recent trip, we visited areas of the country that were new to them. I took them out to the Dingle Peninsula, among other places. With the help of GPS, I even took my brother-in-law to an old farm that once belonged to his uncle. He used to go to the farm during the summer when he was a boy. We also traveled the back roads of west Cork and marveled at its beauty." When teased about Ireland's regular mists and drizzle, Treacy jokes, "I always think of Ireland as a chilly version of Hawaii."

Grandfather to five, he and wife, Renée, have also taken their extended U.S. family to contemplate drisheen, barmbrack and leprechauns (none spotted recently). He laughs: "The grandchildren are getting older – the twins are in college. All five are in Lubbock, so I do my best to try and keep up with them via texts and social media. Took the older ones over a few years ago ... still need to organize a trip for the others."

Aside from rooting for Notre Dame during football season, Treacy's interests include literature and music. He recently acquired an acoustic guitar and has started taking lessons.

"My dad was very learned in music and self taught," he reminisces. "From an early age, music was part of my life. One of my first jobs was selling programs at the local opera house. So I'm inspired to learn (the instrument) because of him and those memories. I also relish Tony Mottola's classical Spanish guitar, and Vivaldi's just wonderful to listen to."

100-year Anniversary of TSBPA

March 2015 marked the centennial anniversary of the Public Accountancy Act (the Act). The Act was created in 1915 by the Texas Legislature to form the Texas State Board of Public Accountancy. The Act mandates the board to protect the public and ensure competence in accounting practice by administering exams, issuing certificates and licensing CPAs.

Treacy adds: "My late brother ... we were close ... used to play the bagpipes and accordion. I miss him to this day. There's a certain spirituality in music that makes life worth living."

As for literature, Treacy considers his latest read, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, to be primarily about pursuing personal dreams. He explains: "We all have personal dreams, but sometimes the road of life takes us on a zigzag path to unexpected places and differs from what we had originally envisioned. However, if we really use our imaginations, we can make connections between our personal dreams and our careers. I once dreamed of being a ship's captain. In a sense, that's what I am. That dream is fulfilled by my ability to serve the public as the executive director of the board." ■