



Judicial Profile

by Katie Cummiskey

Hon. Jane J. Boyle U.S. District Judge, Northern District of Texas

"Well, I think [my experience] really starts and ends with the fact that I have always loved this area, always loved the courtroom, and always loved trial work. It's not something that I have to force myself to do; it's just something that I enjoy. I can't really get enough of it."

– Judge Jane Boyle

In 1981, when Judge Jane J. Boyle graduated with her J.D. from the Dedman School of Law at Southern Methodist University, her peers focused on involvement in the high-profile areas of law at that time—real estate and oil and gas. However, Judge Boyle had her sights set on a different direction: the district attorney's office. She knew that those aforementioned areas of law did not lend themselves to the courtroom, and that is exactly where Judge Boyle wanted to be.

The judge describes being in the courtroom as "the most wonderful job in the world." She is excited to wake up every morning and go to work; she simply cannot get enough of it. Since her sophomore year at the University of Texas at Austin, Judge Boyle knew that she wanted to pursue a law degree. In fact, it was when she met people who were in the law school that she decided it would "be a dream come true to do something like that." After graduating with honors, there was nothing that could stop her from achieving her dream of becoming a lawyer and eventually a U.S. district judge.

"[Judge Boyle] was one of the most dedicated law students in our class," recollects U.S. Magistrate Judge Jeff Kaplan, a fellow graduate of Judge Boyle's law class. "She knew she wanted to be a trial lawyer from the very beginning of law school." It was Southern Methodist University's law school "criminal clinic" program that hooked Judge Boyle on the idea of working in the courtroom. For one summer, she defended



people in real criminal cases in actual trials just as if she were a practicing lawyer. Judge Boyle's newfound spark of interest developed her urge to learn as much as she could to enhance her experience, and the best place to do that was the district attorney's office.

Judge Boyle began her legal career in 1981 as an assistant district attorney for Dallas County. Her initial cases involved traffic and speeding tickets, but from there she moved up to misdemeanor and then felony court, including the career criminal section. In 1985, Judge Boyle was promoted to chief felony prosecutor of the Major Commercial Fraud Unit of the Dallas District Attorney's Office. In this high-level position, she prosecuted white-collar crime cases, including securities fraud and embezzlement, for two years.

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In 1987, Judge Boyle was hired as an assistant U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas. Judge Boyle describes the U.S. attorney's office as very different and the work much more "proactive" for the prosecutors than the district attorney's office. At the U.S. attorney's office, the prosecutors are much more involved from the inception of the investigation through the grand jury process and then through the conviction and sentencing phases of the case. By contrast, in the district attorney's office, the police arrest an individual in the course of a crime and present the case to a grand jury, which later goes to the prosecutor who then assumes charge of the entire case. Judge Boyle emphasizes that because of the heavy burdens in the U.S. attorney's office, experience is an important prerequisite to working there. As Judge Boyle explains, in the U.S. attorney's office, attorneys tend to have a lot more control over their cases, which can leave room for more things to go wrong, thus translating into increased responsibilities on her part. Judge Boyle reflects,

I had one case, which was one of my first long trials, which lasted almost 13 weeks. It was a mail fraud case that involved about 500 victims across the United States who succumbed to these ads for a make-up distributorship. A lot of people invested what little money they had—one man invested his child's college fund. The distributor did not follow through with sending their purchased goods, and people lost their money. We had a trial, and close to 500 victims came down to testify against the distributors. Most of them were convicted and given lengthy prison sentences.

Although by this time, Judge Boyle had fulfilled her aspiration of spending over nine years in the state and federal courtrooms, her ambitions did not end there. In 1990, she was appointed to the position of U.S. magistrate judge for the Northern District of Texas, Dallas Division, where she served 12 years. Judge Boyle credits her experience in the courtroom to helping her have a solid understanding of what works and does not work. Judge Boyle's respect for, and recognition of, lawyers who truly know how to practice law was substantiated during her time as a magistrate judge.

"It was a window into the world of civil lawyers—watching them in the heat of the moment," explains Judge Boyle. One differentiating factor of a civil case, like those she tried as magistrate judge, was that these cases do not go to a grand jury. Judge Boyle estimates that during her tenure as a magistrate judge, she heard thousands of discovery hearings. Judge Boyle used the experience she gleaned from her many judicial positions to advise others through their careers as well. Judge Kaplan reflects, "It seems in almost every career decision that I have made, [Judge Boyle] was

one of the first people that I consulted for advice. She has incredible wisdom and judgment and she was very helpful to me in understanding what all the [magistrate judgeship] would entail." She believes her years of hard work culminated on April 16, 2002, when she was appointed by President George W. Bush to be the U.S. attorney for the Northern District of Texas. Most noteworthy about this position was that she was the first woman to serve as the top federal prosecutor for the Northern District of Texas—a significant honor. She describes this as "one of the best experiences [I've] ever had." Judge Boyle admits she was initially a bit intimidated by this high office. But once her position began, Judge Boyle's accomplishments gave way to what she describes as one of the most rewarding things she has ever taken part in. "It was an interesting time to be at the U.S. attorney's office," recalls Judge Boyle, "because it was right after 9/11." Most of her tenure there focused on anti-terrorism efforts with the FBI. In addition to a heavy emphasis on drug conspiracy and sex trafficking cases, Judge Boyle also dealt with white-collar fraud cases due to Enron's collapse in 2001. Toward the end, her office also handled an onslaught of cyber crimes. Two years later, President Bush appointed Judge Boyle a U.S. district judge for the Northern District of Texas, the position she currently holds.

Judge Boyle's main drive is her love for the law and, as she reflects, "you see social benefits from it, see disputes getting resolved, a criminal defendant getting a fair sentence, and you see that you help do that. It is so fulfilling to be a part of that." Judge Boyle describes her time as a district judge to be extremely interesting because "we have such a broad jurisdiction over civil and criminal cases.... We see everything from patent cases, to white collar cases, to immigration cases."

One must wonder what kinds of characteristics are necessary for someone to achieve such an esteemed position as a U.S. district judge. Judge Boyle asserts that being prepared and completely informed about the case at hand, including reading all the documents, is first and foremost. Possessing an open mind and not "pre-judging" anything are two crucial mindsets to remaining completely objective and fair. These are mindsets that Judge Boyle consistently upholds. In regard to disposition, being even-tempered is very important to Judge Boyle and helps when interacting with the lawyers and witnesses in her courtroom. After observing Judge Boyle in her element, it is quite apparent just how important her thorough understanding of every detail of the case at hand is to her before issuing

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a sentence. She is also very fair and treats people on the stand with great respect, no matter their status as a lawyer or charged citizen. Above all, Judge Boyle respects the legal system, and her passion for the law is why she says that “even after many years, the work is still fun.”

Judge Boyle has seen a wide range of lawyers come through her courtroom, and this helps her distinguish the traits of the most successful ones. “You see that [some] of these issues are life or death to the litigants.... And then you see the skill of their lawyers and how it helps them win or lose. It’s a wonderful thing to see,” describes Judge Boyle. One of her favorite things is observing a lawyer who has really studied and honed his or her skill, and who then parlays that knowledge and abilities to help win a case. However, Judge Boyle has also seen the other end of the spectrum. Lack of obvious preparation, causing a lawyer to let their client down, is something Judge Boyle unfortunately witnesses as well.

As evidenced by Judge Boyle’s ratings in the Dallas Bar Association poll, she receives positive marks from others in the legal world. Most notable is her favorable rating in regard to her preparedness for hearings and trials—something Judge Boyle contends is very important for judges and lawyers alike.

Even though she is the first lawyer in her family, Judge Boyle is not a novice to forging her own path. Her father instilled in her early on that “no one is going to come along and knight you with a sword on each shoulder. You have to go out and you have to seek what you want. ... And when you do that, you have to understand that for a lot of the journey you are going to get knocked down,” Judge Boyle explains. Her father was a huge influence, and it was his advice that helped her ignore those around her who voiced negative opinions about attending law school and becoming a lawyer.

Although it may seem surprising, Judge Boyle’s seemingly fluid journey has not always been a walk in the park. “I sat in a lot of offices as I was moving my way through asking for jobs which I didn’t get. ... I sat through a lot of ceremonies where someone else got the job I applied for,” recalls Judge Boyle. The ability to get back up and keep persevering is something Judge Boyle holds dear.

In order to keep the legal system flourishing, Judge Boyle believes the key is “integrity and character.” She also emphasizes that this is a profession first, and secondly, a business. This profession is one that helps people on any level with their problems—from the poorest to the richest. Judge Boyle finds that in the end, “our system in America is based on the hope that it provides a level playing field decided by objective people” who must continue to believe fairness is what amalgamates our whole judicial system. When asked what her ideal legacy as a U.S. district judge would be, she thought for a few moments and responded, “just that I treated people with respect and made decisions

fairly.” She again refers back to her father’s guidance when he told her that she owes it to the lawyers and to the system to be prepared and exercise justice. “You can never rest on your laurels,” admonishes Judge Boyle, “you always have to take every project like it’s as important as the one 20 years ago.” Judge Boyle’s unfaltering dedication is what has helped her maintain her fairness in the courtroom.

Judge Kaplan reinforces this belief. “[She] is truly a great judge. But she’s an even better person.” Judge Boyle’s stalwart position in the courtroom is coupled with the compassion and love she holds for her utterly supportive family. “I wouldn’t be here if I hadn’t married the man I married,” says Judge Boyle of her husband, John Boyle, an assistant U.S. attorney. Judge Boyle believes her husband’s encouragement has been the foundation of her success. The Boyles have two children: Casey, who currently attends the U.S. Air Force Academy; and Joe, who graduated from the Academy in May 2012.

Judge Boyle’s professional organizations include the Texas Bar Foundation (for which she is a Fellow), and the Dallas Bar Foundation (for which she has served on the Board of Trustees). She also served as former president of the William “Mac” Taylor Chapter of the American Inns of Court. In 2001, Judge Boyle served as vice chair of the Dallas Bar Association’s Business Litigation Section and then served as co-chair of the *Pro Bono* Activities Committee. In 2007, she was appointed to serve on the Criminal Jury Charge Committee of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

Judge Jane Boyle was honored with the *Distinguished Alumni Award* for judicial services from SMU’s Dedman School of Law in 2009. This award praised Judge Boyle because her “personal and professional stature reinforced the quality of the legal education program of the school.” In 2008, Judge Boyle received the *Samuel Pessarra Outstanding Jurist Award* from the Texas Bar Foundation. This award honors an active federal or state judge who exceptionally exemplifies “competency, efficiency, and integrity.” These three characteristics clearly summarize Judge Boyle’s legal career as well as her ideals. Her contributions to and achievements in the courtroom will undoubtedly continue to set standards in her profession. ☺