

## Texas Law Review

Reflection by Samuel A Simon, Esq. Class of 1970

I sit here today in the new phases of my life, reflecting on how those few Texas Law Review years of 1969 – 1970 charted my professional and personal life journey.

I knew I had an Army obligation ahead of me and that it was a perilous and tumultuous time in the world. I was part of an outspoken, progressive activist group of students in the class and on the Law Review that year. We had just heard then Federal Communications Commissioner and alumni Nicholas Johnson speak at our banquet urging us not to “take the Golden Train” to Houston. Instead, to pick a career of advocacy and public interest work.

In the class and on Law Review was the late Jim Welch, Peter Petkas (now living in Houston), and from the class of 1971, Joe Tom Easily. Joe Tom passed away this past week. In 1969, Joe Tom became a Nader’s Raider in Washington. He came back to school in the Fall of 1969 to tell us that Ralph Nader was planning to start a public interest law firm in the summer of 1970. Nader was looking for some bright young lawyers. Joe Tom wanted to recommend us. We, all three, said yes. Nader hired all three of us.

A heady experience. Jim Welch went to a big law firm and died much too young from cancer. Peter Petkas worked in President Carter’s administration as a senior domestic policy staff member. I eventually carved out a career in Washington of bringing public groups and industry together.

It occurs to me that one needs to be careful in taking that first job. It just might determine the rest of your professional life. It was true for me. My work for Ralph Nader in 1970 shaped my professional career. It enabled me to work at the highest levels of political and consumer advocacy in Washington and my now home state of Virginia. (My son is currently a member of the Virginia legislature.) I worked directly or under Ralph’s umbrella until 1986 and then leveraged that experience to form a public affairs firm that brought together industry and public groups to seek common ground. It was new then, and it was possible. Throughout the 25 years of that work of bringing together corporate and public groups, Nader called me onto the carpet only once for getting too close to business interests.

This past week, February 28<sup>th</sup>, I called Ralph on his 88<sup>th</sup> birthday. I am working with him, now 52 years later, to bring together a book of essays from the surviving members of that 1970 group. We want to highlight our different paths of highly productive lives working for the public interest. As we say – you too can do this.