

## **NIKKI TOWREY DeSHAZO**

Nikki Towrey DeShazo was raised in the small town of Stilwell, Oklahoma, and graduated from Stilwell High School as valedictorian of her class. She attended Northwestern State College in Louisiana and received a degree in nursing, after which she moved to Dallas and took a job in the emergency room of Parkland Hospital. She married and had three children. Then, because she wasn't challenged enough, Nikki entered SMU Law School at age twenty-nine, when all three of her children were under the age of five.

After practicing law for a few years, Nikki was elected as Judge of the Probate Court of Dallas County, Texas. She served in that capacity for almost twenty-seven years. During her tenure, Nikki also served as the Presiding Statutory Probate Judge for the State of Texas and as the president of the National College of Probate Judges. She also found time for the many, many other activities listed on her c.v., in recognition of which she has been honored with multiple awards.

Throughout her professional life, Nikki has made the time to be a doting mother, grandmother, great grandmother and wife. She has also been active in her church, serving as an Elder and Chairman of the Board of the two foundations that benefit the church.

You may ask yourself, how has she accomplished all of this? My answer is that within her beats the heart of a small town nurse filled with love and compassion for her fellow humans. Nikki possesses a mind that, when faced with a decision, will always choose the high ground. She is driven to give her best whenever called upon for a particular task. These qualities consistently earned her a ninety-eight percent approval rating in the Dallas Bar Association judicial polls taken while she was on the bench. They also earned her the respect of the members of the Dallas and Texas Bar Associations and every other organization with which she has served.

If I may be personal for a minute, she has been my wife for twenty-eight years and, more than a wife, she has been my wingman and my best friend. It is my great pleasure and honor to present the 2015 Distinguished Probate Lawyer Lifetime Achievement Award to Judge Nikki Towrey DeShazo.

Edward V. Smith III

**NIKKI DeSHAZO**  
**Curriculum Vitae**

**Profession**

Mediator, 2010 to present  
Judge, Probate Court of Dallas County, 1983-July, 2009  
Presiding Statutory Probate Judge of Texas, 1993-1997

**Education**

Northwestern State College, Natchitoches, La., B.S., Nursing, 1966  
Southern Methodist University, J.D., 1976

**Publication**

Probate Texas Practice Guide, Judge Nikki DeShazo, Thomas M. Featherston, Jr., Sharon Brand Gardner and Sarah Patel Pacheco, West Group, Three Volumes, 2000-2010

**Activities**

National College of Probate Judges  
President, 1998-1999  
President Elect, 1997-1998  
Secretary, 1996-1997  
Executive Committee Member, 1993-2000  
Site Selection Chair, 2003-2012

American Bar Association  
Commissioner, American Bar Association Commission, Legal Problems of the Elderly, 1997-2000

National Guardianship Network Steering Committee for Guardianship Standards, 2012  
Elder Law Center Advisory Board, Stetson University College of Law, 2007-2012  
Commission on National Probate Court Standards  
Advisory Committee on Interstate Guardianships  
Wingspan Conference, 2002  
Wingspan Implementation Committee, 2004  
Joint Conference on Legal and Ethical Issues in the Progression of Dementia, 2000  
National Conference on Public Trust and Confidence in the Justice System, 1999  
National Symposium on the Future of Judicial Branch Education, Curriculum Development Meeting, 1999

Roundtable Advisory Group, Enhancing Coordination of State Courts with the Federal Representative Payment Program, a Project of the ABA Commission on Legal Problems of the Elderly and the ABA Center on Children and the Law, 1999-2001

State Bar of Texas  
Chair, Real Estate, Probate and Trust Section, 2005-2006  
Treasurer, Real Estate, Probate and Trust Section, 2003-2004  
President, Women and the Law Section, 1986  
Council Member, Real Estate, Probate and Trust Section, 1987-1991  
Pattern Jury Charge—Family Committee, 2009-2010

Dallas Bar Association  
Member, Probate Section Council, 2010-2012  
Member, Board of Directors, 2006-2007  
Chairman, Mock Trial Committee, Dallas Bar Association, 1986  
Chairman, National Mock Trial Competition, 1988

Member, Executive Board, Dedman School of Law, 2001 to present  
Steering Committee, Volunteer Guardianship Program, Senior Citizens of Greater Dallas, 1995-1998  
President, Executive Women of Dallas, 1991-1992  
Advisory Board, Old Red Foundation  
Director, Summerlee Foundation, 2008 to present  
Secretary, Summerlee Foundation, 2010-2012

## **Honors**

Lifetime Achievement Award, Real Estate Probate and Trust Law Section, Dallas Bar Association, 2013  
Louise Raggio Professionalism Award, 2010  
Distinguished Alumna, SMU Dedman School of Law, 2010  
Honorary Fellow, The American College of Trust and Estate Counsel  
Life Fellow, Texas Bar Foundation  
Founding Life Fellow, Dallas Young Lawyers Association  
Leadership Dallas, Class of 1991  
Distinguished Alumna, Stilwell High School, Stilwell, OK, 1992  
Honorary Alumna, University of North Texas, 1998  
Champion for Seniors Award, Dallas County Adult Protective Service, 2007  
International Who's Who of Professionals  
Who's Who in American Law  
America's Registry of Outstanding Professionals  
2000 Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Great Women of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Married to Edward V. Smith III. Mother of three productive and self-sufficient adults and grandmother of three beautiful young women and one devilish young man and one extraordinary great-granddaughter.