

Zachary Solano

“A Great Lawyer Knows the Judge”

Zachary Solano: Good Afternoon and thank you for tuning in to South Texas Stories. The podcast dedicated to both sharing and preserving community history of South Texas and the Texas Coast. My name is Zachary Solano and I'll be your host this afternoon. They often say a good lawyer knows the law, and a great lawyer knows the judge; Joining me today is a dear friend of mine, Judge Robert Pate. Since moving down to Corpus in the Fall of twenty-seventeen [ed. Note. 2017] I've come to know Robert through a variety of endeavors. Whether that just be the University or our involvement in Young Life. Seemingly every time I see Robert, he's got a new story to tell me, whether it's about one of his kids, his past or something new he's got under his wing. Today I seek to show you the world through his eyes. – As the friend who has constantly been called an “old man” for most of his youth, meeting Robert has reminded me of one thing - “youth is wasted on the young”. Beneath his 5' 9 frame and hiding behind his Dark thick rimmed glasses, you see a man with the Suave of Sinatra, the Charm of Martin, and the seriousness of Cronkite between the aforementioned stories to the occasional run-ins. the lesson learned from Robert, best surmised by a Jimmy Buffett song “Die while I'm living than live while I'm dead and though the days grow more complicated the nightlife still wins.”

Robert Pate:

I take classes at Texas A&M Corpus Christi also since 2012, which is where you and I met. Well, my name's Robert Pate I'm 69 years old. I was born and raised in Corpus Christi through about the seventh grade. And then my dad was transferred in succession to Houston, spent a couple of years there and then to Denver, Colorado actually graduated from . I attended Colorado state university for one year, and then I transferred to the University of Texas at Austin. I received a, undergraduate degree, from The University of Texas at Austin. I have a master's degree from University of Texas graduate school of business and accounting, and they call it the Master of Public accounting degree. I'm a CPA certified public accountant. I practiced certified public accounting for about a year. And then I went back to law school. I went to Southern Methodist university, SMU law school graduated in 1978 from law school and moved back down to, uh, Corpus Christi and in 1978 and went to work with a firm called, Stone-Berryman and Giles about a year later, uh, I, formed a law firm with my one of my best friends growing up a guy by the name of Larry Adams and the name of the firm was Giles, Adams and Pate. We did that for a while and then eventually I went out on my own. And so, I've been out of my own, most of my legal career in 1995, I was appointed as the presiding judge at the 28th district court here by Governor Bush. I stood election in the ninety-six election as a Republican running for this district court bench, there were no Republicans elected in Nueces County. At the time I got beat by an individual who had failed the bar exam twice, but that didn't seem to matter to the voters in Nueces. This County, uh, I left at the end of 1996, December 31st, 1996 was my last day on the bench. I started doing my law prior again, and then in early 1998, uh, Governor Bush called me and asked me if I would accept a second appointment. When judge held a toggling, one of our local district judges and a friend of mine was elevated to the federal bench by President Clinton. I told him I would. So, I took a second appointment from Governor Bush. And

became the presiding judge of the one 48 district court and stood election in 1998. That year, Governor Bush was on the ballot for reelection as governor. And, what I learned as a loss, as a loss in Texas or in politics, because I lost by way, fewer than a thousand votes, but a loss, nonetheless. And that's when Bush carried Nueces County. However, because I'd been twice appointed by the governor, I had enjoyed the status of a visiting judge under the law. If a person was twice appointed by them governor, and then they had the status of a visiting judge and I could serve Texas as a visiting judge, which I continued to do. And I've pretty much served as a judge, as ever in every County South of here. I mean, Kleberg County, Willacy County, Cameron County, Dago County, star County, every County and I've really enjoyed that because as you know, Zach, I fly my own airplane and I would fly down. I'd be able to fly to these cool parts and spend a day being a King for a day and then I'd turn around and fly home. And did that. I'm just unloading here since you asked me the question. I've also been involved over the years of oil and gas investments. Got an oil company with a buddy of mine out of Kansas, and we've got some things we're doing, I office with some clients of mine that are successful real estate developers. In fact, we built over the last several years, we built a two hundred and twenty-four-unit apartment complex over in Portland, Texas. We actually just sold it the day before yesterday. So, we sold that property and now we're out looking to buy something else to go develop something else, but I've got clients that own shopping centers and other developments and. Now I'm active in real estate development with them. And, uh, that's about all I do.

Zachary Solano: When I first arrived in Corpus Christi for my freshman year in 2017, I had no idea what to expect; all I knew was that this city centered around Selena, and the Lexington. . As I've come to be here these past four years; I've seen a lot, heard a lot and read a lot about the identity, the people, the culture and the overall significance of this sparkling city by the sea. Being a Native Texan, we typically wear our hearts on our sleeves and ultimately seek to find and experience how other Texans identify with Texas. For the most part that means owning a pair of boots and jeans whether living in the flatlands of the panhandle or the beaches of the coast, there are some ubiquitous things that define us, and separate us as well, whether that be our methods for the perfect brisket or whether the Dallas Cowboys truly are America's team. Eternal image of Texas is the Cowboy, so much a staple that every Texan maintains some aspect of that culture within our closets or in our mannerisms. Coming across an article in *Texas Monthly*, it introduced me to a new type of cowboy. This was the history of the Cowboys of the Gulf, an introduction to Texas Surfingⁱ. You know when I think surfing, I don't think about Texas, I think about Hawaii and even California. As a Historian I've often seen the connection to history on a personal level appear way later in life. No one person immediately recognizes the connection they have to a moment in time, unless accompanied by some form of monumental change, some force for good or even some force for evil. Occasionally that's newspapers in a grandparent's attic, a photo of a long lost relative or the stories we've heard a thousand times. In this next clip Robert discusses his connection to the cowboys of the gulf and the surfing scene of the gulf coast and how his wife Linda, a member of surfing royalty is partially responsible for the growth and introduction to this latest iteration of Texas culture.

Robert Pate: My wife and her brother and her father they're surfing royalty in South Texas because Linda's father bought a bunch of surf boardsⁱⁱ and brought them back to Corpus Christi and her brother, Larry. Opened up a surf stand here in Corpus and he was actually the first surfboard rental place in Corpus Christi. And he expanded to have surfboard rentals, , up in Freeport and then down in South Padre Island. He financed his entire college education with a surfboard rental business that he basically ran in the spring and summertime and they would get beach boys They called them beach boys. They'd get other kids to run them when he wasn't here, when he was off at school and when he got back. That was one of the problems I have with my wife, frankly. I used to think it was really great, you know, I'd come home with my paycheck, whatever it was and say, we'll get this money. Linda said she used to laugh and say, Oh, what I remember is payday was when Larry would come on Sunday after running the routes to pick up the money from all the surfboard rentals. And there'd be a big pile of money on the bed. And there that was all wet money, wet dollar bills and five-dollar bills. But we had to sort it all out, cleaned it off and everything. So, we could go deposit the bank. She said, now that was a payday.

Zachary Solano: Previously mentioned, Texans seek to define themselves against everyone and everything yet bond over the idea of being Texan. Keeping in mind, Texan Surfers often put themselves out there in conditions others would scoff at, looking at you Californians. From Larry Law sparking the scene in the nineteen-sixties to James Fulbright of Galveston, Texas beginning the movement that was Tanker surfing, or surfing in the wake of the tanker shipsⁱⁱⁱ. A ubiquitous sight both coming and going out of Corpus Christi Bay and Galveston bay.^{iv} Texas itself has an image captured by writers such as John Graves in his book "Goodbye to a river" or even the photographs of Wyman Meinzer, the state photographer. Texas and Nature go hand in hand, much like the image of the cowboy out on the open range on horseback or foot. The stories of individuals getting out to the coastline and getting on their boards encompass magazines^v, history books and forums as far as the eye cares to look. For Texas Surfing is not simply an idea it's a way of life for some. – Robert is an individual who's moved around the great lone star state for most of his adult life, settling back down in Corpus back in 1978 meeting individuals such as Charlie Wilson, the Texas Congressman known for his office antics and his role in defeating the Soviets in Afghanistan and providing aid to the Mujahadeen., to Former President George W. Bush through an oil deal. With the idea of growth in the forefront of my mind I asked him, what was next for corpus and where did he see this going.

Robert Pate: A lot of Corpus hasn't changed one of the nice things about Corpus. you know, we were probably, we are now primarily a Hispanic, I mean we're Hispanic majority city, I think on balance. I think Corpus, we all get along pretty well in Corpus. We have a relatively, we have a small, but I think relatively highly educated black community. We're almost, I think a model for other cities and we have, we have Anglos elected. We have Hispanics elected. We have Republicans elected. We had Democrats elected, we've had black office holders countywide before we've had, I mean Carl Lewis, the County attorney was black. We've had city council members, Hispanic I mean, Corpus gets along. I mean, that's one thing that I like about it. I mean, we don't, I mean, there's, we got problems. I mean, we have disparities and we got, you know, ocean drive, it looks like a goddang ranch road. I mean, it is rough, right? It's what we

have issues, but you know Corpus for the last 20 or 30 years, we've been very lucky. The oil business has been great to us. The port business has been great to us. The tourist business has been great to this whole entire area. we we've had the establishment of Texas A&M Corpus Christi, a four-year university in the last 25 years, or whenever that's been, you know, so we've had a lot of great things that have happened. So, I think, I think on whole it's been a very good thing, but the interesting thing to think about though, I mean, when you think about how much has happened since 1978, in terms of growth in Texas, when we moved back to Corpus Christi after law school after Dallas, after, I graduated from law school. when I moved back to your Corpus Christi's population was around 350,000. That was the population, Austin. I mean, Austin, you know, about a million and a half, whatever it is and it's almost solid people, Austin, all the way to San Antonio. In Corpus on the other hand, we'd gone up maybe 360,000. I mean, we're, we're, we're kind of in that same you know deal.

Zachary Solano: A city is only as good as the people within it and as interesting as the people within it. Corpus Christi is a city I've come to know and love during my four years down here. It has the potential to be where I raise my family and live out a significant portion of my life. I'll always be thankful for my time in the sparkling city by the sea. Despite the Misgivings of Coronavirus, Corpus is a city that doesn't seem to have been hampered or even slowed down on the road of progress; in fact, it seems as if more is getting done, as if this lull is exactly what the city needed to get ahead and as Robert claims that there have been years of the notion that Corpus is on the verge of growth. Whether that be through private investors such as Robert and his developments taking place in Port Aransas, or the University expanding and becoming a more prevalent part of the city. The biggest take away from my time here in Corpus is that there are interesting tidbits wherever you look in your hometown or whatever place you presently calling home. Mine took the form of a 5'9 elderly gentlemen who hid behind dark thick rimmed glasses, who could somehow always tell me a story. Thank you for tuning in, my name is Zachary Solano, and this has been South Texas Stories.

ⁱ Stephen Harrigan "Cowboys of the Gulf." *Texas Monthly*, April 2014, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.texasmonthly.com/the-culture/cowboys-of-the-gulf/>

ⁱⁱ Allison Ehrlich, "TBT yes, you can surf here: Surfers have hit the corpus beach for years" *Corpus Christi Caller Times*, March 13, 2019, accessed September 20, 2020, <https://www.caller.com/story/news/special-reports/building-our-future/throwback/2019/03/13/surfing-corpus-christi-and-port-aransas/3151641002/>

^{iv} Paul Hagey "Third Coast State of Mind" *Texas Monthly*, July 2010, accessed September 26, 2020, <https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/third-coast-state-of-mind/>

^v Justin Housman. "Around the bend: chasing swell on Texas' Gulf Coast" *Surfer* December 17, 2015 Accessed September 26th, 2020, <https://www.surfer.com/features/around-the-bend/>