

*August 11, 2010  
San Antonio, TX*

Presentation of the 2010 Sam Emison Award to  
Ike Vanden Eykel

It is my distinct pleasure to introduce tonight's 2010 Sam Emison Award winner. I have been attending these dinners for the past twenty five years. In that time I have been amazed at the dedication, the accomplishments, the longevity, and the commitment to excellence in the practice of family law that every recipient has exhibited. To a person, every recipient of this award will tell you that the night they won was the highlight, the pinnacle of their professional life. To be recognized by your peers for a lifetime of work and commitment to the law, and particularly family law, is the highest recognition possible.

When I first attended these dinners two decades ago, I could only dream that one day I might be chosen, but I could not imagine the gravity, humility and emotion of actually being the Sam Emison Award recipient. I tell you all of this tonight because I was so overcome with emotion a year ago that I know that I could not have adequately expressed my gratitude to you then. I join my fellow recipients in telling you it *is* the highest honor I will ever receive and I thank you.

Many times as I would watch these presentations and play along with the guessing game and speculation about who would win, I would be surprised by the recipient—not because they didn't imminently deserve it, but because I couldn't believe that they had not already won it years ago. So it will be tonight. You will all be surprised when you think back on the history of this organization, the section and the practice of family law that this recipient is just now receiving the Sam Emison Award.

Like so many of our recipients, tonight's has a depth of service and commitment to family, to the community and to the profession that are largely unknown outside their immediate circle of friends and family.

In 1968, our recipient's brother went missing in action in Viet Nam with two of his fellow soldiers. In 1977 at the age of 28, only four years out of law school, our recipient successfully argued in the United States Supreme Court so that the brother could retain his MIA status and his wife could continue receiving her survivor benefits.

In 1993 our recipient pioneered the *Families First* divorce education program at the Child Abuse Prevention Center where our recipient sat on the Board for over a decade. There our recipient convinced Dallas judges to implement the program which is still in place. "Protecting those who cannot fend for themselves in this world is the highest calling" our recipient was quoted and was awarded the 2009 Child Abuse Prevention Center's prestigious Spirit of Compassion Award.

Our recipient served on the Collin County Children's Advocacy Center Board for six years where our recipient and spouse made generous donations each year rather than exchange Christmas gifts between them.

Our recipient has said "We have the best justice system in the world but it is terribly inaccessible to the poor" and has led the way to donate thousands of dollars and hundreds of hours to the Dallas Volunteer Advocacy Program. Our recipient has been a long time leader in the Access to Justice Campaign both in Dallas and state-wide.

One of his partners has said "I have watched him build respect for all family lawyers by being of service to not only family lawyers, but the larger bar as well. He has helped bring respect to us all by being a leader in his profession. And lastly I've watched him do all of this with not one

hair out of place and not one wrinkle in his suit. He always looked like class and most importantly acted like class.”

His wife of 32 years could not be here but sends this message: “I am so proud of the time that he has selflessly devoted to the community and to his family. There hasn’t been much time for himself but both of us believe in the quote ‘to whom much is given, much is expected’. This is how we have lived all of married life and we have made difficult decisions based on this.”

He was born March 25, 1949 Marlon James Vanden Eykel in Slayton, Minnesota. He graduated from Drake University in 1971 where in his freshman year, his pledge trainer stumbled over his name so many times that he just nicknamed him “Ike.” He graduated from Baylor University School of Law in 1973 where his daughter is set to begin in the spring of 2011.

He is Board Certified in both Family and Civil Trial law.

He is a member of the Texas Academy of Family Law Specialists, a Fellow in the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and the International Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and a Diplomate in the American College of Family Trial Lawyers.

He has written or co-authored four books on Texas Family Law.

He is the current President of the Dallas Bar Association.

His favorite possession is a red Smart car that he fits in.... barely.

The only crap he takes are from his babies Annie and Abbie, two yorkies whose poop he scoops daily

He is the managing partner of the largest family law firm in the Southwest. Most would think he would want his name on the door first

but he is smart enough to recognize that the first two names on the door are in the Hall of Legends and perhaps being third to them is ok.

On a personal note, my mother who was a legal assistant in Dallas for years, was thrilled that I became a family lawyer because I believe she had a crush on Ike. Whenever I was with her at holiday or family gatherings, she always asked whether I had seen him or talked to him and wanted to know how he was doing.

Ladies and gentlemen please join me, all of the Past Emison Award winners, and all of the associates and partners of Koons Fuller Vanden Eykel & Robertson in congratulating the 2010 Sam Emison Award winner, Ike Vanden Eykel.

*Tom Vick*