



In Memoriam: TLTA Past President Bert V. Massey, II

Dear TLTA member,

Last week our TLTA family suffered a great loss with the passing of our beloved friend and longtime industry leader and icon, Bert V. Massey, II. I've been personally privileged to know and work closely with Bert for over 40 years, and I'm going to miss his friendship and wisdom more than I can possibly express. I know so many of you feel exactly the same way. Bert had a way of making everyone feel special, and the list of people who considered him a mentor and friend could fill up a football stadium. He would of course have requested that be Daryl K. Royal Memorial Stadium in Austin, home of his favorite Texas Longhorns.

Since I received the news of his passing, I've been reflecting on just what it was that made Bert so special. He truly was one of a kind, with all the best human qualities you can think of rolled up into one larger-than-life persona. The list of his achievements and the legacy of his service have been expressed beautifully in the [obituary written by his family](#) and the [eulogy penned by the local Brownwood newspaper](#). I'm not going to try to duplicate those, but please be sure to read them to fully grasp the scope of his accomplishments and contributions.

Instead, I wanted to share just a few of my thoughts about what made Bert, Bert.



For starters, Bert was an intellect like no other – a walking encyclopedia of information on everything from politics (one of his many passions), to the law, the title business, the inner workings of a municipality, Texas history, sports stats, the best place to buy stylish men's clothing (he was quite the clothes horse), the best kind of cigars to smoke (boy did he ever love his cigars), and the list goes on and on and on. He was always ready and available to share that knowledge with anyone who asked. Not only was he smart, he also had incredible recall and could tell you something that happened 50 years ago in the greatest and most colorful detail at the drop of a hat.

And speaking of colorful, Bert loved to tell stories and could frequently be seen holding court at any TLTA event, to the delight of everyone on the receiving end. His sense of humor, frequently laced with his trademark sarcasm, was as legendary as the big laugh that accompanied it. An emcee at many TLTA events and fun occasions, we all were the happy beneficiaries—and occasionally the victims of—that wickedly funny sense of humor.

To say Bert was blessed with the gift of oratory and the gift of gab is an understatement. I know so many of us were in awe of his eloquence in delivering anything and everything. Whether it was in front of a packed audience or just in casual conversation on the phone, Bert never ceased to amaze me with his ability to articulate things in a way that we mere mortals could not. I will miss hearing him speak and the sound of his commanding voice that made everyone in the room sit up and listen and smile.

Bert was a really good sport. The best example I can think of was him agreeing—I'm sure against his better judgment—to pop out of a giant cake for our TLTA Centennial Celebration. He did have the good sense to decline to be dressed like the New Year's baby, instead opting for a classic tuxedo. What none of us realized was how hot it would be inside that cake while we were waiting for him to make his surprise appearance. Sweltering might be more accurate. He didn't complain, though, he just sipped his celebratory glass of champagne while he sweated and dutifully waited to pop out on cue. Who else would have been good natured enough to do that or more dedicated to TLTA? The TLTA staff will forever be grateful to you, Bert, for agreeing to that crazy little stunt!

Being considered a mentor is the true sign of a quintessential professional and Bert was a mentor to countless people in our industry, and no doubt in all aspects of his life. You tend to think a mentor is someone older than you, but in Bert's case, age was immaterial. People younger than him looked up to and learned from him of course, but people older than him did exactly the same. When we celebrated our TLTA Centennial and asked our members who their mentors were, Bert was on almost everyone's list – universally admired and a role model to all.

More than anyone I've ever known, Bert had a true servant's heart. Reading his obituary, you get a sense of the sheer depth and breadth of his volunteer service and leadership – both to our industry, which he loved dearly, and equally so to his community locally and statewide. He just believed in giving back, in working tirelessly to make things better in his sphere, and he rarely if ever said no when the call came to serve in whatever capacity large or small. I was also privileged to see some of Bert's quieter acts of kindness. He would do almost anything to help someone in need – he embodied that spirit of service whether in the spotlight or behind the scenes. The result was a lasting legacy that will impact the world he lived in and the issues and people he cared about for a long time to come.

Bert was loved and respected by everyone who came in contact with him. He did not know a stranger. He was an ambassador of goodwill in ways large and small, with people he knew well and those he only knew peripherally. People were just naturally drawn to him. One example that I remember was being at a rate hearing at TDI that Bert was unable to attend. The Commissioner of Insurance paused at the beginning of the hearing before proceeding and said, "Where's Mayor Massey"? The commissioner was genuinely disappointed that Bert would not be in attendance and the rest of us, I think, probably served as a poor substitute for the ever-popular Bert Massey. His presence just filled a room and made an impact wherever he went.

One of things I really appreciated about Bert was that he loved his life, pure and simple. He loved his hometown, his friends, his profession, and all his many passions and interests. He was comfortable and happy in his own skin.

Bert was a man of God, a man of great faith, a good man, an honest man, a kind and caring man, and he lived by the principles of his faith as evidenced in the very lengthy list of his good works.

Above all else, he loved and adored his family, within which he was the center of the universe, lovingly referred to as Daddy Bert. To Melinda and the entire family, please know that we send our deepest condolences and hold you in our hearts as we grieve and celebrate with you the life of this fine man. Thank you for sharing him with us all these years.

Bert, thank you for the gift of your life, the gift of your time and your talents, the gift of your treasured friendship. We are all eternally blessed to have had you in our lives for so long and richer for having known and called you friend. You have earned your rest now, dear friend, but whenever we gather as the TLTA family, we will always feel your spirit with us and we will smile.

With sadness, love and respect,

Leslie Midgley, CAE
TLTA Executive Vice President and CEO