

CPA Spotlight: Always on the Go

As published in the July Issue of TSCAP e-zine

Some people are just wired a certain way. Whether it's working on a project that requires countless hours of work to fulfill completion or working outside, taking on back-breaking labor, some folks just can't sit still... They have to be working.

This seems to be the case for Terry Sheldon, CPA and shareholder of Johnson & Sheldon of Amarillo. Sheldon has more than 30 years of experience in public accounting, serving audit and tax clients, and managing wholesale, retail, construction, financial institutions and cooperative organizations.

However, before entering the profession, he spent his youth growing up on a family farm in Dumas (approx. 50 miles north of Amarillo). A routine of rising early and working hard all day helped build a mentality of doing what's right and toiling until the job is done.

"Growing up on a farm, we always had to work hard and when we could, we played hard," he said. "I still operate the same way today. In our firm, most people are here early and work hard all day long."

As a kid, Sheldon had a love and gift for math and at the time, knew there was a need for accountants. After making a deal with his dad to pursue it, he left for Texas Tech and turned his attention to reaching his goal.

"Yes, I was better at math than anything else," he said. "In the '70s, accounting degrees were in great demand and still are. My dad said he would help pay for my education if I didn't take any agricultural classes, so my last semester I took electives of Animal Science and Commodity Hedging."

After graduation, Sheldon began his career close to home working for H.V. Robertson & Company in Amarillo in 1979. From the outset, he was taken under the wings of the partners and learned the ins and outs of audit and tax in the public area, which proved to be ideal preparation for the future.

"James Davis, Marilyn Ault and the other partners at H.V. Robertson gave me great training and taught me responsibility for client service. I received well-rounded training from them," Sheldon said.

"Public accounting is great for any business career," he added, "I learned valuable lessons and how to get along with clients, staff and supervisors."

Now more than three decades later, Sheldon recalls this early education and incorporates it in his (and his staff's) dealings with clients to not only provide stellar service on all accounting issues but general business. "The satisfaction of helping people and the relationships I've established over the years with long-term clients are the best part of this job," he said. "They are not only clients, but my friends."

As past president and treasurer of the Amarillo Botanical Gardens, an active member in many civic organizations and profession-related associations such as AICPA, the Panhandle Chapter of TSCPA and TSCPA, and the National Society of Accountants for Cooperatives, Sheldon reaches out because as he puts it, "there is always something I should be doing, so I just go do it." This need to give back also filters to his staff as they're urged to support local causes for the betterment of the area.

"I truly believe we all need to support our community with our time as well as money," he said. "Lots of people give money, but nonprofit organizations also need your time. My wife introduced me to volunteerism early in our marriage and it has been a great benefit."

Johnson & Sheldon wants all of our staff to be on boards, go to charity functions and to get involved. We always have people involved in United Way, Leadership Amarillo and several other organizations," Sheldon said.

Amarillo will always be a special place for Sheldon and his family. Although the population has grown to nearly 200,000 over the years, it has stayed true to its roots as a place of old-fashioned values, work ethic and unity.

"I am surprised that when I go out, I always know several people," he said. "People involved in the community get to know each other and that helps you in your business career and your personal life. The economy here has been great and is diversified with agriculture, financial, government, medical and oil and gas. It is a great place to be in business and to raise a family. My wife and I raised our twin daughters here, and they are great adults and parents who want to live in this community."

It helps that there are people like Terry Sheldon proud to call it home.