



A storied career

Jim Ross has built a successful legal practice by establishing meaningful relationships

When you sit down in Jim Ross' office, you immediately feel at home. His easy way of speaking mixed with the casual atmosphere make it feel as though you're in the Ross' family room rather than his office.

Looking for a fresh start, Ross moved to Arlington in 1983 after serving four years as a U.S. Marine – a fresh start the American Dream City had to offer. Soon, Ross found himself in his new role of Arlington Texas Police Officer.

"I spent very little time on patrol," Ross recalls. "I was instead selected for Arlington's brand-new Special Operations Unit. This was Arlington's first full-time SWAT team."

It became clear that Ross was bound to make a difference for the Arlington PD. After serving in Special Operations, Ross went on to become the in-service and defensive tactics training coordinator at the Police Training Center. It was in that position that Ross developed the curriculum and proposal for The City's

very own Police Academy. He remained as the Coordinator for the first two Academy classes. The Academy still exists today and recently graduated Academy Class #56.

"My Police Academy Commander moved over to Narcotics," says Ross. "And I knew that was where I wanted to be, so I applied and followed him there and eventually to the DEA Task Force in Fort Worth." Ross spent over six years undercover investigating drug trafficking and sales.

"I remember this little motel on Division – it's where I did one of my first drug deals," Ross says. His eyes a bit glazed over as he pictures the dated establishment he's referring to.

"Now," laughs Ross, "I know the guy who owns that block."

For Ross, relationships are the tapestry that set the backdrop to his life story, interwoven in each scene and story line, and writing the lead paragraph for each chapter that occurs.

In 1996, Ross made the bold choice to quit his career in law

enforcement and go to Law School.

"I'd testified in court rooms as an expert witness," recalls Ross, "and I was intrigued by trial."

As a new Attorney, Ross was inexperienced – yet savvy – due to his previous careers. In many ways, Ross' life has been a series of experiments in making unknown decisions with just enough wisdom to make them work.

And, clearly, this strategy has served him well – his next unexpected encounter proving a case in point.

"Meeting Erin Brokovich," Ross says, "was one of the best parts of my career that I never could have predicted."

Ross' friendship with Brokovich led him into a career of multi-million-dollar environmental cases with the New York law firm, Weitz & Luxenberg, which set up a Fort Worth office for Ross to run.

Once again, for Ross it was relationships, even unexpected relationships, that led the way.

Ross' impressive – and ever-evolving – story is especially noteworthy, considering that when he began his own firm in 2008, "I spent more money than I made."

He took out telephone book ads, and, his first website, he created on his own with the help of his ex-wife.

"I quickly found out," he says, "that there are plenty of people willing to show you the way, for the right price. I fell prey to some pretty bad business decisions."

Yet despite these early struggles, Ross has grown his firm substantially in just over a decade. The small office on Lamar Boulevard where he "hung his shingle" in 2008 begat a bigger space, which begat another, which eventually produced the current home of The Jim Ross Law Group. It comprises just over 10,000-square feet on the eighth floor at 2221 E. Lamar Blvd.

In the process, Ross has seen his one-attorney firm grow to feature nine lawyers, including his first attorney hire, Lance Welch, who joined the firm in 2010 and is now a partner who supervises family law cases.

Then, of course, there's Ross' "other job," as co-owner of the popular restaurant Mercury Chophouse, which opened a little over a year ago a floor above the law firm and which routinely entertains local and visiting guests who enjoy not only great cuisine but one of the best views in North Texas.

"My partner, Zack Moutaouakil, puts great food with great service," Ross says. "My job is to be the conduit that brings people to the restaurant – I have the easy part."

Of all the stories, there is one that stands out to this Michigan native. It's the story that changed his thinking and has become his personal mantra, as well as that of his firm.

It involves a consultation Ross had with an elderly gentleman,

who asked if he could speak with the lawyer about some issues he was facing.

Ross listened for nearly an hour, then responded.

"Legally speaking, there wasn't much I could offer," Ross remembers with a slight shrug of his shoulders. "The man's issues weren't any that would require legal action."

The gentleman thanked Ross for his time and offered to pay him for the visit. Ross declined to take his money. As they parted, the man picked up one of Ross' business cards and made his way out the door.

"A year and a half later," Ross recalls, "I got a call from a family that was at Harris Methodist hospital."

The family was in need of legal counsel as their son had just lost his leg in an accident involving an 18-wheeler. The family told Ross they believed there was a case for negligence on the part of the trucking company and asked if they could hire him to represent them. Ross accepted the case, and won a healthy settlement that would provide for the son for the rest of his life.

In the aftermath of the settlement, Ross asked the family how they came to call him in the first place. "They said they were



"What I do, what we do at this firm, is all about relationships. True marketing doesn't come from ads or billboards or any of that kind of communication. Real marketing comes from the way you treat people."

talking and a janitor at the hospital overheard them, and told them, 'I met the nicest lawyer in Arlington, and I think he can help you.'"

Yes – it was the same elderly gentleman with whom Ross had visited previously.

Ross, contemplative for a moment, says, "what I do, what we do at this firm, is all about relationships. True marketing doesn't come from ads or billboards or any of that kind of communication. Real marketing comes from the way you treat people."

It's clear that relationships are working for Jim Ross. And his commitment to Arlington has not gone unnoticed. **A**