



Medina Municipal Court Judge Dale Chase

Meet Medina Municipal Court Judge Dale Chase,
by Kate Feeks, Courthouse Reporter for *CZ Court Reporter* at
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I was greeted with "Good Morning" when I sat down to meet Judge Dale Chase. It is the same kind of greeting that Judge Chase of the Medina Municipal Court uses to greet each and every person that stands before him in the court room. It is extremely important to him to offer this greeting of respect.

Judge Chase explained, "When I over see misdemeanor cases, I know and can see there is more going on, a crisis, in these peoples lives that is causing them to be there in front of me. 'Good Morning' is how I greet each and every one of them because it is important for these people to know that I am reaching out human to human and offering respect to them. It just may be the first time these people have ever received respect from authority."

The respect that Judge Chase so diligently works at expressing to people in his court doesn't end with his greeting. It is important to him that this respect is carried throughout the process of each case he handles.

Since Judge Chase is the only judge in his court, handles up to 18,000 cases per year. "The shear volume is so incredible that you have to be organized to give each person the focused, individual attention, he or she deserves" the Judge explained. It is just that "focused individual attention" that I

noticed was prominent in Judge Chase as I sat and learned more about him and his responsibilities.

Judge Dale Chase of the Medina Municipal Court was born and raised in Medina and is a graduate from Medina High School. He holds a B.A. in International Studies from The American University and a degree in law from The Catholic University of America. Judge Chase had a private law practice from 1975 through 1987. He served on the Medina City School District Board of Education and Medina County Career Center Board of Education from 1978 through 1987. He was elected Municipal Court Judge in 1987 and his term started January 1, 1988 and he has continued serving to the present.

During the years before he became Judge, forty two percent of the DUI cases that were handed down were given a lesser sentence. He prides himself on the fact that he will not permit these cases to be reduced. "These are the cases that directly affect my community through injury and death so I have really focused in on them for the past twenty two years of my career."

The DUI cases that pass through this court range from 700-1,100 each year. Although these cases are at a high number, they are organized according to the number of DUI offenses they have committed. Individuals who have committed prior offenses will receive more of the court's attention and resources. Judge Chase is passionate about each and every case he handles, but he has sense of mission when it comes to DUI offenders.

The first offenders in a DUI case are directly sent to the Driver Intervention Program (DIP). This is a seventy two hours residential program that is offered as an alternative to incarceration. The program not only helps offenders recognize the seriousness of a DUI and the need to stop the act all together, but it provides assessment, testing, educational services, and counseling in both individual and group settings.

Once an offender finishes the DIP program they return to the court for sentencing. Judge Chase receives an assessment from their program and from this information the Judge determines whether or not the offender needs further assistance from the court. The offender is able to Exit the program if no further assistance is necessary. If the offender needs further assistance they receive at least another year of probation and more treatment.

When Chase was elected Judge in 1988 the court did not have a probation department. He organized the department that provides background and history of the individuals that come into court. This allows him to have

information needed to make better judgment. The probation department is an essential tool to the office. Judge Chase's refusal to reduce DUI offenses combined with the supervision of his probation department is the backbone of his Court's handling of DUI offenses.

In addition to Judge Chase's many roles at the Medina Municipal Court it is his family he feels is his biggest accomplishment. His face lit up when he told me about his Anniversary trip of a lifetime, given to him as a surprise by his wife Barbara, to celebrate thirty five years of marriage. He gave a loud laugh describing how he spent this Anniversary at the Graceland Wedding Chapel, on the Las Vegas Strip, with a thin Elvis singing away to them. Judge Chase spoke highly of his wife Barbara and his three children, Martha, Nicholas, and Elizabeth.

Judge Chase has a focus and determination concerning his work that goes well beyond what is required from his position. As I went over in my mind all that we had discussed I couldn't help but be impressed with the individual attention he had given me.

Remember that he is responsible for 18,000 cases a year and he is the only judge in our Municipal Court. I know how privileged he feels to be a judge in his hometown. Like him, I am a native of Medina. I also love this community and always want to keep it just like home – safe. I know the focused attention Judge Chase says he has for each case that crosses his desk is truly that, a focus on keeping our town the same safe Medina as he and I have always known it to be.