

# THE OKLAHOMAN

## Executive Q&A with Linda King: Oil & gas attorney adds biblical Ph.D. to her lifelong learning vault



by **Paula Burkes** Published: January 14, 2018 5:00 AM CDT Updated: January 14, 2018 5:00



Attorney Linda King of GableGotwals poses for a photo at the office library in Oklahoma City. [Photo by Chris Landsberger, The Oklahoman]

GableGotwals attorney Linda King recently fulfilled a New Year's resolution she set for herself years ago. King in December earned a doctorate in biblical interpretation, after successfully defending her dissertation on the metaphors of abundance in the gospels.

Her work was the culmination of 14 long years, including four years of weekly commutes to Texas Christian University in Fort Worth to complete graduate and Ph.D. classes, followed by years of researching, writing and rewriting her doctoral thesis.

The hardest part, King said, was learning French, German, Greek and Hebrew so that she could read scholarly articles in all four languages. Her coursework, which she stacked on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, also involved studying neurology, philosophy and more. "I'm a lifelong learner," said King, who's taught Greek and writing classes with St. Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University for the past nine years. "Since my youth, learning has always been my favorite thing — and still is."

From her 15th-floor office in the north tower of Leadership Square, King, 70, sat down with *The Oklahoman* on Monday to talk about her life and career, including how studying the law and the bible intersect. This is an edited transcript:

**Q: Tell us about your roots.**

**A:** My dad was an electrician and my mother worked for Genie Personnel. Both valued education. I was raised debating and arguing all kinds of stuff. I'm the oldest of four, so I had to make my case, whether it was for an extended curfew, bigger allowance or the last pork chop. I attended Northeast Junior-Senior High School and graduated from Carl Albert High School where I competed in debate, including against Elizabeth Warren in one tournament. I also worked on my high school newspaper and yearbook, and edited my college newspaper.

**Q: What did you want to be when you grew up?**

**A:** I aspired to be a literature professor, and wanted to write the great American novel; something for the ages. I was awarded a tuition scholarship to Oklahoma Christian (OC), where I studied English and worked as a grader on campus to help cover my other expenses.

**Q: You were widowed as a young mother. That must've been so heartbreaking and scary.**

**A:** It was a traumatic blur. I had a 2-year-old son and was nine months pregnant with my second son. I went from the funeral to the hospital to have him. My first husband was killed in a small plane crash. He was a flight instructor and a student was piloting the plane. Following his death, I used the life insurance money to buy a small bungalow in Edmond near my parents, so they could watch the boys while I attended graduate classes at OSU. About a year later, I earned my pilot's license. I'd flown with my late husband and wanted to face my fears versus run from them. I've also sky-dived.

**Q: How did you meet your current husband?**

**A:** Eric was the only bachelor at the church I attended and several yentas kept shoving him toward me. We'd met at OC. An Englishman, he came here to go to school. He finally asked me out; I think to get those women off his back. Ha. We married six months later.

**Q: What led you to go to law school?**

**A:** I was studying all this bleak literature and Eric, who was in his first year of OU law school, was studying torts and other, far more interesting stuff. That's when I decided to follow him to law school. When we graduated, we worked for different firms for three years. Then, we jumped off the cliff in 1979 and opened our own oil and gas law firm, King & King, which we ran for 15 or 16 years, before merging with GableGotwals when it opened its Oklahoma City office in 1995. The timing was right. We'd expanded to 11 employees and begun to outgrow our own building in Edmond. Plus, we embraced the opportunity to join a large firm, as some larger gas companies will do business only with firms of our size and stature.

**Q: What's the connection among teaching English, practicing law and interpreting the bible?**

**A:** Each requires the love of, and skills for reading closely — whether it's a poem or novel, the Constitution or statute, or a passage of Scripture. Also, each often involves the same interpretive techniques: consideration of the author's intent, context, the world behind/within/in front of the text, and the ways that various reading communities and reading strategies can yield different meanings. For me, title examinations in oil and gas law are like reading historical novels. You learn everything about the land, from its allotment to Indian tribes to present day, including mortgages, foreclosures, divorces, war and the Penn Square Bank debacle.

**Q: I understand practicing law and theology isn't rare at GableGotwals.**

**A:** Correct. Oliver Howard in our Tulsa office was a minister before he became a lawyer. He continues to lecture on biblical topics and served many years on the board of the Phillips Theological Seminary. Meanwhile, veteran attorney John Henry Rule, also in Tulsa, earned a master's in divinity in 2005. John continues to work as a full-time lawyer, as well as a part-time Episcopal priest. I'm delighted that ethics and integrity are woven into the culture of this firm.

## **Personally speaking: Linda King**

**Positions:** GableGotwals, oil and gas attorney/title examination.

**Education:** Oklahoma Christian University, bachelor's in English; University of Oklahoma, law degree; Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, master's and doctorate in biblical interpretation.

**Family:** Eric King, GableGotwals colleague and husband of 45 years; sons Bryan King, 47, an Oklahoma City attorney, and Brad King, 45, an emergency room doctor in Tyler, Texas;

daughter Cory Elizabeth King, 40, a corporate employment law attorney in Oklahoma City; and 11 grandchildren, ages 6 to 19.

**Neighborhood:** They're downsizing and building a home in the Stonebridge addition in southeast Edmond.

**Church:** Dayspring Church of Christ in Edmond. She helped found the church in 1982, and has served as its longtime chair of adult education.

**Philanthropy:** She serves on the U.S. board of directors for Predisan, a medical mission in Catacamas, Olancho, Honduras (She's gone on 15 trips so far.), and co-founded the Edmond-based U R Special Ministries Inc., a nonprofit that provides new clothing to needy schoolchildren.

**Travel:** Her most recent trip was to New Zealand. Next up is Portugal and Spain in October. She every year also visits London, where her husband has family.

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