

Father and Daughter Share Experiences on the Kansas Board of Law Examiners

By Anne Woods, Director of Public Services and Foundation Liaison

The Kansas Board of Law Examiners (KBLE) brings shared memories for a father and daughter. In 1995, Tom Murray was appointed to the KBLE and served until 2013. He was chairman from 2006 to 2013. In July 2005, his daughter, Anne, was preparing to take the Kansas Bar exam.

“He was on the board when my husband (Mark Emert, Fagan & Emert, LLC) and I both took the bar exam in July 2005. He was recused from the grading for that examination because of the conflict of having a daughter as an applicant, but at the swearing-in ceremony my dad was able to read the roll of new attorneys, which is a special memory for our family,” shared Anne Emert.

Anne had certain qualities growing up that led Tom to believe she might become a lawyer someday.

“Her work ethic and tenacity were remarkable in everything she did, which in my view characterizes her legal career,” Tom said. When she decided to apply for law school, Tom said he was proud of her and “fairly quickly began to notice that she was starting to debate me on things all the time and enjoying it to the hilt.”

Anne was nominated in 2023 to serve on the KBLE.

“I knew generally about the Board of Law Examiners and the work that it does, and I was excited for the opportunity to assist with the important task of helping to oversee the processes for attorney admissions to the Kansas Bar,” Anne said. “The board meets twice a year for about a half-day. Throughout the rest of the year, the board is responsible for grading the two bar exams administered in July and February. The board divides up that work, and the grading itself can take anywhere from 20 to 40 hours for each exam, depending on how many examinations are assigned to each grader. The board also is responsible for matters involving character and fitness, and from time to time the board may have hearings



Anne Emert and Carol Park at the April 24, 2026, swearing-in ceremony.

for applicants about whether they have met the character and fitness requirements for admission to the Kansas Bar. So, there is time involved in preparing for those hearings, reading all the materials, attending the hearing, and then discussing the resolution with other board members.”

In 1995, Tom was contacted by Carol Green, clerk of the Appellate Courts, who informed him that a Supreme Court Justice had nominated him for the KBLE. Tom explained that he didn’t have any particular expectation during his first year on the KBLE, but he knew the board was charged with preparing and grading Kansas Bar examinations. He shared that the character and fitness hearings were a new item. When he became chair in 2006, his duties expanded.

“When I served as chairman, my main duties revolved around chairing board meetings, including character and fitness hearings, certifying bar exam results, and reading the names of those who had passed the Bar at the Kansas Supreme Court’s bar passage ceremonies held twice a year,” Tom said. ►



Carol Park and Anne Emert presenting the report to the Kansas Supreme Court on April 25, 2026.

Fast forward to 2023 and Anne Emert is on the KBLE. She now also serves as chair.

"I am honored to have been nominated to serve as chair of the board, just as my father served for many years. It's a privilege to serve on this board with many talented and dedicated lawyers from across the State of Kansas," she said.

Service on the KBLE also includes being alert to the changing landscape of the legal profession and being knowledgeable about current issues affecting bar examinations.

"When I served on the board, we were always alert to current ideas and proposals relating to bar examinations generally. I attended the National Conference of Bar Examiners meetings as my practice allowed and always enjoyed conversing with bar examiners from all over the country," Tom shared. "Probably the most significant change during my board service was instituting reciprocity between Kansas and Missouri, which occurred before I became chairman. There were also frequent debates going on in every state as to whether bar examinations should be based primarily on a given state's own statutes, case law, and legal system or instead become more nationally oriented. A number of changes moving toward a more national approach have since occurred."



The Murray family on the day of Anne's admission to the Kansas Bar. Left to right: Anne Murray, Tom Murray, Cindy Murray, and Tom Murray, Jr.

Anne believes her service on the KBLE has shaped her perspective about the future of the legal profession.

"When I first joined the board, I had not been following closely the proposal by the National Conference of Bar Examiners to transition from offering the Uniform Bar Exam (UBE) to the NextGen UBE," Anne said. "It's been informative to learn about the structure of the NextGen UBE and the reasons that the NCBE is encouraging states to adopt it. And I am looking forward to 2028, when Kansas will begin administering the NextGen UBE for its applicants."

When asked how having a father who has had experience on the board provided her with guidance in her service, Anne shared that she has much more appreciation for the work he did on the board.

"It's interesting to talk with my dad about the changes to the Kansas Bar exam over the years. When he was on the board, the board members were responsible for drafting the examination questions for the Kansas-specific portion of the written examination. I remember showing my dad my BarBri study guide when I was studying for the exam, which contained practice questions from past Kansas Bar exams, and he was able to recognize several questions that he had written over the years. I am thankful that the current board does not have such a challenging task! I also think my dad instilled in me the importance of the work of the KBLE in that it is responsible for overseeing all aspects of attorney admissions in Kansas. The board does this work to make sure Kansas clients are getting competent legal representation, which in turn strengthens the reputation of the Kansas Bar and the community's confidence in the legal profession."

Both Tom and Anne are grateful for the opportunity that service on the KBLE has provided to get to know fellow board members.



Anne with her then fiancé, now husband, Mark Emert on the day they were both admitted to the Kansas Bar in September 2005.

“I’ve really enjoyed getting to know my fellow board members who practice across the State of Kansas in a diverse set of disciplines. Everyone on the KBLE takes their roles seriously, prepares diligently for each meeting or hearing, and asks thoughtful and well-reasoned questions as we contemplate important issues involving attorney admission,” Anne said.

Tom recalls the friendships he has formed and what he liked most about his time on the KBLE.

“Hands down, what I liked most was the camaraderie we all enjoyed during our meetings and in dealing with each other outside of the meetings. There were very genuine and lasting friendships formed from service on the board.”

It should not be of any surprise that Anne became an attorney and was selected to serve on the KBLE. She said her dad still jokes about her use of legal terms as a child.

“My dad still jokes about the legal terms that he would use around me as a child, and then I would repeat them back to him. Once when I was about four years old, I handed my dad his briefcase and told him, ‘Good luck in your “appadition” today, daddy.’ Then, when I was a fairly new associate at my law firm, and I took my first deposition, I remember emailing my dad to tell him about the milestone of my taking my first ‘appadition.’”

Anne did not always have law at the forefront of her career interests.

“I didn’t always know that I wanted to be an attorney. I started my career in marketing at a large magazine company in New York. I hated the lack of human interaction and feeling like my work was not making a difference in someone’s life. It was that experience that inspired me to sign up to take the LSAT and start applying to law school,” she said.



Reading of the Roll of Attorneys by Thomas V. Murray, Chair of the Kansas Board of Law Examiners.

Anne is the daughter of Tom and the late Cindy Murray. She recalls that both parents emphasized service to others.

“If I were not an attorney, I likely would be a teacher. I love working with and helping people solve problems, which is why I enjoy the practice of law. I never considered nursing (her mother was a registered nurse) because I did not have a love for the sciences like my mother did, but I think our professions are similar — and I learned this from both of my parents — that working in a profession that provides service to others and strengthens communities is rewarding work for a career.”

Anne is with FineLine Employment Law in Overland Park. Her areas of focus include employment law and counseling, assisting clients with employment advice, workplace investigations, employee handbook and policy reviews, and other human resources practices.

Tom is senior counsel with Lathrop GPM LLP in Overland Park. His areas of focus are labor and employment and general business and complex commercial litigation.

So far, Tom and Anne have provided a combined 21 years of service on the KBLE, a unique experience that few father/daughters can say they have. ♦



Anne Woods coordinates the KBA Lawyer Referral Service program and the Kansas Free Legal Answers program. She provides support for KBA and KBF communications, IOLTA, and the KBF grants and scholarship programs. Woods received her bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Kansas and has more than 25 years of experience working for associations and nonprofits in Kansas.