David Coale, partner at Lynn Pinker Cox & Hurst, is recognized as one of the top appellate practitioners in Texas. He leads an exciting career and is the author of two different legal blogs. We sat down with David to discuss how he got to where he is today and what advice he would give to younger lawyers looking to find their own niche. Below is our full exchange.

**How long have you been practicing law? Where did you go to school and how did you start your career?**

I have been practicing law for 26 years now. I went to Harvard College, and attended law school at the University of Texas.

**What initially attracted you to appellate litigation and what makes you stay?**

I was on debate teams in high school and in college: in high school, I was the Texas State Debate Champion. In college, I was the 1990 National College Debate Champion. A lot of debaters actually end up going into appellate work—of all practices of law, it’s the most like debate, so I would say that similarity is both what attracted me to it in the first place and what makes me stay. When I first came to Lynn Pinker Cox & Hurst, they didn't have a specialist in appellate work—we mutually realized the need, and a synergy developed naturally.

**What was the most exciting or interesting matter you’ve ever had?**

The most novel case I’ve experienced was one in which I represented Siemens, the German engineering company, regarding a power plant in Mexico that had malfunctioned. Siemens made a power turbine that they sold to the state-owned electric utility of Mexico, known as CFE. The relationship between Siemens and CFE never worked well: CFE wanted to burn a fuel in the turbine that Siemens wasn’t comfortable using, and CFE also used another company for maintenance on the blades of the turbine. One of the blades broke and ripped through the turbine. Thankfully no one was hurt, but CFE claimed that it caused millions of dollars in damage. CFE sued Siemens, claiming that the blade was poorly designed. Siemens argued that the blade was sound, but rather it was the fuel chosen by CFE or the other company’s maintenance work that had caused the problem. We had to translate boxes of documents: there were three different languages and three different countries involved. The whole case was pretty complex, but just fascinating—you could hold the blade in your hand and see the entire story of the case in the blade’s design, the deposits left on the blade from the fuel and the covering on the blade added as part of the maintenance process.

**If you could give new lawyers one piece of advice, what would that be?**

Start thinking early about what you want to do long term. Your first hurdle will always be to get your first job and work on gaining experience; but keep in mind that you probably won’t have that job forever. Eventually, one way or another, you’ll be running your own show—even at a big firm, you’ll likely have a specific niche. Ask yourself, “What aspects of my work resonate with me? What could I focus on one day?” If you don’t give it thought early on, you might get stuck doing something for the long term that you’re not really excited about.
If being a lawyer wasn’t an option, what career path would you have chosen?

Well, I’ve always wanted to be a lawyer, so this is a tough one—but I suppose I would be a fortuneteller in New Orleans. I go to New Orleans a lot for my appellate practice and really enjoy it there. Once I got my fortune told and I thought to myself, “I could do a better job.” So, I bought a deck of tarot cards and got really good at it. I don’t pretend to use magic or anything, but everyone looks at the images a different way, so I do think that a good deck of tarot cards is a good way to gain insight about yourself. I even wrote an article about tarot card illustration history for ArtHistory.us

You have a couple of blogs, right? Can you tell me about those?

My blog, 600 Camp, covers commercial litigation in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. Its “little sister” blog, 600 Commerce, covers commercial litigation in the Dallas Court of Appeals. Both blogs focus on the simplest nuts and bolts of a case: What does this case say? How do you do X? We live in such a complex time and cases can get really confusing. The simplest, most general answer is often best, even in these modern and highly specialized times, and that’s what I hope my blogs offer to readers.