

WAITING FOR THE VERDICT IN THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS

What Can I Do to Keep Myself Occupied?

By: Michael Locklar

Your closing is complete. The last words of the jury charge still hang in the air. One of the senior associates is instructed to wait in the courtroom for word that the jury has reached the verdict. There is little for you to do until the jury comes back with the verdict. What do you do with yourself until you get the call to come back and hear the fate of the case? Here are some suggestions if you find yourself in one of the courts in the Eastern District of Texas. These suggestions are categorized into

Jury will be out a:

SHORT time – There are only three questions on the verdict form and several of the jurors gave you (or your opponent!) a “thumbs up” on the way out of the court room;

MEDIUM time – The trial was hard-fought and the issues were close. The verdict form has questions on validity (several pieces of prior art), infringement, willfulness, and damages (including lost profits, and reasonable royalty);

LONG time – Somehow the defendant convinced the Court to include special interrogatories on the verdict form. The jury put in its dinner order for Monday evening – and it is Friday.



SHORT – Photographers Island – The Courthouse is split down the middle – half is in Arkansas and half is in Texas. If you walk out the Courthouse door, you will find in front of you “Photographer’s Island”. The island shows the state line and you can plant a foot in both Arkansas and Texas. Line up your trial team, snap a picture with the Courthouse in the background, and head back inside.

MEDIUM - **Spring Lake Park** – Gather up the trial team and head to Spring Lake Park, less than 3 miles from the Courthouse. Spring Lake Park is a 75-acre park that features a spring fed lake, open green spaces, an 18 hole disc golf course, two fishing piers, and a 1.75 mile walking/biking trail that

meanders through the park. Spring Lake Park was also in the movie “The Town that Dreaded Sundown” based on the events of the “The Phantom Killer” that stalked Texarkana in the 50s and 60s.

LONG – **Crater of Diamonds State Park** – Crater of Diamonds State Park in Murfreesboro, Arkansas is 68 miles from the Courthouse. However, the drive is worth it. You can dig for diamonds and more than 40 types of rocks and minerals including lamproite, amethyst, banded agate, jasper, peridot, garnet, quartz, calcite, barite, and hematite. There are trails that wander through the property, along with a sizable, reasonably-priced swim-park.

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SHORT – Michelson Museum of Art – Open 10 am to 4 pm on weekdays, the Michelson Museum of art is a mere 3 minute walk from the Courthouse. The Michelson Museum of Art displays the life work of Russian-American artist Leo Michelson (1887 - 1978) and includes the Gloria and Bernard Kronenberg Collection of early 20th century American art and the Ramona and Jay Ward Collection of African Masks and Chinese Opera Puppets. You might also tour the **Wisteria Gardens Bed and Breakfast** if you find you have some extra time.

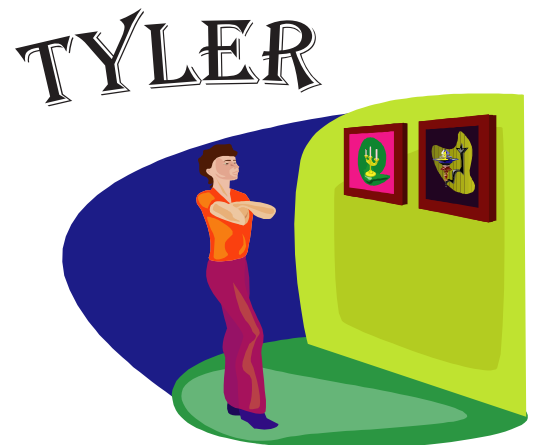
MEDIUM – Golfing in Marshall (www.thechallengegolfgroup.com/; **Oak Lawn Municipal Golf Course**) What lawyer doesn't like to hit the links and curse the gods of golf? Cypress Hills is a semi-private 18-hole golf course and Oak Lawn is a municipal 9-hole course. Both offer reasonable pricing and are near the Courthouse.

LONG – Splash Kingdom in Shreveport – Shreveport has lots of activities, but one of my favorites is Splash Kingdom, particularly in the summer. Other things to do in Shreveport include the **Sciport Discovery Center** and the **Eldorado Resort Casino**.

SHORT – Art in Tyler Texas – The Downtown Tyler Arts Coalition works diligently to grow the arts scene in downtown Tyler. The cornerstone is the Gallery Main Street just around the corner from the Courthouse. The exhibits rotate, so you can come after hearings and depositions and never see the same thing twice.

MEDIUM – Caldwell Zoo – The Caldwell zoo has more than 2000 animals from 250 species from Africa, North and South America in an 85-acre park. The zoo has a children's petting pen, two aquariums and a cafe that overlooks an African savannah. Decide which of the animals most resembles opposing counsel or experience the visceral feel of the daily alligator feedings.

LONG – Texas State Railroad – The Texas State Railroad takes you between Rusk and Palestine Texas and is about an hour away from the Courthouse. With both steam and diesel engines, the trip is a nice 1.5 hour excursion through the woods between the two cities. There are picnic facilities at both ends that make for a great afternoon outing.



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LUFKIN



SHORT – Museum of East Texas – The Museum of East Texas is about a seven minute walk from the Courthouse. You are in the Eastern District of Texas, so why not take a half an hour to view the exhibits and find out more about the part of the Texas you are visiting?

MEDIUM – Go Birding at Azalea Trail – Get back to nature. Walk the Azalea Trail in Lufkin, Texas and look for such birds as the Barred Owl, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Wood-Pewee, Great Crested and Scissor-tailed flycatchers, Hermit and Wood Thrushes, Swainson’s Warbler, White-eyed, Red-eyed and Yellow-throated Vireo’s Northern Parula, Yellow-throated, Pine, Black-and-White and Hooded Warblers, Common Yellowthroat and Summer Tanager. Other good places to go birding around Lufkin include the Ellen Trout Zoo and Lake and Angelina College Forest Fitness Trail.

LONG – Cherokee Trace Drive-Through Safari – Visit Africa, India, the Middle East and Japan, all without leaving your car. The Cherokee Trace Drive-Through Safari is in Jacksonville, Texas. The tour through the park will take you about two hours.

SHORT – St. Anthony’s Cathedral Basilica – St. Anthony’s Cathedral is a 2-3 minute drive from the Courthouse, but you may not want to walk there because of lack of sidewalks. When the jury is out, many lawyers like to pray for a favorable outcome. Pope Benedict has granted St. Anthony Cathedral minor basilica status, joining only three other Texas churches with that designation.

MEDIUM – Gator Country Amusement Park

No doubt, sitting at home watching CMT, you have wondered, “Where do they film that great show, Gator 911?” Welcome to Gator Country Amusement Park and Restaurant. Incidentally, if you plan ahead and bring your children, birthday party space is available. Gator Country Amusement Park is about 20 minutes from the Courthouse.

LONG – Big Thicket National Preserve – Attorneys who live in Texas are familiar with the beauty of the Big Thicket Nature Preserve. If you have some time, the Big Thicket Nature Preserve has hiking, fishing, birding, hunting, boating, kayaking, canoeing, off-road bicycling, and horse back riding. It is about 30 minutes from the Courthouse.



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SHERMAN

The Courthouse for the Sherman Division of the Eastern District of Texas is located in Plano, Texas, which is a suburb of Dallas. Most attorneys are familiar with the attractions and excitement around Dallas and attempting to express those here would leave out hundreds of wonderful venues. For those unfamiliar with the area, I would suggest the following websites:

http://www.visitdallas.com/visitors/arts_entertainment/sights_attractions/

<http://www.10best.com/destinations/texas/dallas/>



I hope this article will help visitors to the great State of Texas find something to do to while away the hours waiting for the message “Come back to the Courthouse; the jury is back with a verdict.”

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