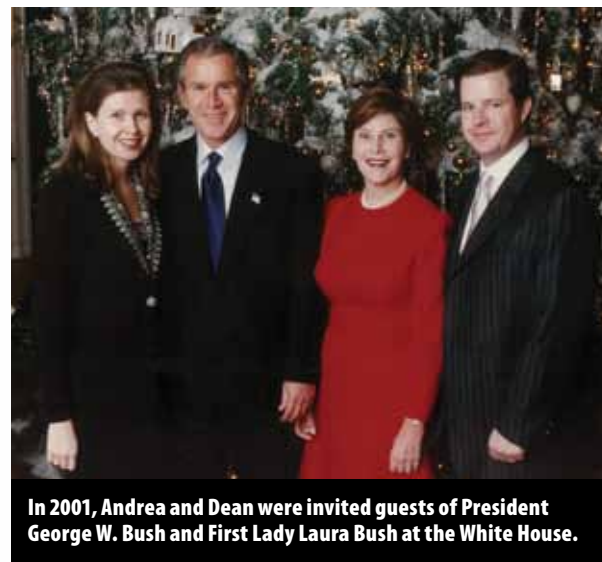


A Labor of Love

IN AUSTIN, DEAN AND ANDREA MCWILLIAMS HAVE TAKEN LOBBYING AND POLITICAL FUND-RAISING TO A WHOLE NEW LEVEL

by Amy Rodgers



In 2001, Andrea and Dean were invited guests of President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush at the White House.

Austin, Texas, has been taken by storm with this duo. This married couple, Republican/Democratic pair and set of proud parents have taken lobbying and political fund-raising to a whole new level. Dean and Andrea McWilliams use their intelligence and determination in their everyday life for their clients. With decades of strategic experience with Texas Legislature, together they created McWilliams and Associates, which is a “governmental affairs consulting firm that offers the intimacy of a boutique lobbying firm.”

The eyes and ears for nearly 40 clients, no two days are the same for Dean and Andrea. Their clients’ interests vary so Dean and Andrea have to stay on their toes when it comes to keeping a special interest in every one of their clients and making sure every need is met. “Our practice includes entities involved in almost every sector of the economy such as energy, health care, education, transportation and public safety,” Dean said. “A typical day’s work can be unpredictable and demanding, yet exciting. We consider taking care of our clients’ needs a labor of love.”

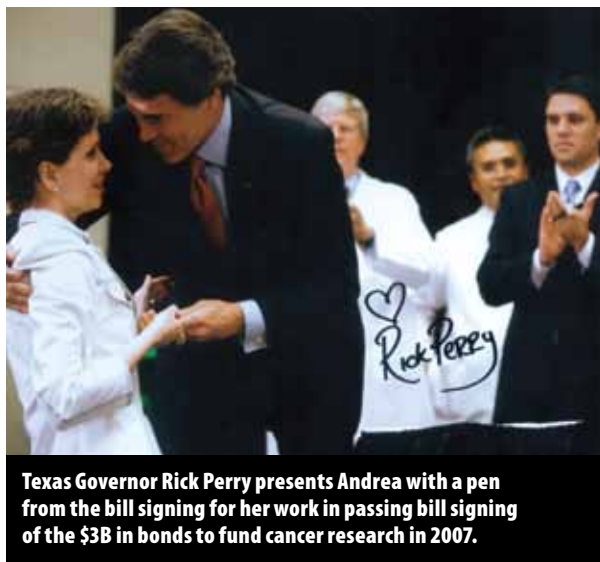
“We pride ourselves on being a bipartisan lobby firm with clients across a broad spectrum of interests,” Andrea stated. Dean added, “We are in constant contact with legislators and clients about breaking news or things we are hearing around the Capitol. In our business, this is absolutely critical, as there is a premium placed on being the best-informed and most knowledgeable about each clients’ needs and issues. Lobbying is no longer smoke-filled rooms and brother-in-law deals. It has evolved into a hard-driving, high energy field where information is king.”

Each legislative session lasts 140 days, and includes Legislature working in two years’ worth of policy making into that short time span. “We must, in a very short time period, prepare for every conceivable question a legislator could ask and be sure to have an answer for it and also contemplate every spin that our clients’ opposition might use and have persuasive counterpoints ready,” Dean said.

Through the years, the McWilliamses have had the pleasure of meeting politicians and reporters. They had the opportunity to meet with Presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush, Governors

Dean and Andrea McWilliams on the roof of their office building, the closest lobby office to the Capitol in Austin.

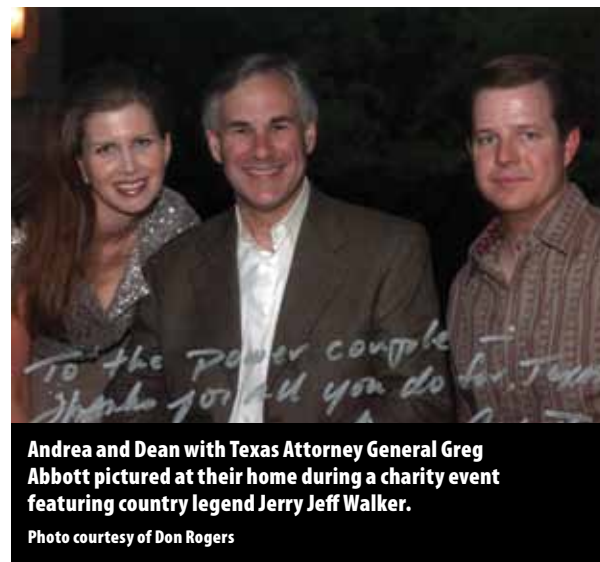
Photo courtesy of Don Rogers



Texas Governor Rick Perry presents Andrea with a pen from the bill signing for her work in passing bill signing of the \$3B in bonds to fund cancer research in 2007.



Texas Congressman Lamar Smith and Madison McWilliams on the floor of the U.S. House participating in the swearing in of the 111th Congress.



Andrea and Dean with Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott pictured at their home during a charity event featuring country legend Jerry Jeff Walker.

Photo courtesy of Don Rogers

Ann Richards and Rick Perry, Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst and Attorney General Greg Abbott. Most recently, the McWilliamses had a chance to meet Governor Mike Huckabee. “He is just a class-act, genuine and a stand-up kind of gentleman,” Dean stated. “For that reason, Andrea and I co-chaired his Presidential campaign in Texas. He has a big heart and as a politician, that is the most important thing. Plus, he introduced me to his friend Chuck Norris. I am reminded that when Chuck Norris does push-ups, he is not pushing himself up but instead pushing the earth down!”

Andrea added that during the 2000 Republican National Convention, CNN did a piece on them as the youngest Bush Pioneers, the fund-raising arm for George W. Bush. Through that opportunity, the pair were able to meet CNN hosts.

Both Dean and Andrea have had their hands in politics and government since childhood. Dean grew up in Texarkana, and has always shown an interest in this field. “I guess it is in my blood. My great grandfather was the first elected sheriff of Bowie County, and my great grandfather was district judge and later, chief justice of the Texarkana Court of Appeals,” Dean stated. “My parents, George and Becky McWilliams, still call Texarkana home and have been extremely active in political, legal and civic affairs of great importance to the Texarkana region. The work I do is worthwhile because I’ve taken some skills I’ve inherited and worked to perfect them in order to provide the best representation for our clients who need to navigate the halls of state government.”

“Well, they say there is no place better to learn about politics than Texas,” Andrea added. “It’s like P.J. O’Rourke said, ‘Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenagers.’ This career is hard work, yes, but it is also fun, and intellectually stimulating. I also get to see the fruits of my labor when an important bill passes or bad legislation is defeated.”

Andrea is a true “Austinite,” born and raised. She stated that she has fond memories of growing up as a child in Austin and living just steps away from the Capitol. In the early 1970s, her father owned a café on Congress Avenue and they lived in an

apartment above it. She stated that the apartment is no longer there but that it’s a “stone’s throw away from the Capitol.” Living so close to the Capitol, Andrea and her older sister would run and play in the grassy areas outside the building. The Capitol, even at a young age was a big part of both Andrea and her sister’s lives. Not only is Andrea a lobbyist now, but her sister works inside the Capitol, too.

Before becoming “Mr. and Mrs. McWilliams,” Dean had to show persistence in not only his career, but also to set a date with Andrea. Dean and Andrea met while both were working at the Capitol. “After



The McWilliams family: Marcus (3), Andrea, Madison (8), Dean and Max (4).
Photo courtesy of Don Rogers

she declined a date with me a couple of times, I just became more persistent ... a quality that serves me well as a lobbyist,” Dean added. “I knew I wanted to marry her. We were drawn to politics and both shared the same can-do, will-do attitude.” Dean was right. Their combination of spirit behind politics, determination behind getting their clients’ needs met and love for each other make for an amazing team.

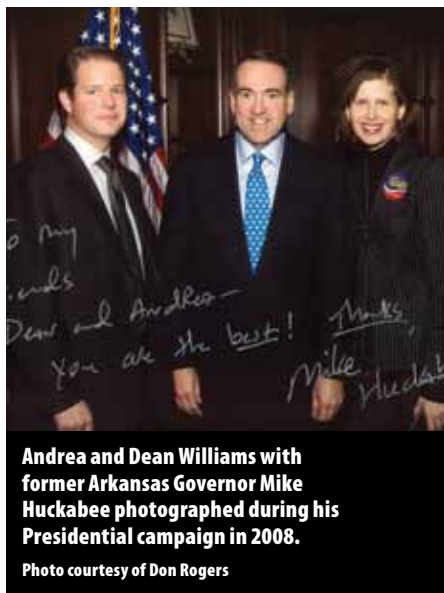
Dean and Andrea take the word “teamwork” above and beyond. “We often laugh that we ‘share a brain,’” Dean added. “We generally are in contact with each other every step of the way to ensure that every client’s need is addressed. Our staff helps

with logistics and planning and so does our family.” With working as a husband and wife team in both career and home life, they are able to eat dinner as a family every day, take their kids to school and pick them up, and help them prepare for drama, classes and sports.

The couple have three children together, and they both agree that their children are their greatest accomplishments. Madison is their oldest child and only daughter. Dean describes Madison as someone who was made for the stage. “She is a smaller version of Andrea in that she is not afraid to speak her mind,” Dean added. Max and Marcus are the couple’s two sons, and are less than a year apart. Andrea stated that the boys are oftentimes called Irish twins, in that they love playing together. “Max is just like Dean ... he has a keen eye for detail and likes order,” Andrea said. “Marcus is our youngest and most precocious. He reminds both of us of my late father ... he loves life.”

Spending time with their three children is something they both enjoy doing and even though they have extremely busy schedules, their children are the most important aspects of their lives. “We like to say that our kids are our most important clients,” Andrea stated. “As a family, one of our most favorite things to do, is head out on our boat on Lake Austin. It allows us to enjoy our family in the serenity and natural beauty of Lake Austin and the Texas Hill Country. Our weekends are sacred. Those are the times we spoil them by taking them to a 3D movie at the Bob Bullock Museum or walking them through the flowers at the Lady Bird Johnson Botanical Garden.”

Andrea, who is a cancer survivor, fought for her life, and her unborn child’s life. In January of 2006, three months after the birth of their son, Max, Andrea visited their neighborhood pharmacy to get an home pregnancy test. “I took a pregnancy test and stared at the two red lines confirming that I was pregnant,” Andrea said. “I remember thinking, ‘I’m pregnant and I have cancer.’ The joyous moment of learning about my pregnancy was intertwined with the harrowing cancer diagnosis I received a week earlier. Rather than succumbing to the diagnosis,



Andrea and Dean Williams with former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee photographed during his Presidential campaign in 2008.

Photo courtesy of Don Rogers

though, I was adamant to survive for myself, my surviving children and the unborn angel, Marcus. At this point, I embarked on the most aggressive treatment regimen possible for pregnant women, and I came out victorious.” Even though this was one of her hardest times in her life, she worked hard to beat her cancer. “This brush with cancer makes me embrace all that I do with everything in me,” Andrea added. “There is a great quote by the beautiful and phenomenal poetess, Maya Angelou saying ‘surviving is important, thriving is elegant.’” Andrea will be cancer-free for 5 years next year.

Through Andrea’s battle with cancer, it gave her an understanding about it that only a small percentage of Americans know. One of Andrea’s most positive things she has done in her life was working together with Lance Armstrong, a cyclist who has also had a journey with cancer. Together, they worked to pass \$3 billion in bonds to fund cancer research in Texas. “Our work insures that Texas receives \$300 million a year for 10 years to identify potential cures and treatment for all types of cancer,” Andrea said. “That funding has made Texas the center of the cancer universe and will directly result in saving lives that otherwise would be lost to cancer. As a cancer survivor, it was one of my proudest moments.”

Dean and Andrea look forward to their children growing up and seeing the adults they become. They are excited about what their future holds as a family. In their career, these two lobbyists will continue to take Austin, Texas, and the Capitol by storm and build up their governmental affairs consulting firm, McWilliams and Associates, for many years to come. 🇺🇸

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