



ED ABEL

AS HIS NAME SUGGESTS, Ed Abel certainly is “able” to do all things through Christ. An accomplished trial attorney with a litany of awards, titles and recognitions to his name, Abel recently celebrated 50 years as a legal practitioner. He only had his sight for about half of that time.

Born and raised in Oklahoma, Abel was eight years old when he was diagnosed with juvenile diabetes. He managed the chronic illness well, minding his diet and staying active, even dabbling in various sports in junior high and high school.

That didn’t stop the disease from robbing him of his vision about two decades ago.

He still remembers returning from a snow skiing vacation in Colorado, wondering why the gnats he swatted from his eyes wouldn’t go away. Abel soon learned they weren’t bugs at all, but the result of hemorrhaging in both eyes. He sought out doctors at home and in other states, traveling as far as Detroit to see specialists and surgeons who could preserve his vision a little bit longer.

“They were helpful,” Abel said, “but they ultimately couldn’t prevent me from going blind.”

In the 1970s, he lost the sight in his left eye, and the vision in his right began to diminish. As he drove his young family to downtown Oklahoma City one afternoon, he clipped a police car as he came off the highway. That sobering experience ended in Abel handing the keys to his wife.

It was the last day he ever drove.

Packaged with the fear of not being able to continue his practice or take care of his family, Abel turned toward the hope he didn’t need eyes to see.

A believer since his youth, Abel was raised in a strong Christian home with parents cemented in their faith. He had many mentors who poured biblical influence and teaching into him. He said it has always been a comfort to him.

“The Lord has been a part of my life for a long time,” Abel said.

It was by His power and glory that Abel knew he could overcome this new adversity in his life.

“I knew I had a choice to make so I prayed about it a lot. I asked God, ‘What do I do with this blindness?’ The message I received was what the apostle Paul did: ‘My grace is sufficient for you.’”

To help with the transition, Abel found a counselor. He said those sessions were helpful in coming to terms with his blindness.

“I finally came to the realization that if God was in my corner, I could still be effective as an attorney and do what I needed to do,” Abel said.

To continue practicing law, Abel used an assistant to read his depositions so he could prepare for cases. He learned to memorize the smallest details of what he was once able to easily reference.

“Through the Good Lord’s guidance, I developed the philosophy that you’ve got a couple choices in life: you can

go sit in the corner and cry about it or you can get up and do what you can do,” Abel said.

And what Abel does is something that not many others can. “I guess there’s not very many blind trial lawyers around,” he chuckled.

Abel first found his love of law in high school after he joined the debate team. He went to tournaments around the metro with his team and carried that passion with him to the University of Oklahoma in Norman, where he debated at the collegiate level and eventually graduated from law school.

In his five decades as a trial attorney, Abel said he’s tried about 300 cases in a handful of states. He’s gone toe-to-toe with big names like Black & Decker and represented several MACU students.

Abel came to know MACU through his friendships with President Dr. John Fozard and University Advancement Vice President Rev. Steve Seaton, both of whom he met at Crossings Community Church in Oklahoma City. As God cultivated the seeds of friendship between the men, Abel accepted an offer to serve on the MACU Board of Trustees.

“MACU is very special,” Abel said. “Not all universities and colleges have that basis in Christ. The professors really care about the students, they’re really open to them – that’s not always true in a lot of schools.”

He said professors’ willingness to talk to students – even outside of the classroom – helps set MACU apart from other schools. Abel remains actively involved in Evangel campus life, frequenting President’s Roundtables and proudly serving on the Board of Trustees. He said it’s a part of the successful life he’s been able to maintain despite his blindness.

He’s also been able to keep up with another one of his great loves: the outdoors. Beneath his father’s guiding hand, Abel hunted squirrels and raccoons from a young age and developed a great fondness for coonhounds. When he left home, Abel started a kennel and raised and sold puppies. He traveled across the eastern U.S. showing his dogs, and even though his blindness has prevented him from pursuing his passion the way he once did, he hasn’t ruled out getting back into dog breeding.

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To share his love of hunting and wildlife with others, Abel writes a monthly article for a few outdoors magazines, aptly named “The Legal Hound.” He helped start the Oklahoma Federation of Coonhunters, a group dedicated to supporting political figures who are open to the sport and want to see it continued. Because of Abel’s hard work with the group, they’ve helped outlaw killer traps that could harm dogs and extended the hunting season to year-round.

He’s also in his sixteenth year on the governing board of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife.

In addition to splitting time between work and hobbies, Abel has donated time to Lawyers for Children, a group of attorneys and social workers who represent children in foster care situations free of charge.

“If it had not been for the Lord, I never would have made any of it happen,” Abel said. “I have a really good life. I’m married to a very wonderful lady, I have four amazing children and six beautiful grandchildren. I’ve been able to continue as a trial attorney. I’ve been able to participate on the board for MACU. I’ve been allowed to do a lot of fun things like hunting and all of that even though I can’t see a lick. That’s not by accident. It didn’t just happen.”

It happened because while Ed Abel may be blind – his faith is surely not.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

Attorney and MACU Board of Trustee member Ed Abel has served as a legal practitioner for five decades.

