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## A career in banking law

*Charlotte Rasche, senior executive vice president and general counsel, Prosperity Bank, Houston*

**A**fter living in Carbondale, Ill. until the age of 10, moving to the tourist town of Galveston was quite the treat for a young Charlotte Rasche, now the senior executive vice president and general counsel of Prosperity Bank. "When I moved [to Galveston] when I was 10 years old it was a lot of fun," Rasche says. "We'd go to the beach, play putt-putt, go on the waterslides — it was like a vacation all the time, then you got used to it."

Rasche says the weather in Galveston was a big draw for her parents. Having grown up in the Midwest, the prospect of warm, sunny weather and almost never having to deal with snow was intriguing. But the main motivation for her family's move was the position Rasche's father accepted to work at the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston as a rare book librarian. "Very artsy," Rasche jokes. Her mother is a musician who plays organ, piano and viola.

The path to banking was not laid out for Rasche at a young age. Rather, after receiving her bachelor's degree in business administration from Stephen F. Austin University in 1986 and a master's degree in higher education administration from Oklahoma State University in 1988, Rasche went to work for Texas Tech University as a



**Rasche kayaking in Clear Lake City near Houston. She also cycles and runs when time permits her to do so.**

coordinator of residence life. "I wanted to go into higher education — I loved my job, but to move up at a university you have to have some kind of a terminal degree," Rasche says.

Rasche explains she was always interested in law, so after five years at Texas Tech, she attended law school at the University of Texas at Austin where she received her Juris Doctor in 1997. Between her second year and third year at UT law school, Rasche took a clerkship with Bracewell & Patterson (now Bracewell & Giuliani) in Houston. "The work that I really liked at Bracewell was the banking work — both the clients and the types of deals," Rasche says. After graduation, Rasche was hired as a fulltime associate at Bracewell & Patterson. "I really learned banking by working with Will Luedke, my partner and mentor at Bracewell, and spending time with my clients as a young associate."

### A fabulous opportunity

Prosperity Bank, based in Houston, was one of Rasche's clients, a relationship that began in 1998 during her time at the law firm. "I worked on their IPO in 1998 and worked on every acquisition they completed after that." This relationship made Rasche the ideal candidate for Prosperity Bank's general counsel position, a job she accepted in 2012. "Every transition is tough when you change jobs," Rasche says. "But this was a very seamless transition because I knew most of the management and a lot of people knew me."

Rasche emphasizes that Prosperity Bank is a relationship bank — customer service is



**Charlotte Rasche rides in the 2012 Hotter'N Hell Hundred in Wichita Falls.**



Rasche has two Bichon Frises named Bailey and Gracie.

number one. “Our motto is we always greet the customer with a smile, address the customer by name, try to say yes instead of no, and thank the customer for banking with us,” Rasche says. “That’s a very simple philosophy but that’s really what we try to base everything on because we want to have a relationship with our customers.”

Prosperity Bank is mostly involved in commercial lending, Rasche says. Their markets are currently in Texas and the Oklahoma City area. “Around April, we’ll be in Tulsa, Okla.,” Rasche says. “We’re buying F&M Bank; it has seven locations in Tulsa and three in Dallas.” When Prosperity Bank adds that to its existing footprint, that’ll put them at approximately 250 banking centers. They currently have approximately \$18 billion in assets and will soon be up to \$20 billion after their April acquisition, Rasche says.

### Challenges and serving communities

One of the greatest challenges Rasche says she’s faced at Prosperity Bank is the loss of fee income through the Durbin Amendment, which cut down the amount banks can charge on debit card transactions. The effect of this law was a loss of \$4.5 million in revenue for Prosperity Bank for six months in 2013, Rasche estimates. “What other industry does a regulator just decide one day to eliminate \$9 million annually from your bottom line?” The low interest rate environment and new regulatory burdens are also



Rasche is accompanied at the New York Stock Exchange by her former partner at Bracewell & Patterson, Will Luedke. Prosperity Bank switched to the New York Stock Exchange at the end of 2011, so the bank was honored with opening the stock exchange on Nov. 28, 2011.

hurdles Prosperity Bank has had to learn to deal with.

All of Prosperity Bank’s locations are involved in the Money Smart financial education program in local schools. They also strive to be active through donations and participation in charity efforts in the communities they serve — including the American Heart Association in Dallas and the March of Dimes in Houston.

### TBA involvement

Rasche serves on TBA’s board of directors. She participated in conferences and seminars with TBA since her early days at Bracewell & Patterson. “It’s an excellent way to learn about the banking industry and the networking is excellent,” Rasche says. “Being involved in some of the issues surrounding banking is very important to my effectiveness as outside counsel and now as part of management.”

### Life outside of banking

Rasche says spare time has been hard to find lately, but she likes to cycle and run. She tries to be active socially, enjoying her downtime by having dinner with friends or attending art

gallery openings. Rasche makes trips to see her mom who still lives in Galveston. She certainly didn’t want to forget to mention her two dogs: “I have two Bichon Frises, Bailey and Gracie, so they require some attention — they’re good kids.”

#### What’s your favorite sports team?

Texas Longhorns

#### Who’s your hero?

My mom. She’s 88 years old and she still plays viola in the Galveston Symphony.

#### What are some of your favorite vacations or trips?

After taking the Bar exam, a lot of lawyers take trips before they start at the firm that hired them. I took a three-week trip with friends to Europe; we visited England, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

My Dad passed away in 2003. And every year since, I take my mom back to Ohio to see her family and where my dad is buried. Those are memories I will cherish for a very long time.