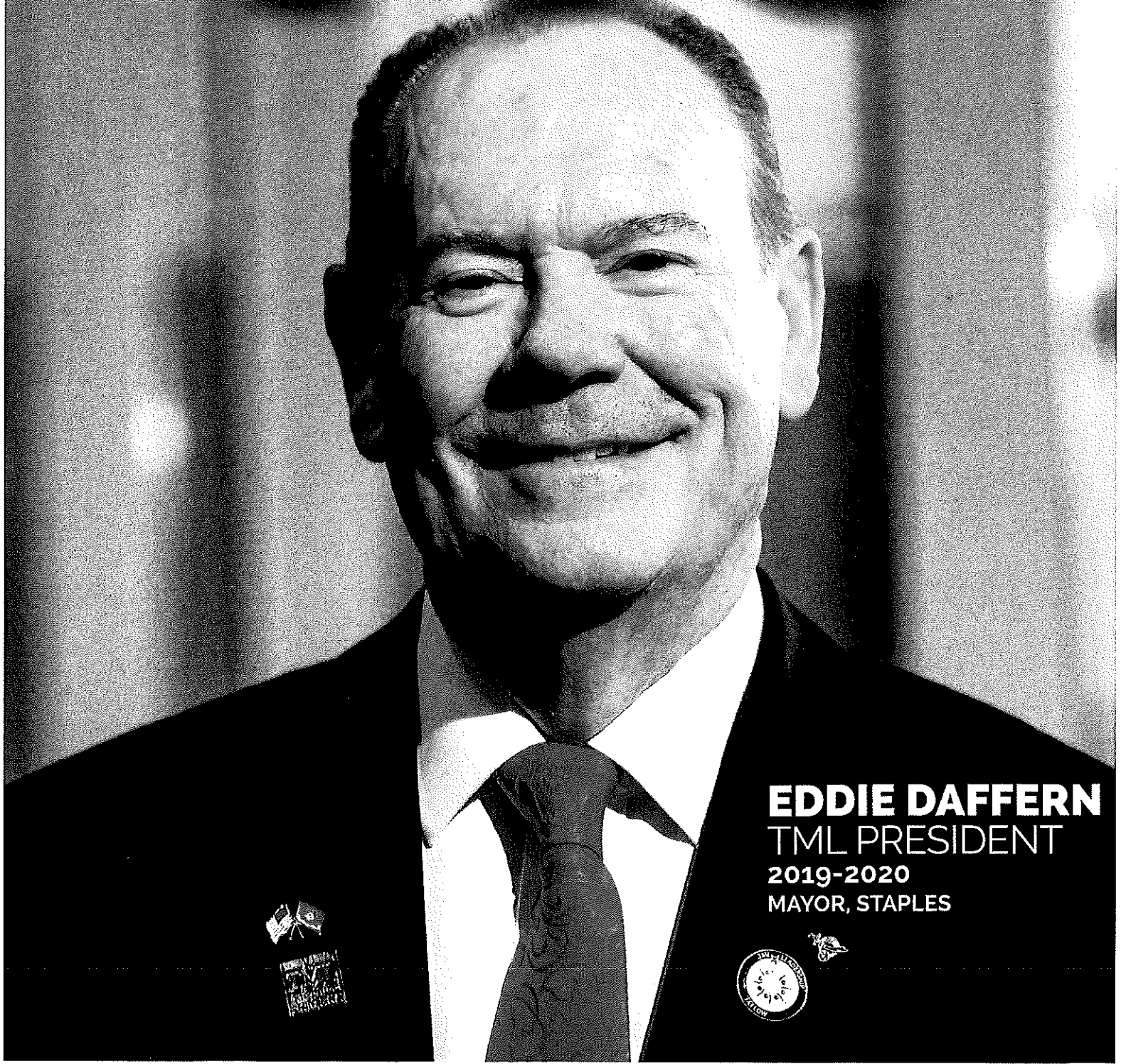


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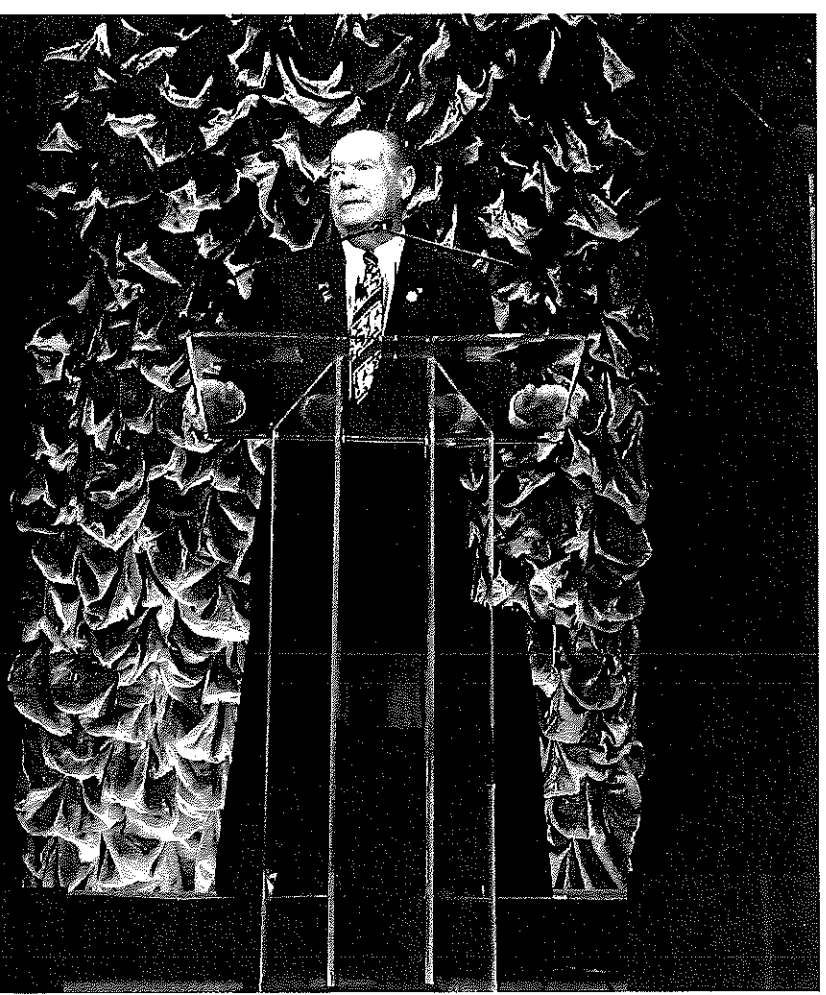


**EDDIE DAFFERN**  
TML PRESIDENT  
2019-2020  
MAYOR, STAPLES

# GET TO KNOW YOUR TML PRESIDENT EDDIE DAFFERN

Interview by: **Rachael Pitts**, Deputy Executive Director for Affiliate and Member Services, Texas Municipal League

The City of Staples is a small community of less than 300 residents, located in the northeastern part of Guadalupe County, overlooking the San Marcos River valley to the east. Eddie Daffern is the first TML president from the City of Staples and its first mayor. Daffern helped lead the community's successful incorporation efforts and won the office of its first (and only) mayor in 2008.



**Rachael Pitts:** Let's start with some background information. I know that you and your wife Shari have been in Staples for about 20 years. Can you share a little about your life before Staples?

**Eddie Daffern:** I was born in Avery, Texas. My parents moved to Lubbock when I was about four years old and that is where I grew up. I had five sisters, and unfortunately, two have now passed away as have my mother and daddy.

My parents had limited education, but we always had food and plenty of love. My daddy started a janitorial service when I was in the third or fourth grade. That is when I started to work. I would help him most nights after my homework was done.

By the seventh grade, I started working at a grocery store to help the family and continued doing that until I left home to join the United States Marine Corps. I played drums and when I became 16 years old, I started playing with bands in the local nightclubs. I graduated from Lubbock High School in 1966 where I was the drum major my senior year.

In March 1968, I dropped out of Texas Tech University to join the Marine Corps. By September, I was on my way to Vietnam and returned stateside in October 1969.

My wife Shari and I met in junior high and dated in high school. We married on May 30, 1970. As my profession, I initially worked in a jewelry store and eventually began selling diamonds and jewelry wholesale to retail stores in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Colorado. After several years, I joined a sales team in a company that was introducing surgical staples. During this time, I also stayed in the United States Marine Corps Reserves for 22 years.

**RP:** What are some of the organizations you are involved with?

**ED:** I am a member and former potentate (president) of the Khiva Shrine in Amarillo, a member of the Ben Hur Shrine in Austin, and current commander of the International Association Legions of Honor whose members are Shriners and veterans. I am also a member of the Masons, Scottish Rite, York Rite, Order of the Eastern Star, and hold a commission of colonel in the Kentucky Colonels. I am a life member of the VFW, American Legion, Marine Corps Association, and the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation. Shari and I are also members of the Combat Vets Motorcycle Association.

**RP:** Why was incorporating Staples important?

**ED:** It became important when the citizens began hearing rumors of the toll road, Highway 130, being built. The highway was going to come into, or near, Staples. The route changed a couple of times and is now two miles from our city center. The community was also concerned about encroachment from other, larger cities. Staples was established around 1852, and the citizens didn't want it to change.

**RP:** What do you most enjoy about being mayor?

**ED:** It was rewarding being the first mayor and helping to set up a new government. Being able to lead the councilmembers in charting a new course for Staples as an incorporated city and seeing what the future of Staples is very exciting.

**RP:** What's happening in Staples?

**ED:** Over time we have managed to start a city cleanup. We bring in a large commercial dumpster twice a year for the citizens. Once a year, we now have a garage sale in the park, which is growing. This will be our fourth year for the Christmas in the Park and it has definitely expanded. Our biggest project now is to remodel our meeting space. It is the old Staples School cafeteria, which we now call Staples Center. We appointed a building committee several months ago and the new septic system and foundation of the building is now completed. The renovation is slow because of funding, but we are working together towards completion.

**RP:** How would you describe Staples to someone who has never visited?

**ED:** It is quiet, serene, and beautiful!

**RP:** What inspired you to run for the TML Board and then president-elect and president?

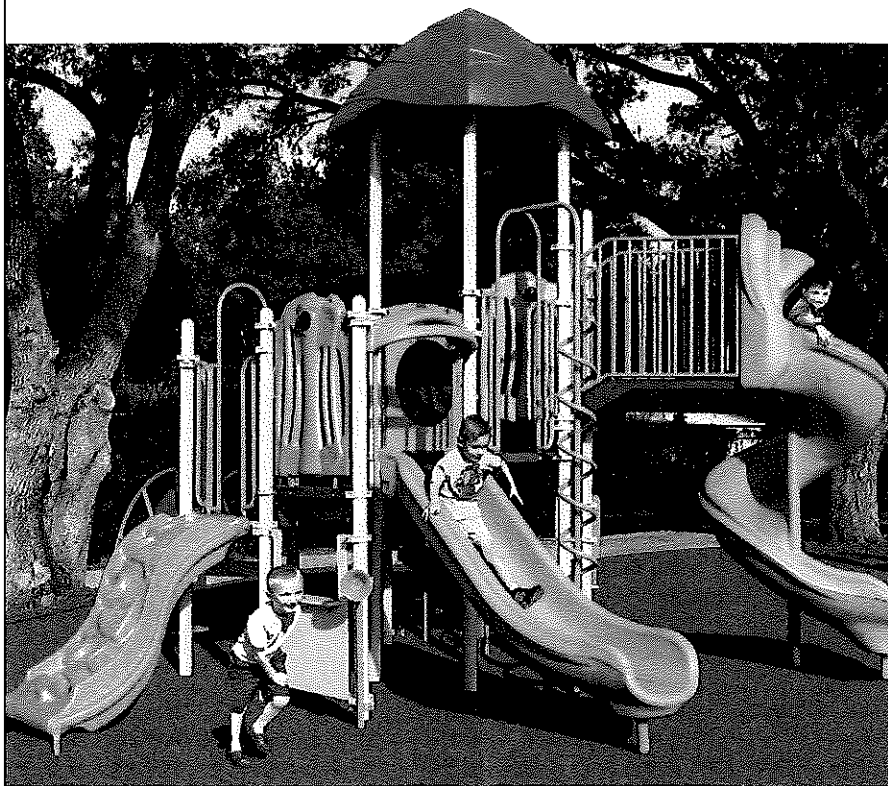
**ED:** When I became mayor and attended my first TML meeting, a Small Cities' Problem-Solving Clinic, I knew I wanted to go to as many TML meetings as possible, for my education and to help my city. After a couple

of years, I was appointed to the Small Cities Advisory Council and eventually became chairman. I also attended all of the Texas Association of Mayors, Councilmembers and Commissioners meetings. After meeting so many people and TML staff, it seemed natural to run for the TML Board and eventually president.

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**RP:** What do you look forward to during your time as president?

**ED:** What I look forward to the most is meeting more city officials around the State at region meetings and at TML training. Shari and I attended several region meetings this past year, and are eager to attend more.

**RP:** What are your goals as TML president?

**ED:** We have to start preparing now for the next legislative session in Austin. That has to be our number one priority. With the attitude of some of our state legislators, we all have to be more proactive, even before the session begins. I'm looking forward to meeting with the TML legislative staff, Board members, and other city officials to help design a strategy which will enhance our relationship with our legislators and benefit all Texas cities.

**RP:** What is one of the most important lessons you have learned about public service?

**ED:** Be honest! I think that is one of the most important lessons one could learn about public service. Be honest with yourself and what you know. Don't try to sell the sizzle if no one wants a steak! Be honest with your constituents. It makes life easier.

**RP:** What do you see as the most important issues facing Texas cities, and what should be the League's role in addressing these issues?

**ED:** I think the most important issues cities are facing are preemption bills by the state and federal governments. This is born out of what happened at the last legislative session and by the comments recently made by the governor, lieutenant governor, and house speaker.

The League has to continue providing legislative support to the cities by reading all the bills and alerting cities about bills that will affect them, good or bad. Smaller cities rely heavily on this information. During the next legislative session, the cities may have to take a more proactive stance on bills by using a phone tree. During the last session, the phone tree approach was used effectively on at least one bill. It's important that TML maintain a good relationship with the legislature.

**RP:** Do you have any leadership advice to share?

**ED:** Instead of giving advice, I will share some traits I believe are important which I try to live by: honor, courage, and commitment. Honor exemplifies the ultimate in ethical and moral behavior to never lie, cheat, or steal; to respect human dignity; be accountable for your actions; and fulfill your obligations. Courage can see you through the mastery of fear, to do what is right, lead by example, and adhere to a higher standard of personal conduct. Commitment is the spirit of determination and dedication that leads to professionalism and mastery of your profession. Always keep in mind that the health and safety of our citizens should come first, not special interest groups. And remember, your pet project may not be what the citizens need.

**RP:** What is your favorite book and song?

**ED:** I enjoy a lot of different books such as W.E.B. Griffin's series of fiction books, *Who Moved my Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, and positive thinking books such as *Think and Grow Rich* by Napoleon Hill. My favorite song is "Santa Baby" by Eartha Kitt.

**RP:** Do you have a favorite quote?

**ED:** My favorite quote is by Marine General "Mad Dog" Mattis, who when sending his Marines into Iraq said, "Be polite, be professional, but have a plan to kill everybody you meet." I like it, because I changed it a little to be, "Be polite, be professional, and have a plan to inspire everybody you meet."

**RP:** What is some of the best advice you have been given?

**ED:** A great friend of mind in Amarillo, Haskell Beaver, as I was about to be elected potentate (president) of Khiva Shrine, said, "Don't worry about making everyone happy, because it can't be done. If you can make 51 percent of the people happy, you will have done a good job. Also, remember, there has only been one perfect person in the world and they crucified him."

**RP:** How do you like to spend your time outside city service?

**ED:** Shari and I enjoy traveling. I am currently the commander (president) of the International Association Legions of Honor, and we have the opportunity often. Since 2011, when I was first elected to this officer line, we average 125 nights a year in hotels. During this time, we have traveled to all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, and all 254 Texas counties. When we are home, we enjoy riding our Spyder motorcycle with our friends, the Combat Vets Motorcycle Association. They have group rides, but more importantly, they are vets helping vets.

**RP:** Is there anything else you'd like to share with our city officials?

**ED:** Yes! It is my distinct honor and pleasure to serve this year as TML President. If you think I may be able to help you, in any way, please contact me.★