



The TML Risk Pool is committed to providing risk management services and a full suite of liability, property, workers' compensation, and cyber coverages to Texas cities and other local governments. The Pool's Board of Trustees is comprised mostly of municipal officials from across the state of Texas.

For the latest installment of "Meet a Trustee," Pool Staff interviewed retired city manager Bert Lumbreras, who holds an Appointed Citizen Position on the Pool's Board of Trustees and serves as the Board's Vice-Chair.

What did Bert always want to be when he grew up? An astronaut, a firefighter, or a sports star? (More on the sports star later.) Nope, he knew he wanted to be a city manager. "I just got so intrigued by government, civics, and social studies – the whole thing about community," he said during a recent interview.

"I didn't want to work in the fields forever, as I had as a child." Bert's family were migrant farm workers, caravanning all around the country to pick crops for the summer. He's proud of his upbringing because his parents always provided for him and his seven siblings. "Their work put food on our table and helped us purchase school supplies, but I wanted something more."

What his father lacked in formal education, he made up with integrity, commitment, and experience as a World War II veteran. In fact, his father was elected to the city council in the family's hometown of Dilley shortly before Bert graduated from high school.

Bert graduated from Dilley High School as one of just 35 in his graduating class. No one in his family had ever attended college, and he was inspired to do so. He first attended Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde. While there, he told his career counselor that he was interested in government, but he didn't want to be a politician. The counselor's exact words? "Have you ever thought about city management?" The counselor sent Bert to a City of Uvalde council meeting, and from that moment forward, he was hooked.

Bert later transferred to Texas State University and completed his bachelor's degree in public administration. As a Senior in 1981, he did an internship for the City of San Marcos, where decades later he would return "full circle" as city manager to finish his career.

His first job? Two months before graduation, he received a call from his hometown city manager. That manager had won a race for county commissioner, which would soon leave his city position vacant. Bert got the job before he even graduated. His Dad was still on the city council, and pursuant to state nepotism law had to resign for Bert to be hired – he did so proudly to pave the way for Bert's career.

It was during this time in Dilley that he married his wife Elvia and had two children. (Apparently their marriage was a foregone conclusion – the "ladies at church" and close friends made the couple their "project" by continuously tricking them into being together on dates and at church events. Even if they both showed up late to a full event, two side-by-side chairs always just happened to be available!) The pay wasn't enough to support his growing family, so after five years, he took the city manager role in Floresville. His father was sad to see the family move, but he also immediately got back on the city council!



After five years in Floresville, Bert moved once again to the City of Alamo for four years. One of Bert's most poignant career memories came when the mayor of Alamo at the time pushed Bert to hire his unqualified relative for a city position. The relative had a "rap-sheet," as well. Bert refused, citing the city charter provision delegating all hiring to the city manager. "I won't compromise my ethics – that's who I am as a person, a family man, and a professional – I'm just not going to do that." He ended up leaving with his head held high, and the incident became a defining moment in his career and led to a great deal of respect in the city management community.

He left for Uvalde, then Waco for almost 10 years as the city's first Latino assistant city manager (ACM). Then on to Austin as an ACM, and finally Bert ended his career where it started as an intern decades ago – as city manager for the City of San Marcos.

Bert said he loved all his city management roles, but he cherishes the smaller cities. "Those cities have very limited resources and don't want to increase taxes. That means creativity is essential." One example? While in Dilley, Bert negotiated with the owner of a local bank that had moved to a new location to donate the old one to the city. The city named the building after the donors, and it's still the city hall to this day!

After a highly rewarding and successful career in city management, Bert is living the good life in retirement. When asked whether he still consults or does other city-related work, he said "nope, I'm going to have fun!" That being said, serving on nonprofit boards has always been important to him. He has served the International City Management Association as Mountain Plains Vice President and the Texas City Management Association (TCMA) as President in 2012-2013. As TCMA President, his focus was on growing the profession. "We need more growth and more diversity in the form of professional city managers to keep our cities great." He is also member of the Local Government Hispanic Network and numerous community and civic organizations.

How did he come to serve the Pool? Another Pool Trustee and now-retired city manager – Rickey Childers – recruited Bert. Bert started while still San Marcos city manager, and he was reappointed to a citizen position almost immediately after he retired.

"If you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life..." That's Bert's mantra and it has served him well in his personal life, his career in city management, and his tireless volunteer roles. Speaking of personal life, Bert is so proud of his wife, Elvia. She was a longtime teacher and loved working with younger children. In fact, the Austin Independent School District recognized her for the way she managed her classroom. Bert and Elvia have three children, and now five grandchildren. He thinks her classroom management style helps make her the best grandmother ever – she always has activities lined up for them! And all three of their children graduated college and are living successful lives.

When asked with whom he would like to have dinner – alive or dead – Bert chose Abraham Lincoln. "I always read books and did papers on him. I admired where he came from and how humble he was and the leadership traits he had – most importantly, like my father, he was a good listener."

Which of the Pool's Core Values (Integrity, Public Service, Fiscal Responsibility, and Operational Excellence) speak to him the most? Without hesitation, Bert said, "Integrity – my father had it and the experience in Alamo showed me its importance – all you've got is your word."



Okay, remember the “sports star” reference at the beginning of this article? One word: Pickleball. Bert is an avid player. He started playing for fun, but it’s now serious business! He plays every day. In fact, he recently lost 40 pounds doing so. Kissing Tree, the active lifestyle community where he now lives, has a statewide tournament, and he and his partner won gold in their age group and skill level. While Bert accomplished his dream of being an amazing city manager for many cities over four decades, he is – in fact – now a sports star as well!

The Risk Pool’s Board is comprised of Trustees who work in local government, are dedicated to public service, and understand the day-to-day challenges of governing. To learn more about your Board Members, [visit the Risk Pool website](#).