

# Mission in Bolivia enriched life of Washington attorney



By Brian Cox

In a small, isolated village on the San Juan de Oro River in southern Bolivia, Dexter Bradford experienced the most profound sense of community he had ever encountered.

The young Washington attorney describes his time at the Mormon mission in Quiriza as enriching, eye-opening, and the best two years of his life.

“It was a formative period,” says Bradford, who was fresh out of high school when he left for Bolivia. “There’s incredible value in putting yourself at a young age in the shoes of someone halfway around the world who lives in a house of adobe bricks. There’s something that grounds you and gives you perspective for the rest of your life. You come to appreciate what you have and realize that your way of living isn’t the only way of living.”

As part of immersing himself in the rural culture as he traveled by horseback to visit villages up and down the San Juan de Oro River, Bradford became fluent in conversational Spanish.

The economy of Quiriza and the other villages in the area centers around garlic farming. Bradford recalls being struck by how all the farmers helped one another during harvest time, despite being competing small business owners operating independent garlic farms.



After high school, attorney Dexter Bradford spent two formative years in Quiriza, Bolivia, a small garlic farming community along the San Juan de Oro River.

Bradford says it was “incredible how efficient and loving they all were.”

“Each town had an incredible sense of community,” says Bradford. “They value being a member of the community far more than any money they could get from selling their garlic. They were all part of the same town and that united them. They were bound together in life, and they had an obligation to help each other. They would see it as wrong if they didn’t help each other.”

Growing up as the oldest of four children in Stockton, Calif., and then moving when he was in high school to Murrietta, a town south of Los Angeles, Bradford says he developed no strong roots in any community, and he was amazed to witness the camaraderie and love that was shared among the residents of Quiriza.

“They all deeply loved and cared for each other, which was something I had just never seen before,” says Bradford.

The value of strong bonds within a community is one that Bradford has embedded into his practice at Beresford Booth Lawyers, a full-service firm in Edmonds, Wash., a harbor town on Puget Sound with a view of the Olympic Mountains. Founded in 1946, the firm caters to clients ranging from small start-up companies to families growing businesses.

“In practicing in Edmonds, I get to know the members of the community and work with them directly and help them develop and grow their businesses,” says Bradford. “I feel we’re a big part of the community and we’re helping those within the area grow and become more successful.”

Bradford didn’t always want to be an attorney. In fact, he wasn’t much attracted to the career at all. His father was a law partner at a small firm that primarily did business litigation and employment work. As a young teen, Bradford occasionally worked at his father’s firm, and from what he could tell, being a lawyer was painfully boring.

“As a young kid, there really isn’t much for you to do in a law office,” he recalls. “My only exposure to law was that all you do is shred papers and deal with big boxes of stuff called discovery.”

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**Dexter and his wife Bonnie with their 2-year-old daughter, Avery. The couple met in college at Utah Valley University. Bonnie works at a financial planning firm in Redmond.**

It wasn't until he graduated high school and began to consider what he wanted to do with his life that he became more curious about what his father's work truly entailed. By the time he was a sophomore at Utah Valley University, he had set eyes on being a lawyer. He pursued a degree in public speaking, believing it was a skill that might come in handy in a law career.

Bradford chose to attend Seattle University Law School in part because of its top-ranked legal writing program. He was a member of the Moot Court Board and the managing editor of the Journal of Technological Innovation & Environmental Law. During his first year, he was an in-house counsel intern for a software company and then landed a clerkship at Beresford Booth for the next two years. Joining the firm after graduating and passing the bar seemed a natural choice.

"The attorneys here are fantastic," he says. "From day one, what I've loved about them is how they pride themselves on being excellent in everything they do. They take that seriously. They're all striving to be excellent."

His primary areas of practice include business and real estate litigation, and employment law. Employment defense and pre-litigation advisement for small- to medium-size businesses, real estate, and business litigation are the main areas he focuses on in his practice.

"I'm a person who values justice," says Bradford. "I hate any sort of perceived injustice. When there's a wrongdoing that goes unanswered, it pains my soul. Litigation has always been something I've been drawn to because I can't let it go."

Bradford met his wife, Bonnie, in college. She works at a financial planning firm in Redmond, and the couple has a 2-year-old daughter named Avery. In addition to water sports, travel, and hiking, Bradford enjoys photography, a hobby he has loved since high school. He picked it up from his grandfather, who was a photographer for a time in the Bay Area. During college, Bradford made a little money on the side shooting weddings, family portraits, and engagement photos.

On a shelf in his office, he displays the camera he took with him to Bolivia. It's a little beat up from use – the barrel is cracked and the lens is covered in dust – but it served him well on his travels.

Bradford is enthusiastic about building his practice over the next several years. He believes the best practice development comes from doing excellent work.

"I think that's what speaks the loudest," he says. "People are always much more likely to come to you with their business when they have a trusted friend who had a good experience with you."

He is exhilarated by experiences such as attending the Primerus Young Lawyers Conference in New Orleans, La. and making connections that are the seeds of community.

"It's exciting," says Bradford of growing his practice. "I'm someone who has always loved a challenge, especially an intellectual one. I love the feeling of continual growth."



**Dexter fell in love with photography as a teenager and in college made a little money on the side shooting weddings, family portraits, and engagement photos.**