



State Bar Archives Specialist Caitlin Bumford (left) and State Bar Archives Director Alexandra Myers Swast culled through documents and images to create *1963*, an exhibit that connects the past to the present, which is on display at the Texas Law Center.

What's Old Is New Again

BY LOWELL BROWN

The country was changing, and Texas attorneys were at the center of it all."

So begins the historical exhibit highlighting the role Texas attorneys played in shaping national events in 1963. The famously tumultuous time, now 50 years in the past, saw the assassination of a president in Dallas and the simmering of racial tensions in Texas and across the country.

But it also brought a landmark access-to-justice court decision and the creation of a new State Bar of Texas department for continuing legal education.

State Bar Archives Director Alexandra Myers Swast and Archives Specialist Caitlin Bumford wanted to capture all of that history with an emphasis on how Texas attorneys influenced the events. The result is the *1963* exhibit, which opened in March in the lobby of the Texas Law Center in Austin.

Bumford and Swast, who hold master's degrees in information studies from the University of Texas at Austin, spent months combing through *Texas Bar Journal* files and other resources for photographs, news clips, and other records to tell the stories. It all started when they were brainstorming ideas for their depart-

ment's annual exhibit and realized the 50-year anniversary of 1963 offered ample material.

"The bar's annual meeting in 1963 was in Dallas just a few months before the Kennedy assassination," Bumford said. "Also, [State Bar Immediate Past President] Buck Files's 50-year anniversary is this year. The more I looked at it, the more connections I saw between the State Bar and a lot of the national stories.

"They were involved in all of the big issues going on that year, and they continue to be."

The exhibit fills five display panels, each focused on a different topic. The first celebrates the Texas Bar Class of 1963, which included Files, who took the attorney's oath that September and went on to become a U.S. Marine Corps lawyer during the Vietnam War, a criminal defense lawyer in Tyler, and, in 2012-2013, the State Bar president.

The exhibit features two photos of Files—one an official presidential photo, the other an informal shot of a young lawyer with a buzz cut in the fields of Vietnam. The panel is a reminder of bar members' strong history of military service, Bumford said.

In Washington that spring, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its landmark ruling, in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, that the Sixth Amendment requires states to provide attorneys to criminal defendants who can't afford them. Supreme Court Justice Tom C. Clark, a Texas attorney, agreed with the majority in a concurring opinion.

At the Annual Meeting that July, State Bar President Leon Jaworski, a staunch equal justice advocate, devoted part of his presidential address to the decision.

"Because of recent decisions by the United States Supreme Court in *Gideon v. Wainwright* and companion cases, the responsibility of the bar in this regard has multiplied," he said. "... I confidently feel that the lawyers of Texas will not regard this added responsibility as a burden, but rather as their high prerogative to undergird the ideal of equal justice under law. We are again afforded an opportunity to demonstrate that in our land justice is not related to the state of poverty or wealth of the accused, and that lawyers, contrary to the assertions of some cynics, have a dedicated and unselfish devotion to our judicial process."

Meanwhile, other Texas attorneys devoted themselves to the cause of civil rights. Chief among them was U.S. Sen. Ralph Yarborough, a leader in the Democratic Party's liberal wing who, the exhibit notes, was the only Southern senator to vote for all civil rights bills between 1957 and 1970. A photo in the exhibit shows Yarborough standing behind the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. as President Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Johnson made passage of the landmark civil rights legislation a priority after President John F. Kennedy was killed in Dal-

las in November 1963.

The assassination and its aftermath—including the high-profile Dallas trial of Jack Ruby for the murder of accused Kennedy assassin Lee Harvey Oswald—gets a full panel in the exhibit. Kennedy needed Texas to win re-election in 1964, the exhibit explains, so he traveled to Dallas in part to show a united front with rivals in the Texas Democratic Party, including Yarborough.

Texas attorneys were visible throughout the saga, from U.S. District Court Judge Sarah T. Hughes, who administered the presidential oath of office to Johnson at Love Field, to the lawyers who prosecuted and defended Ruby in his murder trial and subsequent appeal.

The 50th anniversary of the State Bar of Texas CLE Department also gets an exhibit panel. The bar's board of directors created the department at the Annual Meeting in July 1963, hiring Gene Cavin as the bar's first director of continuing legal education. The CLE program previously existed as a volunteer effort, but the hiring of Cavin, who retired in 1986, allowed the program to grow into "a nationally admired producer of treatises, form-books, practice systems, audio cassettes, and video programs," past Bar President Darrell Jordan says in remarks included in the exhibit.

Swast said she is glad for the chance to highlight bar history.

"For the archives department, it's a chance to showcase the fact that we are the repository for the bar's permanent history, including photographic evidence of how Texas lawyers have been central figures in national legal dialogs," Swast said. "The exhibit asks viewers to consider how civil rights, legal education, and access to justice have changed over the last 50 years."

The exhibit will be on display through 2013. **TBJ**

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State Bar of Texas Archives Department

The State Bar Archives Department preserves and collects historical records of the State Bar. For more information about the department, to initiate a research request, to request a tour of the State Bar archives, or to inquire about archival donations, contact the department at (800) 204-2222, ext. 1311 or (512) 427-1311 or by email at archives@texasbar.com.

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