



A Tribute to **JAMES B. SALES**

ON FEBRUARY 11, 2023, TEXAS LOST A LEGAL LEGEND. James B. Sales passed after a brief illness. According to family, he was cooking Julia Child-inspired meals for his loving wife, Beuna, reading a book a day, active in his children and grandchildren's lives, and attending weekly mass. He ordered three custom suits that were ready shortly after he passed. Jim had plans to do more.

Jim came from humble beginnings. He was born in 1934 during the Great Depression and was the first person in his family to go to college. He received academic and ROTC scholarships and worked during school at the University of Texas.

Jim was a proud Marine and stayed fit his entire life.

After graduating from the University of Texas School of Law in 1960, he joined the firm now known as Norton Rose Fulbright, where he worked for 62 years before stepping down from his role as counsel in 2022. Jim tried over 100 cases to verdict.

Jim was a consummate leader. His philosophy was "Lead or get out of the way." And lead he did.

He served as president of the Houston Bar Association, or HBA, from 1980 to 1981. During his term, Houston Volunteer Lawyers was founded to deliver free legal services to low-income residents in the Houston area. In 1982, the Houston Bar Foundation was established as the charitable arm of the HBA to support programs that provide legal representation to the indigent. Jim served as the foundation's first chair.

Jim served as president of the State Bar of Texas from 1988 to 1989. At the January 1989 meeting, under Jim's leadership, the board voted to amend the budget to include \$18,000 to cover the operating expenses to establish an office for the Texas Lawyers' Assistance Program, or TLAP. At the time, Michael J. Crowley, an Austin attorney who among many others was instrumental in TLAP's creation, advised Jim that since Texas had a committee for lawyers assistance, it wasn't the worst program in the country but Texas' program was unquestionably "at the bottom." Mike recommended that TLAP have a staff of at least one, a toll-free hotline, be well organized, and be continuously publicized. The efforts by Jim and Mike to get TLAP off the ground should be recognized but I want to also recognize the many others involved in its conception—a tremendous group effort by maverick people who really wanted to help others and the profession.

I am pleased to say that 34 years later, TLAP's program is among the finest in the country. TLAP has five employees, three of whom are lawyers and three of whom are clinical professionals. Last year, TLAP handled 845 consultations, which are strictly confidential by statute. You can go to the TLAP website at tlaphelps.org and get one hour of free CLE. You can also hear tips on managing burnout and anxiety and rediscovering the joy of practicing law.

Since the formation of TLAP, the number of lawyers struggling with substance use issues, depression, stress, anxiety, and cognitive decline has increased significantly. We are so blessed to have the resources of TLAP. If you need help, call or text TLAP 24/7 at 1-800-343-TLAP (8527).

In 2003, while counsel to his firm, Jim served as the first chair of the Texas Access to Justice Commission, a position he held for six years. During his leadership, Jim worked closely with the Texas Supreme Court to establish statewide programs designed to expand access to justice for all Texans, including more than 5 million low-income Texas families.

It is only fitting that one of Jim's favorite quotes has often been attributed to Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give." Jim changed his focus from success to significance. I am grateful he did.

LAURA GIBSON

President, 2022-2023
State Bar of Texas