



Send letters by first-class mail to Managing Editor, *Texas Bar Journal*, P.O. Box 12487, Austin, TX 78711-2487; by overnight mail to Managing Editor, *Texas Bar Journal*, 1414 Colorado, Suite 312, Austin, TX 78701-1627; by fax to (512) 427-4107; or by email to [tbj@texasbar.com](mailto:tbj@texasbar.com).

## Preservation Praise

While I normally find most of the articles and special reports in the *Texas Bar Journal* interesting and at times entertaining, I am not usually compelled to submit any comments to them. The March 2012 issue, and in particular the marvelous piece on “Preserving Texas’ Legal History” (p. 186), is the exception. Unlike our State Bar President, Bob Black, I am not a history buff. But this accounting of the colossal effort that was made to analyze, record, and preserve old court records, case files, and anecdotal evidence left me feeling like I was having a “driveway moment” (as NPR calls it). The essays were fascinating, and I was literally unable to tear my eyes away from them until I had digested every last detail! Hats off to those who embarked and worked on this quest; it provides a wonderful illustration of Texas’ diverse and exciting history as seen through the eyes of the legal profession. I look forward to viewing the preserved records at the State Bar Annual Meeting.

**Kathy Yates**  
*San Antonio*

I enjoyed the “Preserving Texas’ Legal History” issue very much, especially “*State of Texas v. Frank Hardy* and the Bonnie and Clyde Murders” (p. 214). I could not resist looking up Frank Hardy to see for myself his handsome features. Granted, few people look their best in mug shots, but he must have really been having a non-photogenic day. It just goes to show how unreliable eyewitness testimony can be and how overblown closing arguments can come back to haunt you.

**Sharon Primeau**  
*Huntsville*

Your articles on “Preserving Texas’ Legal History” are of special interest to me, and I applaud the efforts of the Texas Supreme Court and its Task Force to preserve and protect legal documents in all 254 Texas courthouses. After 40 years of active practice in West Texas, I retired in 2004 and began researching and writing true tales of justice and injustice on the western frontier. (*Editor’s Note:* Neal’s work was featured in *Spectrum* in the May 2009 *Texas Bar Journal*.)

Most of the stories came from smaller communities in West Texas and the Panhandle, and much of my research was conducted in the basements of rural courthouses. Too often I found that the old records I was searching for were either missing or were disorganized, in deplorable condition, stuffed in cardboard boxes in no particular order, and scattered helter skelter all over the basement. Once when I had spent several hours in the basement of one such courthouse conducting a fruitless search for the file of an 1890 murder trial, I finally asked the recently elected district clerk if she knew where those 1890 court records were stored. She shrugged and said that when she took over the office, she was short of storage space and told the janitor to get rid of some of those old records, “since nobody needed them anymore.”

In any event, the Task Force has its work cut out for it in saving these records before any more are destroyed or allowed to deteriorate. I would also like to point out that there are many interesting and important court cases, especially in the smaller counties, that do not involve famous people or well-known crimes or celebrated historical events. In the days before radio, television, or other widespread media coverage, many of these fascinating stories did not become well known past the county line. There are hundreds of great stories out there waiting for future historians to discover and tell. And that’s why it is so important to preserve those old records.

**Bill Neal**  
*Abilene*

## Mystery Symbol

What is the name for the conic helix (tornado) symbol on the typical criminal docket from 1850s Travis County? (“Justice in the New State Capital,” March, p. 195) I have previously seen it in deed records from the years when they were handwritten.

**R.B. Morris**  
*Archer City*

(*Editor’s Note:* The staff of the *Texas Bar Journal* is stumped on this question and would like to know the answer as well. If anyone knows of an official name for this symbol, email us at [tbj@texasbar.com](mailto:tbj@texasbar.com).)

## Fraud Is Fraud

I read with great interest the article about LBJ’s 1948 Senate race (“*Lyndon B. Johnson v. Coke R. Stevenson, et al.*,” March, p. 216). The author states that “[t]his file is an insight into a colorful time in Texas history. It also evidences the ingenuity of Lyndon Johnson, which he later so ably displayed in the Senate.” Since when do we report election fraud as colorful or ingenious? Shame on the *Texas Bar Journal* for approving this language.

**Diane Timmons**  
*Dallas*

## A More Complete Record

Thank you for a most interesting issue on Texas history and the important role played by the law as a source of history. When I first riffled through the issue, the old photos intrigued me; but when I finally sat down to read it, I began where I mostly always do — at the back. I got in this habit when Jerry Buchmeyer’s column was running — it was often the highlight of my time in the *Journal*. Now there is no Buchmeyer, so I glance at the want ads, and then turn to the obituaries.

I promptly get stuck in various kinds of ruminations. I look at the pictures and think about the kind of person that lawyer must have been. I examine the photo itself: Was it formal, informal, spontaneous? ... I then get to the ages of the deceased, and this is where the rub-



ber hits the road. ... What percentage of contestants in this lottery were at the end of a human life span and what percentage were "cut down in the prime of life"? What about those in their 50s and 60s? They are the most worrisome, in a way, because I am in my late 50s and they are old enough to have had fulfilling lives but not quite old enough to die. After meeting these people and getting a sense of their life and all that that implies, I turn to the rest of the entry for answers, and the question that is foremost in my mind is cause of death. As we all know, that question is never answered. I look at the schools they attended, their family life as revealed in the cryptic notes, and I am left a bit unsettled by the profundity of the history that is missing. And this month, for the first time, I saw someone with whom I once shared an office.

As I lift from the reverie brought on by that gallery, I wonder whether the historians that populate the front of the March issue should spend more time at the back, thinking over the value of the cryptic obituary. ... Surely we could let our fallen comrades shine through as individuals a little more and provide a fuller record for historicans of the future.

**John Lunstroth**

*Houston*

### Alternative to Print?

Has the *Texas Bar Journal* ever considered offering subscribers a digital form? I am sure that many readers would be happy to receive new issues by email, especially since back issues are available on the *Journal's* website.

I, for example, am an inactive member of the State Bar of Texas, retired from

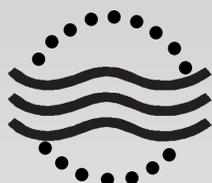
the practice of law and living out of state. While I enjoy receiving the *Journal*, I no longer give most of the articles close attention, and the magazine quickly goes into the recycling bin. It seems a shame to waste the paper and postage. Moreover, like many people, I have chosen to receive other publications in digital form, rather than print editions. I can easily bookmark or print anything I want to keep, without accumulating stacks of old issues.

I hope you will consider offering digital-only subscriptions.

**Judith A. Shepherd**

*Glens Falls, N.Y.*

*(Editor's Note: It's not an email edition, but each month, a complete digital version of the *Texas Bar Journal* is available at [texasbar.com/tbj](http://texasbar.com/tbj).)*



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