



Who Is Your Atticus Finch?

To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Harper Lee's classic novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, the *Texas Bar Journal* asked Texas lawyers "Who is your Atticus Finch?"

W. Frank Newton is Atticus Finch.

Frank has mentored, supported, befriended, coached, and had an impact on hundreds of law students and lawyers in Texas. He was "Dean Newton" at Baylor Law School, back in 1975 when he agreed to teach a young "C" law student how to prepare for and take an exam. The student would take exams from past classes and present the answers to Dean Newton, who would grade them and explain the reasons for the A's and the F's. After a dozen or so of these practice exams, the A's became commonplace. Not just A's on practice exams, but A's as class grades. And there was an award for the most improved mid-year law student because of it. This is one minor example. There are thousands of others.

Frank has been a fearless long-time champion of providing pro bono services to the poor. So much so that the State Bar of Texas named their annual pro bono award the "W. Frank Newton Award." He now serves as president and CEO of the Beaumont Foundation of America, providing grants that focus on enhancing the futures of less fortunate children, youth, and families.

Frank Newton is the poster child for "doing it right."

— *Hull Youngblood, Austin*

Marshall Wood from Texarkana is our local Atticus Finch. Like Finch, Marshall takes the responsibility of his occupation seriously. He is not one to back down in the face of an uphill climb, because he believes "the one place where a man ought to get a square deal is in a courtroom" (*To Kill a Mockingbird*, Chapter 11). Marshall balances his thriving law practice with his role as a community leader, husband, and devoted father of three children. Even with a full plate, he donates countless hours to mentoring young lawyers in our community. He makes every lawyer in this city proud.

— *Shivali Sharma, Texarkana*

Bob Mow is a real-life Atticus Finch. I began working with Bob at a time when there were considerably fewer women and minority lawyers in the practice. My gender or race never mattered to Bob; he always treated me as an equal. He taught me how to be a trial lawyer and personified professionalism in every way. He has mentored many outstanding women lawyers over the years. Bob is as good as it gets in a courtroom, but he is an Atticus because of his mentoring and the creation of an equal playing field for me at a time in my professional development when it really mattered.

— *Kim Askew, Dallas*

Charlye Ola Farris of Wichita Falls was the first African-American woman to be licensed to practice law in Texas and the first African American to serve as a judge in any capacity in the South since Reconstruction. She endured the indignity of practicing law in a county courthouse that, until 1962, had separate restrooms and drinking fountains for "colored" people.

Charlye died Feb. 18 at age 80. The years did not diminish her elegance, and the prejudice she endured did not make her bitter or resentful. She overcame adversity and represented all that is good and honorable about the legal profession.

— *Barry Macha, Wichita Falls*

Forrest Bowers, my father, is my real-life Atticus Finch for three main reasons. First, many times his clients had never had anyone stand up for them before. Second, my dad believed in his cases. In the movie, before Atticus leaves the courtroom, he goes over to the court reporter and clearly indicates, "You get that transcript ready; we're appealing." That's my dad on the wide screen. Third, like Atticus, my dad commands attention and respect, especially in court.

— *Fred Bowers, Lubbock*