

State Rep. Brian McCall publishes first book

T'S BEEN SAID that Gov. John Connally wasn't comfortable unless he was in a \$300 suit and in the company of men wearing \$300 suits. Gov. Preston Smith wore polka-dotted ties and horn-rimmed glasses with no lenses. Who can forget Gov. Ann Richards' white bouffant hairdo and down-home Texas charm? Then there was Gov. George W. Bush, the jester in cowboy boots who gave nicknames to those around him.

Texas' governors have been unique characters. State Rep. **Brian McCall** says, "Most have been colorful characters who understood that to bore one's audience is to lose one's audience. Each had a sense of show and show-business."

In his book *The Power of the Texas Governor: Connally to Bush*, McCall examines the last four decades of Texas governors and how they effectively use (and misuse) power. He argues that personality is power. "Power is a social game," says McCall. "A governor who is highly developed socially, with a strong work ethic and flexibility, can achieve much. The most powerful person in any relationship is the most flexible."

John Connally knew how to be flexible and not break. He desired for Texas to lead the nation in higher education and called for an extra \$26 million for teachers. When Speaker of the House Byron Tunnell and Lt. Gov. Preston Smith cut the proposal in half, Connally used the governor's line-item veto and cut \$12,439,924 from the budget bill to provide "a substantial down payment on excellence in education." Connally said, "And you may rest assured that I plan to guard that nest egg like an old mother hen."

Connally was more of a visionary than his successor, Preston Smith, but Smith understood his power in office, too. A Texas Tech alumnus, Smith wanted the college to get a law school, a pharmacy school, and a medical school. When the regents at the University of Texas were pushing for a series of new buildings, Smith said, "You might get your UT-Dallas, you might get your upper divisions in Tyler, but, it won't be

until after I get a pharmacy school" at Texas Tech.

In *The Power of the Texas Governor*, McCall reveals former chiefs of state's successes and failures. He asserts, "Texas governors who enjoyed the most success had high aims, ones that they articulated clearly, as well as patience in deliberation, a sense of balance, firmness, ability, and principle." He adds that a successful governor will possess "attractive personal characteristics" as well.

Gov. Bill Clements rarely smiled. The author says, "If Clements ever felt the need to be liked, he disguised it." When Clements pushed for the Taxpayer Bill of Rights, which would give Texans

the right to vote on initiatives and reject certain taxes, Clements failed to pass the bill. It was the first override of a gubernatorial veto in 38 years (and there's hasn't been another one since).

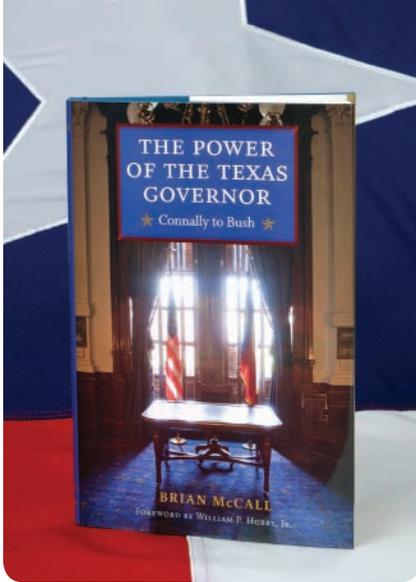
In 1991, Ann Richards succeeded in becoming the second female governor of Texas. (Miriam Amanda Wallace Ferguson was the first in 1925.) Richards used her sense of humor to command the attention of a crowd: "Poor George, he can't help it. He was born with a silver foot in his mouth," she said at the 1988 Democratic Convention. And, "When we pay billions for planes that won't fly, billions for tanks that won't fire, and billions for systems that won't work, that old dog won't hunt."

Richards was defeated for reelection in 1994 by Bush. The oilman from West Texas "employed a style that served his purposes," according to McCall.

Terral Smith, Bush's legislative director, reports on the governor's compassion and tells a story of Norma Chavez, a Democratic representative from El Paso. Chavez pushed for a bill that placed an



State representative and author **Brian McCall**. Profile photo



insignificant regulation on businesses. Bush looked over the bill and told Smith he was going to veto it. Smith told Chavez, who broke down in tears, so Bush signed the bill.

Bush became the first Texas governor to be reelected to consecutive four-year terms. He would go on to pass what would be the largest tax-cut bill in Texas' history, which included eliminating the tax on over-the-counter medications. He also implemented a once-a-year "sales tax holiday" among other legislation.

McCall, a Republican, compares himself most to Richards and Bush. Perhaps he possesses Richards' affability and, like Bush, he advocates for tax cuts. The state representative wrote and helped pass the largest tax-cut bill in Texas when the state was the ninth largest economy in the world.

Elected in 1991, McCall has represented North Dallas, Frisco, Allen, and Plano. The Plano Chamber of Commerce named him 2007 Outstanding Citizen of the Year. He holds a bachelor's degree from Baylor University, a master's from Southern Methodist University, spent a year as a visiting post-graduate student at Oxford University, and earned a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Texas at Dallas.

The Power of the Texas Governor is McCall's first book and is available online at Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Borders, and at Legacy Books in Plano. To learn more about state Rep. Brian McCall, visit brianmccall.com.

— BRIT MOTT

excerpt

From *The Power of the Texas Governor: Connally to Bush*

Because Texas legislators serve part-time in a job that pays less than the cost to serve, most maintain full-time careers in addition to holding political office. Therefore, often the mere threat by a governor to call a special session can advance the governor's cause or add to a bill's vote tally. Once a special session begins, a governor can add items to the legislative agenda—a useful bargaining chip, since legislators' pet bills can be included in exchange for their support of the governor's program.

The governor of Texas can veto any piece of legislation for any reason—or without a reason—and has the power of the line-item veto for specific appropriations in the state budget. In short, the governor can eliminate spending on certain items without vetoing an entire appropriations bill. Likewise, the governor can strike spending for various things deemed important by the legislature without giving an explanation; the governor can do this for political reasons. However, the governor may not reduce the spending in any budget item; rather, the governor must strike out the entire budget line or let it stand. Skilled legislators can design budget lines to make it politically difficult for the governor to veto the item. The threat of a veto can prompt lawmakers to modify their bills to be more palatable to the governor, or even to cause lawmakers to "pull them down."



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For more information about
the Collin College Foundation:
972.599.3145 | mfrazier@cccfd.edu
4800 Preston Park Blvd., Ste. A100
Plano, Texas 75093