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Spring 2010

**Review of John Hill for the State of Texas. By John L. Hill, Jr. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009. Pp. 280. Notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-1603440721. \$35.00).**

Randall Adrian  
*University of Texas at Brownsville*

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### **Recommended Citation**

Adrian, R. (2010). John Hill for the State of Texas. *Journal of South Texas*, 23(3), 113–114.

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*John Hill for the State of Texas*. By John L. Hill, Jr. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2009. Pp. 280. Notes, bibliography, index. ISBN 978-1603440721. \$35.00).

*John Hill For the State of Texas* is the autobiography of a Texas attorney/politician who began his career as a successful plaintiff's trial lawyer chasing class action law suits, who then proceeded to serve as Secretary of State of Texas, failed gubernatorial candidate, Chief Justice of the Texas Supreme Court, and Attorney General for the State of Texas. The emphasis of Hill's memoirs focuses on his prosecution of nine spectacular legal cases during his years as the lawyer for the state between 1973 and 1978, including the drama of him personally arguing the state's position relative to five dramatic cases before the Supreme Court of the United States.

Thorough narratives defining the legal issues, explanation of both Hill's and the opposition's cases, and the final verdicts are presented for the nine cases including: (1) the successful Constitutional defense of the Texas death penalty, (2) defending the rights of Texas against the claims of California and Nevada for the huge estate taxes related to the death of Howard Hughes, and (3) securing corrective action by and compensation from flagrant polluters of the Houston Ship Channel including politically well-connected major multinational companies as well as The City of Houston.

Perhaps Hill's most pronounced impact on the office of Attorney General was his demonstrated policy of being the state's lawyer first and a politician second. Prior AGs had presided over a political staff and merely directed traffic to outside hired counsel when it became necessary to defend a state agency in court. Hill built a talented legal staff and aggressively expanded the mission of his office to represent the people of the State of Texas in courts at all levels as their lawyer, not merely a passive political advisor to state agencies who came to him for legal advice.

Especially disquieting to Texas readers are Hill's revelations of frequent irregular influences on state legislators by lobbyists, including corruption that reached into the highest level of the state's political offices. The Texas Speaker of the House, the second most politically powerful man in the state, ended up in prison during Hill's tenure and the superstar lieutenant governor's career plummeted into oblivion. Underscoring that contemptible situation was the even more shocking, extremely virulent outright theft of

county assets by officials of specific county governments. All are exposed in intimate detail and successfully prosecuted.

And then there is the unintentional disclosure of Hill's Achilles Heel, his glaring arrogance pronounced repeatedly in situations that would give elation to any man, but celebrated by Hill with a surprising degree of braggadocio. He relates his superior techniques in making his arguments to the U.S. Supreme Court, his dramatic changes of pace, rapid-fire delivery in a treble pitch alternating with wise somber baritone pronouncements. Not that there is vanity in the style but rather in his repeated laudation of his "powerful oratorical skills," a direct quote. Naturally, for his arguments to succeed, he had to display his "brilliant legal mind and knowledge," to paraphrase other unfortunate statements.

Perhaps Fate has a way of bringing down the self-proclaimed mighty. In 1968 following his term as Secretary of State, appointed by Democrat Governor John Connally, Hill finished sixth in the statewide Democratic primary for governor. Then in 1978, Hill won the Democratic primary for governor but lost the general election to William Clements. Fate sometimes plays rough with a person's ego, however, when John Hill died in July 2007 at age 84, his memorial was attended by the then Texas Governor Rick Perry, U.S. Senator John Cornyn, the Texas Attorney General, the Texas Secretary of State—all distinguished Republicans plus the president of his alma mater, The University of Texas Austin, and a Justice of the Virginia Supreme Court, a protégé of Hill. Of course, his wife of sixty years, Elizabeth Ann "Bitsy" Graham Hill, sat smiling tearfully before his bier.

John Hill's story is alarming but never boring. It should be required reading for every student who harbors ambitions of a hoped for legal or political career.

**Randall Adrian      University of Texas at Brownsville**

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