

PAST CHAIRMAN PROFILE

ROBERT C. GRABLE
(1946-2023)

OGERL Council Chairman (1991-1992)

The Oil, Gas and Energy Resources Law Council of the State Bar of Texas periodically prints articles profiling Past Chairs of the Council. Due to the hard work and dedication, these Past Chairs provided both to the Council and to the practice of oil, gas and energy law in Texas, the Council felt that recognition of these Past Chairs was due. The following Past Chair profile is of Robert C. Grable (1946-2023), who was Chair of the Council during its 1991-1992 term.

Born in San Antonio, Bob was the middle child of Charles Francis Grable and Esther DeBord Grable. Bob was raised in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Dallas. As a boy, Bob's father and mother, instilled in Bob a strong work ethic, a devotion to family, a love of country and a Christian faith which Bob would carry with him throughout his life. During his youth in Tulsa, Bob ran a paper route for the Tulsa Tribune throughout his neighborhood in the early morning and evening hours before and after school earning income to help support himself and his family. Bob and his brother Charles became Boy Scouts which they would continue with through high school achieving Star and Eagle Scout ranks respectively. Bob learned early on the value of hard work and integrity, traits that would later serve him well in his chosen field of oil and gas law.

In Dallas, Bob attended Hillcrest High School, graduating in 1964. God gifted Bob with natural athletic ability and coordination which enabled him to excel as a varsity basketball player for Hillcrest. More important to Bob than athletic and academic accolades, however, were the dear and lifelong friendships that Bob formed while a student at Hillcrest which would include his future wife, Martha "Marty" Hallman.

Upon graduating from Hillcrest, Bob enrolled as a freshman at the University of California at Los Angeles (in part to be near his mother and father who has relocated to the area for work). Bob decided to come back to Dallas to join his brother at Southern Methodist University where he graduated in 1968. During his time at SMU, Bob was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity where he made treasured friendships. Initially a pre-med major, Bob changed his focus to pre-law due partly to his admiration for Marty's father, a noted Dallas attorney.

On June 29, 1968, Bob and Marty were married in Dallas. They spent the next three years in Austin where Bob attended the University of Texas Law School while Marty taught elementary school. Bob earned high honors at UT Law School, graduating as the Grand Chancellor in 1971. Bob was also a member of the Order of the Coif, Phi Delta Phi, and Associate Editor of the *Texas Law Review*. Bob loved his time at UT Law where he made many lifelong friends. He was a loyal supporter of the school throughout the rest of his life, including serving as a trustee on the UT Law School Foundation from 2001-2021 (serving as the Board Chair from 2007-2010), a member of the McDonald Observatory and Astronomy Board of Visitors at UT, the UT Development Board, and the Chancellor's Council Executive Committee.

While preparing to enter law school, Bob committed to join the United States Navy upon graduation. In October 1971, Bob started active duty where he served as a Naval Legal Officer in the Judge Advocate General Corps in commands throughout the United States including Rhode Island and eventually Corpus Christi where he was honorably discharged in 1975 as a Lieutenant.

After the Navy, Bob and Marty settled in Austin where Bob joined the firm of Graves, Dougherty, Hearon, Moody & Garwood. At Graves Dougherty, Bob had the good fortune to work with Dan Moody, Jr. Under Dan Moody's guidance, Bob began to serve firm clients in oil and gas matters, including regulatory work at the Railroad Commission. The Railroad Commission in the 1970's seemed to be the epicenter of the petroleum universe, and Bob enjoyed the variety of work and busy hearing docket. Mr. Moody continued to be a friend and mentor to Bob throughout Bob's career, even after leaving Graves Dougherty.

In 1979, Bob and Marty's lives changed when Dee Kelly, Sr., Mark Hart and Bill Hallman extended an offer to Bob, Dan Settle, Glen Johnson and Pete Geren to form the firm of Kelly Hart & Hallman in Fort Worth. Bob greatly admired Dee Kelly, Sr., with whom he practiced law continuously for the next thirty-six years until Mr. Kelly's passing. Together with Mr. Kelly, Bob represented Burnett Oil Company and the Bass and Fortson families in their oil and gas businesses for many years, forming trusted relationships and friendships. Bob would become a trusted advisor and counselor to the Fortson family and the Kimbell Art Foundation. He worked on many developments for the Kimbell Art Museum, including the legal aspects of several significant acquisitions works and antiquities and the design and construction of the Renzo Piano Pavilion. Bob developed an expertise in oil, gas and mineral law, a specialty in which he became Board Certified by the State Bar of Texas.

Bob was a proud Texan and recognized the importance of the petroleum industry in our State. He had a deep admiration for the people in the petroleum industry, and treated all ranks of people with respect, from roughnecks to executives. Bob's clients and work at Kelly Hart took him all across Texas, from the Panhandle to deep South Texas, both working for oil companies and for landowners. He was counsel of record in over 40 appellate decisions, including six significant oil and gas opinions of the Texas Supreme Court.

During his career, in addition to serving as Chair of OGERL, Bob was the longtime chair and senior member of the Kelly Hart's Oil and Gas section. Bob also served as a member of the firm's Executive Committee for many years, helping to lead the firm to continued growth and success. From the initial group of seven attorneys in Fort Worth, the attorney roster at Kelly Hart has grown to 140 attorneys in five offices. His kind heart and care for others extended to all persons at the firm and he was widely admired. Over the years Bob had many assistants and paralegals with whom he worked closely and who loved Bob dearly. He treated each with dignity and respect, often providing counsel and advice in times of need. Bob was among the few lawyers whose practice combined sophisticated energy transactions, litigation and administrative hearing work. Bob thrived on the often scientific and mathematical aspects of oil and gas geology, seismology, geophysics and subsurface operations, production, treatment and marketing. This enabled him to be a very effective advocate for his clients.

Bob's abilities led to him being recognized with many honors including inclusion in *Best Lawyers in America* and *Texas Super Lawyers*. Bob also had the honor of serving as a member of the Board of Directors of ATMOS Energy Corporation. Bob and Marty made many dear friendships through Bob's service on the Board of ATMOS.

Bob had a passion for golf and its history and was a regular participant in the River Crest Country Club "gangsone" for many years. Over the years, he would enjoy many golf trips with his Kelly Hart partners Don Herrmann, Dan Settle, Don Plattsmier and Dee Kelly, Jr. He loved these trips and his friends. Bob also enjoyed spending summers in Santa Fe, New Mexico with Marty and playing the Sunrise and Sunset courses at Las Campanas Club where he had many close friends and golfing buddies. "He was truly a brilliant man. He would converse about anything and was always fun to talk to," Dee Kelly, Jr. said.

Above all, Bob was a devoted husband and father and man of faith who loved and cared for his family to the end. The birth of his two granddaughters gave great joy to Bob. He loved nothing more than being a granddad and spending time with them. Bob was always up for their adventures whether it was going for a hike in Santa Fe or helping with math homework, for which he was quite well suited.

Jeff Grable is the son of Bob Grable and also worked alongside him at Kelly Hart. Jeff Grable described his father as loving and encouraging. He always made time for his children despite his busy schedule, his son said. He gave his children caring advice rooted in wisdom and never talked down to them, Jeff Grable said. Bob sparked Jeff's early interest in oil and gas by showing Jeff a VHS tape of a massive well blowout in West Texas, making it clear that there could be an element of excitement to what his Dad did every day!

Now a partner at Jackson Walker in Fort Worth, one of Jeff Grable's fondest memories of his father was when he was hired at Kelly Hart. Among other matters, Jeff and Bob worked together on a significant breach of contract case for the Bass family in Reeves County. They were working together, father and son. Jeff Grable learned about being a lawyer from his father. He saw how his dad's professionalism drew clients and maintained successful relationships with them. Grable always put his clients first, his son said.

"He was a godly and caring man, who although was very gifted in his abilities as an attorney, cared for his people," Jeff Grable said.

