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### **RIDING SHARPSTOWN TO VICTORY**

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In 1972, I knew I could rebuild the Texas attorney general's office into a legal powerhouse by attracting sharp young lawyers eager for a new challenge. The only obstacle standing in my path was an attorney general who wasn't ready to retire.

Running against an incumbent holding a statewide office in Texas is always difficult. That is particularly true in a race for an office not well understood by voters, which the attorney general's office always will be. Most of its responsibilities involve providing legal advice to state agencies and taking action in courts to implement a law or defend a state agency from legal challenge. Large businesses subject to far-reaching regulatory laws and rules kept a close watch on the attorney general's office, but the average citizen seldom was touched directly by it. That's why candidates for attorney general usually used the campaign theme "I'm tough on crime." Even though the attorney general's powers directly impacting law enforcement are minimal and it is only a small part of the officeholder's role, law enforcement is the only area of responsibility that may have a direct impact on most voters.

To win the election, I would need two circumstances to occur: a one-on-one race against the incumbent and a strong issue that would neutralize the incumbent's natural advantage. Both of these circumstances were beyond my control. On the first item, I could only wait until the filing deadline to determine who the candidates would be. On the second item, I was blessed with an epic influence-peddling scandal that tainted all Austin officeholders.

This scandal was quite a spectacle. The man responsible for this political turmoil was one of my fellow Houstonians but one whom I had never met. His name was Frank Sharp, and his misdeeds gave me my most effective campaign issue. What Sharp intended to do was to sucker