

Maury Maverick Jr. fought for underdog

BY MYRNA OLIVER
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Maury Maverick Jr., an iconoclastic Texas lawyer, legislator and columnist who stood out from the crowd and stood up for the underdog, has died. He was 82.

Mr. Maverick died Jan. 28 in his native San Antonio of kidney failure after surgery.

Unlike his forebears, he never added new words to the lexicon of American English. But he did set some important legal precedent to ensure civil rights for all.

His great-grandfather, Samuel Augustus Maverick, who signed the Texas Declaration of Independence in 1836, made the family name a word by refusing to brand his cattle. Cowboys coming upon any calf without a mark seared into its flank declared it "a maverick," and the word was soon applied to human non-conformists, too.

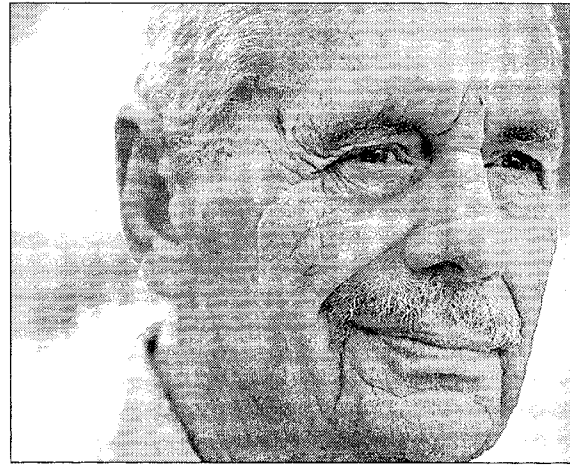
His father, Maury Maverick Sr., was a liberal Democrat and congressman who worked for Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal legislation, served as mayor of San Antonio and nearly got lynched for permitting Communists to meet in the city's Municipal Auditorium.

The father also contributed a word to the dictionary: "gobbledygook."

As chairman of Smaller War Plants Corp. during World War II, the senior Maverick labeled pompously worded memos "gobbledygook" and ordered his employees to "be short and say what you're talking about" or "be shot."

Maury Jr., through his career as legislator, lawyer and free-lance columnist for the San Antonio Express-News for more than 20 years, acted with a maverick's independence and avoided gobbledygook. He could quote Shakespeare, Homer, Mark Twain, Al Capone or Huey Newton with equal ease, but he always kept it short and said what he was talking about.

Some of his columns were published in the 1997



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Maury Maverick Jr., shown in this 1999 photo, was the scion of a prominent San Antonio family who made his own mark as a liberal attorney, legislator and newspaper columnist.

book, "Texas Iconoclast."

Mr. Maverick graduated from the Texas Military Institute, earned an economics degree from the University of Texas in Austin, served in the Marines during World War II and then received a law degree from St. Mary's University in San Antonio.

He was in the Texas Legislature from 1950 to 1956 at the height of the McCarthy era — and voted 18 times against anti-Communism bills, including one that would have sent anyone convicted of being a Communist to the electric chair.

When a resolution was introduced to invite U.S. Sen. Joseph McCarthy, R-Wis., to address the Texas Legislature, Mr. Maverick countered with an amendment to invite Mickey Mouse instead.

"If we're going to invite a rat to visit our state," he

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said, "why not invite a good rat?"

The highly touted "Red Scare," Mr. Maverick believed, enabled racists and bigots to persecute blacks, Latinos, unions and even librarians and school-teachers.

Disgusted with politics, he concentrated on practicing law. He handled scores of cases for the American Civil Liberties Union and the Texas Civil Liberties Union and was justly proud of the John Minor Wisdom Public Interest and Professionalism Award given him in 1991 by the American Bar Association for his pro bono work.

Mr. Maverick's most famous case, decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1965, became a landmark in limiting search and seizure. It was called *Stanford v. Texas* and involved John W. Stanford Jr., who operated a bookstore out of his home. In that case, the court ruled that a search warrant calling for the seizure of any books or pamphlets on the Communist Party of Texas was unconstitutional.

As a legislator, Mr. Maverick had introduced a bill to overturn Texas' 1933 Jim Crow law banning professional boxing matches between blacks and whites. The bill never got out of committee, but a black boxer named I. H. "Sporty" Harvey read about it and asked Mr. Maverick to file a lawsuit on his behalf. Rather than argue the unfairness of the law, Mr. Maverick stressed that the ban unconstitutionally deprived his client of the right to earn a living.

The court agreed with him, and overturned the law in 1954.

Mr. Maverick is survived by his wife of 36 years, Julia, and a sister, Terrelita.