

# Hutchison attorney has earned reputation as tiger in courtroom

BY GARDNER SELBY  
POST AUSTIN BUREAU

AUSTIN — Michael Tigar, one of two lawyers leading the defense of U.S. Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison against charges of official misconduct and tampering with evidence, is not yet pleading his client's case.

But wisecracks are another matter.

Initially fending off a reporter, the University of Texas law professor said: "I'm going to do the job the state pays me for (teaching). If you don't do the job the state pays you for, you get indicted."

Later, Tigar told a friend: "I'm making a career change. I'm representing Republicans now. Do you have a manual?"

Hutchison, a Republican elected to the Senate in June, faces trial Nov. 29 in Austin on four felony and one misdemeanor charge of using state employees and equipment for personal and political purposes and destroying

computer records during her tenure as state treasurer. She has denied wrongdoing.

Tigar, leading the defense along with well-known Houston lawyer Dick DeGuerin, has a reputation matching his name and campus office, decorated in full tiger: tiger lamp, tiger rug, tiger chair, even a tiger aphorism, in Spanish: *Me Siento Como Un Tigre* (I Feel Like a Tiger).

"There's no better criminal lawyer in America," said Houston lawyer Joe Jamail, whose name is on the UT professorship held by Tigar. "F. Lee Bailey couldn't carry his briefcase."

The 52-year-old California native bears a passing resemblance to Sam Waterston, the actor who portrays a lawyer on the TV show *I'll Fly Away*.

In a storybook legal career, Tigar has represented clients spanning the political spectrum. Consider:

■ He aided radical black activist Angela Davis in her successful fight against murder

charges.

■ He won an acquittal for the late John Connally against charges he accepted a bribe.

■ He fought the Teamsters Union to force them to pay pension benefits to the survivors of Jimmy Hoffa.

■ And most recently, Tigar has served John Demjanjuk in his quest to regain U.S. citizenship lost when he was extradited to Israel to be tried as a Nazi war criminal. Demjanjuk, cleared by Israeli courts of being the so-called "Ivan the Terrible" death camp guard, has returned to his Cleveland-area home.

Tigar, who is going on half-time leave from UT to assist Hutchison, gives his law students two reasons to relish white-collar criminal cases: "Your clients are rich as Croesus and scared as hell."

Yet Tigar, who graduated first in his law school class and once lost a U.S. Supreme Court clerk-

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Karen Warren/Special to The Houston Post

**Dr. Michael Tigar stands behind his tiger chair in his University of Texas Law School office.**



# TIGAR: UT law professor's courtroom shadow looms large

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ship because of his radical activism, said he does not take cases simply for money.

"A lawyer's obligation is to try to secure justice for people whose claims might otherwise go unheard," Tigar said. "I like cases in which we are testing the power of the state with respect to individuals."

Fresh out of law school at the University of California at Berkeley, Tigar took a job as an associate in a law firm headed by Washington, D.C., lawyer Edward Bennett Williams. In between stints in academia, as well as a period as editor of a manual assisting lawyers in fighting the draft, Tigar joined Williams in defense of Connally.

The former U.S. Treasury Secretary was indicted in 1974 for allegedly accepting \$10,000 in bribes from the Associated Milk Producers Inc. in thanks for a recommendation that the government raise milk-price supports. He was acquitted by a jury.

In a twist of history, Tigar might cross-examine Connally's daughter, Sharon Amman, in the Hutchison trial. Amman, a former state Treasury aide, has said she was required to perform personal chores for Hutchison on state time.

Connally, the last Texas politician assisted by Tigar, "had enormous courage," Tigar said.

For a moment, the politic pro-

fessor sounds like an advocate warming for a showdown.

"It takes a lot of gumption to be charged with a crime that you didn't commit and to endure the barrage of media coverage, much of it accepting of the government's version of events, to endure the petty hostility of prosecutors and then to sit through the trial — a trial that many people thought he couldn't win.

"I had the greatest respect for John. He remained a good friend."