In 1986, members of Texas Lawyers Auxiliary attended an American Lawyers Auxiliary roundtable workshop at the American Bar Association Annual Meeting. Each member organization reported on successful local projects, several of them displaying law related handbooks, all with the goal of gifting their graduating seniors with a brief summary of some laws likely to be of interest to teens reaching the age of accountability. One handbook, bearing the above title, was selected by a TLA committee. Copyright permission was given by Cincinnati and Wisconsin. Mrs. Charles Smith of San Antonio, a former first lady of the State Bar of Texas, set about to adapt the book to Texas law, assisted by St. Mary’s School of Law. Some subjects covered were marriage, making contracts, jury service, drinking and driving, apartment renting, and military service.

On June 30, 1987, TLA received 5,080 copies ordered from Williamson Printing Company in Dallas, to test the popularity of the project. Money had to be collected from sale of the books before the printing company could be paid. Demand for the books required funds to print much larger numbers with money on hand to pay for the books upon receipt. TLA was awarded the first of three grants by Texas Bar Foundation to print 50,000 copies. The project goal was to reach every high school student in the state. As demand increased, Texas Bar Foundation again provided funds to print 100,000 copies.

In 2018, our final book order brought the total of books printed to 2,485,280. At least a few books had been distributed in all but 15 of Texas’ 254 Counties. Dallas Lawyers Auxiliary (at that time Dallas Lawyers Wives Club) was a leader, sponsoring the project throughout Dallas County. By 2014, it was the only organization in Texas which had purchased enough books every year since 1987 to make available copies for every high school senior, more than half a million in Dallas County. The record order by one organization was received in 2007 when Houston Bar Foundation and Houston Bar Association Auxiliary ordered 48,250 books for the upcoming school year. One-fourth of all Texas school students are in Harris County!

Funding was provided locally for the books, primarily through law and education related organizations. Clients were billed for cost plus postage for books they order. Local bar associations and auxiliaries ordered books for seniors in their bar districts. In small counties, civic-minded lawyers often purchased books for all seniors.

While the book targeted high school seniors, other uses were: judges with teens under their supervision, elementary teachers in pre-law classes, rehab organizations, law day and citizenship classes. Teachers commented that the book contained what they tried to teach all year, wrapped up in one little book. Smaller cities and towns were successful in securing publicity associated with local attorneys presenting books to students. One of TLA’s reasons for being is to report good deeds by members of the legal profession.

In early 2018, our printing company ceased operation and the decision was made to offer the book by APP instead of the printed version. The Spanish version is on line.

October, 2018