



# BAND OF BROTHERS



When **Ben De Leon** volunteered to mentor children through a church program a few years ago, he didn't think it would change his life. In fact, he wasn't quite sure what to expect from the experience. "I thought I'd be paired with a male student for a small period of time," says De Leon, an attorney with De Leon & Washburn, P.C. in Austin. Little did he know that three years later, the experience would lead to his being named the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America's 2009 National Big Brother of the Year, and, more important, that he would find himself looking up to the child he was meant to guide. "I had no idea what was in store for me," he says of his mentee, or "Little," Anthony. "Now we've created a friendship that runs very deep. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with Anthony."

De Leon's mentorship evolved after Anthony's grandmother asked De Leon to be his Big Brother. "She wrote me a letter. That's what clinched it for me," he says. "I wanted to see Anthony graduate from high school from that point on."

Now, the two consider each other family. De Leon emphasizes that their relationship grew not by spending money on 11-year-old Anthony, but by spending time with him (De Leon aims for at least once every two weeks), listening to him, and exposing him to new things, such as the importance of education and college. In addition to educational and sports-related trips to the University of Texas campus, De Leon has taken Anthony to his law office. "Anthony has said if he weren't in the program, he would probably spend his time playing video games," De Leon says. "I'm not sure Anthony would be as inspired or directed without the program, but now he knows what he is capable of, and he even wants to be a Big Brother himself."

It's this kind of inspiration and his constant support of BBBS that led to De Leon's nomination as Big Brother of the Year. "Ben has consistently been a part of Anthony's life. He is committed to Anthony for the rest of his life, and he is a resource that Anthony can depend on," says BBBS of Central Texas Chief Executive Officer Brent Fields. "Ben is a selfless person who has dedicated his life to making sure that the lives of others are better, and that, in and of itself, speaks to the kind of person he is."

De Leon, though, is modest about the recognition, even giving credit to Anthony. "I wouldn't be the person I am today," he says. "I wouldn't be as patient or persevering as I am if it weren't for Anthony. Sometimes I stop to think about what I would do in a situation if Anthony were watching. He makes me want to do better not only in life, but in the practice of law."

For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters, visit [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org).

Top: Ben De Leon was named the 2009 Big Brother of the Year. He often spends family time with his "Little," Anthony. The two consider each other family and even spend holidays together, like in this 2008 Christmas photo. De Leon's daughter, Anna, is also pictured.

Bottom: Ben De Leon and Anthony attended BBBS-sponsored Hobie Day at Lake Travis, where Bigs and Littles spend time on sailboats.



## TEXAS PEOPLE

# A POSITIVE MESSAGE

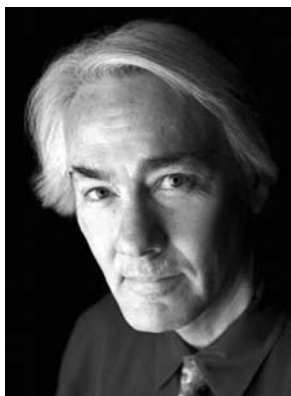
BY MICHAEL SINGLEY

Austin trial lawyer **Jack London** is on a voyage of self-discovery, both as a trial lawyer and in his personal life and pursuits. He lives by a simple, positive motto that has sustained him through the darkest times: “Oh yes, I can.” As an example of this philosophy, London recently published his first novel, *French Letters: Virginia’s War*, book one of a planned trilogy set in a small Texas town during World War II.

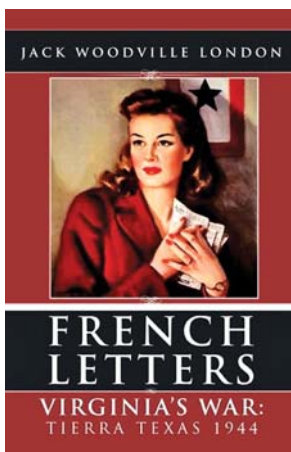
His motto stems from 1986 when he ran the London Marathon. Prior to the race, he was given a poster of two men running along the Embankment with St. Paul’s Cathedral visible behind them. One of the men says, “Oh God, I can’t go on,” and a cartoon dialogue balloon coming out of St. Paul’s says, “Oh yes, you can.”

London didn’t realize how important that message would be until 10 years later when he got the devastating news that his 19-year-old son Daniel and Daniel’s girlfriend, Beth, had been killed by a drunk driver. Support from close friends and especially his wife, Alice, also a trial lawyer, helped London cope, but he found something else that helped him go on: writing.

“I decided that it was time to apply St. Paul’s comment to myself, to go on, yes, I could. I wanted to learn better how to tell a story and to do so by writing,” he said.



Attorney Jack London, author of the World War II-era novel, *French Letters: Virginia’s War*



London attended a writing program in St. Cere, France, where he forged close friendships with fellow students who still serve as mentors and critics and who supported him throughout the process of writing and publishing *Virginia’s War*.

Writing *Virginia’s War* fulfilled a dream London had deferred since college due to the demands of a busy professional and family life. Despite his successful career as a trial lawyer, writing has provided an important new dimension of creative and personal satisfaction to him. The novel has received critical acclaim since its debut in February, including a nomination for the Williams Foundation’s Willie Morris Award for the best novel from the South.

London is hard at work on the second book in the trilogy and enjoying every minute. His success in finding the strength to move forward after tragedy and to fulfill a dream provides an important lesson to all of us: Oh yes, we can. ✦

*Michael Singley is a co-founder of Mundy & Singley, L.L.P., in Austin*

**Linda L. Addison**, partner-in-charge in Fulbright & Jaworski, L.L.P. in Houston and New York, N.Y., is one of five recipients of the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession’s 2009 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award. The award, established in 1991, honors outstanding women lawyers who have achieved professional excellence in their area of specialty and have actively paved the way to success for others.



**John H. Martin**, a partner in Thompson & Knight, L.L.P. in Dallas, was named president-elect of Lawyers for Civil Justice, a national organization of defense lawyers and corporate counsel dedicated to fairness and improvements within the civil justice system.



**Barbara Spudis de Marigny**, a partner in Gardere, Wynne, Sewell, L.L.P. in Houston, received the 2009 Larry M. Katz Distinguished Service Award by the American Bar Association Section of Taxation. The award is presented each year in recognition of a lawyer’s outstanding service in the field of partnership and limited liability company taxation.



**R. Hal Moorman**, a partner in Moorman, Tate, Moorman, Urquhart & Haley, L.L.P., in Brenham, was elected Texas chair of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel. The organization is a nonprofit association of lawyers who have made substantial contributions to the field of trust and estate law through writing, teaching, and bar leadership activities.

