



One on One with H. Minor Pipes III, 81st LSBA President:

A Fifth-Generation Louisiana Lawyer, Pipes Discusses the Legal Profession in the “New Frontier”

Interviewed by C.A. (Hap) Martin III

H. Minor Pipes III is a founding member of the New Orleans firm Pipes Miles Beckman, LLC. He was selected as a member of the inaugural Leadership LSBA class, an investment by the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) that has paid off well as he was sworn in as the 81st LSBA president in June.

Pipes, a fifth-generation Louisiana lawyer, was originally from Houma. After attending Louisiana State University for two years, he transferred to Penn State University where he received his BA degree in history in 1991. He returned to Louisiana and attended Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center where he earned his JD degree in 1996. He was admitted to the practice of law in Louisiana in 1996.

He served as the LSBA president-

elect in 2020-21 and the LSBA treasurer in 2016-18. He represented the First District on the Board of Governors and has served in the House of Delegates. He has co-chaired the LSBA's Summer School for Lawyers and participated as a speaker in that program. He received the LSBA's President's Award in 2009. He also served as the 2015-16 president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation.

Pipes has been recognized by Louisiana Super Lawyers as one of the Top 50 Lawyers in Louisiana. He also has been recognized as a Top Lawyer by New Orleans Magazine, as a leading lawyer in New Orleans by Best Lawyers and New Orleans CityBusiness, and as a “Litigation Star” by Benchmark Litigation.

In his community, he volunteers his



time with Hogs for the Cause, KidsmART and Trinity Episcopal School.

Pipes is married to Jill McKay Pipes and they are the parents of three sons, ages 14, 16 and 18.

(Left) H. Minor Pipes III and family: from left, Henry, George, H. Minor Pipes III, his wife Jill McKay Pipes, and Charlie. Photo by Paul Morse Photography.

(Above) H. Minor Pipes III, the 81st president of the Louisiana State Bar Association.



H. Minor Pipes III with former LSBA President Joseph L. (Larry) Shea, Jr., at the 2015 LSBA Access to Justice Pro Bono Awards held at the Louisiana Supreme Court in New Orleans.

Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

Martin: You've practiced your entire career in New Orleans, but I understand you are originally from Houma.

Pipes: Yes, I was born and raised in Houma, but, interestingly enough, my mother is from New Orleans, my father's mother is from New Orleans and my father's grandfather is from New Orleans. So, the Pipes family comes from New Orleans, married somebody from Houma and moved to Houma, and then went back to New Orleans to find their spouses. I was born in Touro Hospital in New Orleans. My mother grew up on Webster Street in New Orleans and preferred to have children there. She drove to New Orleans every time she was about ready to give birth, stayed with her parents and would go to the hospital to have us. So, I always spent a lot of time in New Orleans.

I left home when I was 17 to go to LSU. I spent two years at LSU because I knew I was paying for it and got a scholarship there. I got my free ride at LSU before I transferred to Penn State. I went

to Penn State and I have not lived in Houma, except between school breaks, since I was 17.

My father passed away and I moved home. I spent six months in Houma, sort of getting everything straight before going to law school. After law school, I knew I wasn't going back to Houma because, at that point, I'd lived at Penn State and in DC, so my choices were between Houston or New Orleans. I decided to take a pay cut and go to New Orleans and never looked back.

Martin: Let's talk more about your education. Why did you go to college at Penn State?

Pipes: I always wanted to get away. We always traveled a lot when I was a child. I just had it in my head that going away to school would let me understand if I ever wanted to be back here or not. I wanted to end up where I was supposed to be, and I felt like you had to leave to do that. It was a natural thing for me to try something else out. And, it made me

respect it a lot more when I came home.

Martin: What was your course of study there?

Pipes: History.

Martin: Then, you came back to attend law school at LSU.

Pipes: I did. I would have been a fifth-generation Tulane law graduate. By that point, all those grads were not around to pay for it. LSU had more scholarship money and less tuition, and so it made more sense.

Martin: As you mentioned, you are a fifth-generation lawyer. Explain the family history.

Pipes: My great-grandfather had a JD but didn't practice a whole lot. He was a sugar farmer by trade.

Martin: Did your great-grandfather read the law?

Pipes: He did. He was in the Legislature so he helped write the law, but he didn't really practice. Then my great-grandfather grew up in New Orleans, went to Tulane, married a farmer's daughter and moved to Houma to run the plantation. Actually, he ended up becoming a heck of a farmer. I remember reading about him in a book when I was a kid. He figured out the cross strain of sugar that allowed it to deal with Houma's swampiness. So, instead of them getting half the sugar they were getting out of planting, it increased significantly.

Then my grandfather was a lawyer. He went to Washington and Lee first and then he went to Tulane Law School. He started practicing in Houma and practiced there until a year or two before he died.

My father went to Tulane and then Tulane Law School. He thought he was going to work in New Orleans and got an apartment. After he graduated, my grandfather said, "Oh, I didn't tell you? You're coming to work with me." For a year, he commuted to Houma because my mother wasn't sure she wanted to move there. Ultimately, she moved there and lived there for 40 years and loved it.

Interestingly enough, I never wanted to be a lawyer. Because I was the "III," everybody assumed I would just follow in their footsteps. I wanted to make my



Minor, Jill and sons Henry, George and Charlie at the 2015 Louisiana Bar Foundation Fellows Gala. Photo courtesy Louisiana Bar Foundation archives.



Jill and Minor Pipes at the 2015 Louisiana Bar Foundation Fellows Gala. Photo courtesy Louisiana Bar Foundation archives.

own path, which is probably why I went away for school. I was two years out of undergrad before I even thought about law school.

Martin: What did you do during those two years?

Pipes: I ran a McDonald's.

Martin: A real-life education.

Pipes: When I went to Penn State, I had been working all my life. I started throwing papers when I was 11. I had full-time jobs from when I was 17 on. I went to Penn State and, at that point, I had bought a car. I had a car note and I thought I'll just get a job waiting tables or bartending or one of the things I've done for years. I went out there, I was 19, but was too young to work in a bar in Pennsylvania. You only had to be 18 here. I couldn't get a job because it was a town of just 25,000 people with 50,000 undergrads. So, all those jobs went from fraternity brother to fraternity brother or a little brother. The only place hiring was McDonald's. I walked in, gave them my schedule and said, "I got to make this much money a month.

If you can give me that much work, I'll take a job." So I started working there. By the time I graduated, I was running shifts. I was a history major and I didn't have a job. The guy that oversaw the McDonald's from the company side offered me a job anywhere in the county I wanted to go, and I went to DC. He gave me a store, running it with somebody else, and I did that for two years.

Martin: What made you decide to leave that career and go to law school?

Pipes: My father passed away. When my Dad died, I packed up. I came home for a month so I could help my family figure out what to do. Since my father was a solo practitioner, I hired a lawyer to run his practice and to close everything up. I went back to DC to wrap everything up. I quit my job, came home and started bartending again. I took the LSAT in February and started law school in August.

Martin: If you didn't think you would be a lawyer before, why did that change?

Pipes: You know, it was about the

time my father died, or probably a few months before, I started realizing what I really wanted to do; it was what I was good at. I had been in debate in high school. I knew, as my sister said, I liked to argue. It just seemed before that, I never really wanted to go back to school and get a degree like that, but it just kept calling to me. After a while, when you're working three jobs, you're making \$25,000 a year, you're not really going anywhere, you're having a good time, you start thinking, where's my future? I knew I wasn't going to do that for forever. So, unless I wanted to get on the ownership train and figure out a way to turn it into a business, law school seemed like it made sense.

Martin: Did you ever work in your father's law office growing up?

Pipes: I worked there as a runner. I would file things at the courthouse, things like that. I would do books over there. I was always pretty good with numbers so I would do that, but that was about it.

Continued next page



Jill and Minor Pipes at the 2002 Annual Meeting in Destin, Fla.
Photo from LSBA archives.



Jill and Minor Pipes with their eldest son, Henry, at the 2002 Annual Meeting in Destin, Fla. *Photo from LSBA archives.*

Martin: What kind of practice do you have?

Pipes: All litigation. Eighteen lawyers. We do probably 99% defense work. Every now and then, we get a plaintiff's case. But, for the most part, it's insurance, bad faith and coverage litigation. We do a decent amount of construction litigation and just general practice.

Martin: What's your favorite type of case?

Pipes: Anything that gets me in the courtroom. I tell people, I'd wear a suit every day if they let me go to court every day.

Martin: Since you like to go to court, what was your worst day in court so far?

Pipes: I was a young lawyer. I filed three exceptions in a case that I thought I should win. Two of them were gut cinch winners, and one of them was weak as could be. The judge granted the weakest one and denied the other two as moot. They took a writ and it scared the daylights out of me that I had screwed it up. So, I teach my young lawyers, don't make arguments you're afraid to win.

Martin: What was your best day in

court so far?

Pipes: I had a jury trial in federal court and it was a huge case. I had a jury that got it. It was a tough case, lots of claims, and I get a verdict that could've gone either way. It went very well. It was a defense verdict, so it was the right decision for my client, but I was afraid that they would split the baby. But they didn't. They did a good job. Watching a jury come out, and you can tell when they get it, and they got it. It was just, you could feel it. I told my wife, "You need to come watch it. They're about to do the right thing." And they did.

Martin: Since you've got such a family history, were your predecessors in the law involved in the Louisiana State Bar Association?

Pipes: My father was in the House of Delegates, I believe, early in his career. But after he started his family, he got out of it. Part of that may be because he was in Houma and it was a small town back then. There weren't many people to cover for him. Another reason may be because he was involved with many other things. My father and grandfather were always involved in different things. My father volunteered and ran

the Red Cross in Houma for a while. During the hurricanes, I remember we would go way down the bayou to see the damage. For me, as I got into my law career, it made sense to me that becoming involved with the LSBA would be a good thing. If I was going to be a lawyer, I might as well have something to do with the Bar. It just sort of evolved.

Martin: You were a member of the inaugural Leadership LSBA Class. How did that come about?

Pipes: Larry Feldman appointed me to it, and that was back when a lot of the barons of the Bar were right there in that group. Guy deLaup, Frank Neuner, Marta Schnabel, Beth Foote and Wayne Lee, all those people were present right in the time period. They were the leadership and they were the ones who showed me the ropes. When you have leaders like that who you look up to, it's really easy to follow them.

Martin: Obviously, the experience took hold. You've held the positions of LSBA treasurer and president-elect and now president. You've also been the treasurer of the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program. You are also a



Minor Pipes at the 2009 Annual Meeting in Destin, Fla.
Photo from LSBA archives.



Jill McKay Pipes, H. Minor Pipes III and Robert A. Kutcher at the 2011 LSBA Annual Meeting in Las Vegas, Nev. *Photo from LSBA archives.*

former president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation. I say that they were very successful in getting you cranked up.

Pipes: It's just one of those things. It probably started with attending Summer School. I started as a young lawyer going to Summer School. I remember going before I had children and my oldest is now 18. We just started going and got more and more involved. I started giving speeches, got involved with programming, and I sort of worked my way around from the House of Delegates, to the Board of Governors and up to the leadership.

Martin: What do you have to say to young lawyers about becoming active in the Bar?

Pipes: It's your career. If you don't get involved with it, somebody else is going to tell you what to do. I tell the young lawyers in my firm that I think, across the board, we're all very lucky to have the jobs we have. We worked hard to get here and it's not an easy job. We have a good, stable career. If you work hard, you can do well, and we have an obligation to give back. Whether that is working in your kids' schools or volunteering at the food bank or getting in-

involved in the Bar, you need to find what drives you to become involved. You owe that to society. I think that the history of our profession has always been coupled with leadership. For me, it was easy to choose that path because, frankly, if I want to be a lawyer and I want to have a voice in how my career goes, I should speak up and become involved in the Bar. But for those who don't want to become involved in the Bar, they should definitely find something else that they enjoy. For me, it was always an easy call.

Martin: This interview is being conducted four days before the one-year anniversary of the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. What do you think your biggest challenge is going to be for your presidency?

Pipes: I think the biggest challenge will be figuring out how to get things back to as normal as possible in the profession without ignoring the changes that have happened. At the end of the day, you're not going to, on a regular basis, be in a courtroom full of people. Whether that means hearings will be staggered or you wait in the halls until you're called, I think there's going to be

changes. Right? I don't know if Zoom depositions are here to stay, but definitely things will be different. I think the important thing is not to lose those things that we've gained. We have figured out technology in a way that was needed for some time — whether it was from the court figuring it out or through the lawyers. But, that's a good thing. There's no reason if I've got a five-minute status conference in Alexandria that I need to drive for four hours and 20 minutes. But now judges are used to that. It's much more likely we can work something out. I think that's a good thing, but I think we need to figure out a way to get back to being able to move our cases, whether it's through trials or mediations or taking depositions. I think things have been at a standstill for a period of time. So, I'm looking forward to helping come up with that happy medium that allows both to happen.

Martin: How has the last year affected your outlook on access to justice?

Pipes: I think access to justice has lots of pieces to it. From a criminal perspective, for example, clearly there are issues with getting people proper representation and allowing them the ability

Continued next page



Christopher K. Ralston, Marta-Ann Schnabel and H. Minor Pipes III at a 2015 Louisiana Bar Foundation event.
Photo courtesy Louisiana Bar Foundation archives.



H. Minor Pipes III at the 2016 Louisiana Bar Foundation Fellows Gala Awards Luncheon.
Photo courtesy Louisiana Bar Foundation archives.

to meet with their lawyers and having the ability to have hearings and trials as quickly as you need to. I don't do criminal law, but I have absolutely no doubt that it has affected that process immensely. On the civil side, where you're talking about people who need assistance getting out of bad relationships and they need assistance with divorces, I would assume that, without really having looked at it, volunteer hours are way down because people are trying to take care of themselves right now, and that makes sense. But you have people who are going unserved. They were already having trouble getting served, but now it is even worse. Without the courts opened like they could be, it's not like you can just show up and look for a lawyer to help you. I think we've got a huge problem and we have to address it.

Martin: How do you see the Bar Association helping the lawyers in Louisiana with their recovery from the pandemic?

Pipes: I think working with the courts on making logical changes to the rules, on making logical changes to how we schedule things, and I think, quite frankly, getting jury trials going again. I think it is the most important thing we can do. And it's not an easy answer. It's not like you can say, "Okay, April 1 is the day. Let's hope people show up." Right? We've got to figure that out. Is it doing like some courts do, where there is going to be one jury in the entire courthouse and the judges decide which case gets tried? I don't know, but we've got to figure out a way to get people back to work.

Martin: The LSBA staff is sometimes the unknown and unsung heroes behind the scenes. How do those staff members help you in your new position now?

Pipes: It's a major understatement to say that they are under-appreciated. They are absolutely under-appreciated. I would say that, throughout my career

with the Bar, the staff has helped me immeasurably — whether it's handling Summer School with Annette Buras, whether it's Cheri Grodsky helping put together CLEs with us, whether it's Loretta Larsen who's always there to answer questions and give you wise advice whenever you're smart enough to ask, whether it's just the regular staff that helps make all the events run smoothly. When we show up for a Board or House meeting, it's amazing to me that they are able to keep everything moving in the right direction. I think that we have a staff that is second-to-none. They deserve every accolade they get, plus more.

Martin: I agree with you there. Since you're from a "semi-rural area" originally, how do you respond to lawyers from the rural parishes and others who say that the Bar Association has no relevance to them?

Pipes: I like that the basis of that comment is usually based on a very fo-

LIGHTNING ROUND: Think Fast

Martin: Shoes, lace up or loafers?

Pipes: Loafers.

Martin: Belts or suspenders?

Pipes: Belt.

Martin: Neckties or bowties?

Pipes: Necktie.

Martin: You ever wear a bowtie?

Pipes: Rarely. With black tie or white tie. There's usually a black coat involved.

Martin: Since you're actively involved in CLE programs, do you prefer live or by Internet?

Pipes: Live.

Martin: With your family history: research preference, book or Internet?

Pipes: I guess now Internet, because it's hard to forget you've got the little computer in your hand at all times. But I love pulling out a book. My kids think it's funny when I pull a book off the shelf and say, "Look at this!"

Martin: Stand up or sit-down desk?

Pipes: I do both. I'm sitting down right now, but I probably stood for three of the last four hours. So, I use them both.

Martin: Zoom conference or telephone conference?

Pipes: Zoom.

Martin: Talking with a client: Telephone or email?

Pipes: I'd rather be in person, but I would say telephone; probably do more emails, but I'd rather talk.

Martin: Paper or paperless office?

Pipes: Paperless. Paperless, but I have paper all over my office. We are paperless, as the case goes away so does the paper. But I still have paper everywhere.

Martin: Old courthouses or modern courthouses?

Pipes: I love an old courthouse, if it's kept up. There's nothing sadder to me than one falling down. But I love a good old courthouse. You can't build them like that anymore.

Martin: Filing pleadings: walk to the courthouse or over the Internet?

Pipes: Over the Internet. I always have somebody file for me. I always worked at a big firm so I never did it myself. My father did, and I used to walk and file it for him, but I guess, for me, it's just easier to make sure you got it filed.

Martin: That's it and there are no prizes!

cused view of the world that ignores a lot of things that are relevant. I know some lawyers may say, "Look, they don't give me cases. They don't handle anything that relates to me. I live in a small town. I have my own clients and I go to the courthouse every day. What is the Bar Association? Why am I paying them money?" The relationships between the lawyers, the courts and the judges, and the rules allowing the way that we practice, are important. The Bar Association enters into discussions with the court all the time on how to make sure that the process actually works like it should. We deal with making sure that filing fees don't get out-of-this-world so that you can't afford to go to court. We, obviously, have a lot to do with supporting Rules of Professional Conduct that make sense. We are very big on trying to help lawyers of all backgrounds when they have issues with their clients. If a

client has a complaint, we can get involved before it gets to the Disciplinary Counsel. What the Bar gives each lawyer is somebody looking out for their well-being, while, at the same time, somebody who is a phone call away that can, at a minimum, point them in the right direction or give them the guidance they need on almost any issue. If you come to us and say, "Look, I'm not sure if this violates the rules or not," we can give you an ethics opinion. There are so many pieces to what we do and what so many people use us for, that to me, it's naive to think that we're not working for you even if you don't know it.

Martin: Similar question, because I am sure you hear this one as well, particularly since you were the previous LSBA treasurer. How do you respond to the lawyers who say their dues are too high? What do they gain from their dues?

Pipes: First of all, they should know that about half of the dues they pay goes to the Bar Association. The other half is a disciplinary assessment that runs the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and has nothing to do with the Bar Association. Although the Bar Association collects the money for the ODC, you should understand that that's not money for the Bar Association. That's simply to make it easier for lawyers to pay one place and then we send ODC a check. So, your dues are about half of what a lot of people assume they are. But, what do you get for that? You pay what I consider to be a relatively small amount of money and, in exchange, you get the support of the entire Bar Association, which has about 40 employees, all of the leadership, you get the House of Delegates, the Board of Governors who are making sure that you've got a profession to act upon. What you

Continued next page



Minor Pipes addressed the House of Delegates at the 2015 Annual Meeting and Joint Summer School in Destin, Fla. Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

don't want in the practice of law is what you've got in the construction industry, where you can have somebody call themselves a contractor and could be anything from a guy who paints fences for a living to the guy who builds skyscrapers, and everything in between and they're all the same. We never want people to not understand what being a lawyer is versus a public adjuster, or versus somebody who's a notary, or something else. So, it's really important to us that we not only support that but we make it in a way that if you're going to be a practicing lawyer, you can do it. If you need MCLE credit, we put you in a situation where you can go get it, whether it's paid for, special programming or free programming. We support all the local Bars so they can help you in your locale. To think that the Bar Association is something only for the big firms in New Orleans is crazy. Those firms don't need the support that the small practitioners need. The solo and small practice lawyers are the largest group of lawyers in the Bar. We

have more programming for them than anyone. So, instead of asking what they do for me, you should ask, how do I get involved so that I can be more involved in doing those things.



H. Minor Pipes III is sworn in as president of the Louisiana Bar Foundation by Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson with LBF officer E. Jane Sherman at the 2015 Louisiana Bar Foundation Fellows Gala. Photo courtesy Louisiana Bar Foundation archives.

Martin: Tell us about your family.

Pipes: I have been happily married for 22 years to Jill McKay, whose father and brother were both lawyers. She's from Baton Rouge. We met when I was at LSU Law Center. We have three sons, ages 14, 16 and 18 — George, Charlie and Henry. I have no idea what any of them are going to do when they grow up. Of course, they all talk about being lawyers, but I think that's because I'm a lawyer. I'll be shocked if they all end up there, but at least one of them probably will.

Martin: Do you think there will be a sixth-generation Pipes lawyer?

Pipes: I would think, and I only say that because I know so many people's kids who ultimately ended up going to law school. I think one of them probably will, although there's no pressure there. I come from a big family. I'm one of seven, five sisters and one brother. I like family. I like a lot of people around.

Martin: What are your passions or hobbies outside of the law?

Pipes: My family. I like to travel. I like to read. I like to play tennis. I like experiences. I'm a big sports fan so I go to a lot of live sporting events, at least we used to before they shut it all down. I look forward to getting back to that. I



H. Minor Pipes III at the 2015 and 2016 Tennis tournament during the LSBA Annual Meeting and Joint Summer School in Destin, Fla.

Photo by Matthew Hinton Photography.

really like seeing people and spending time with other people.

Martin: So, the burning question is, are you a Penn State football fan or an LSU football fan?

Pipes: I think it's probably fair to say, because I've been gone for 30 years, that I am more of an LSU fan because I go to their games all the time. I like watching Penn State when they're on, but I was only there for a couple of years. Frankly, I worked so much when I was there, I rarely got to go to games. But we're season-ticket holders for LSU, so we go to most of the games.

Martin: With the stress of the last year and changes with the way everyone has been practicing law because of the pandemic, any new ways to unwind that you developed over the past year?

Pipes: New ways to unwind? I would say a perfect unwinding evening for me, which is different than it used to be, would be opening a nice bottle

of wine, ordering in something to eat or cooking something, and then sitting back and watching whatever we happen to be binging on television for that month. But really, the quiet, do nothing. But, you know, anyone who knows me would say I'm not a low-energy person. I've always got a million things going on. Half the time while I'm sitting there watching television, I'm reading the paper while I'm doing it. But I think I've gotten better at just taking a deep breath and relaxing a little.

Martin: Probably better for your overall wellbeing, too.

Pipes: Probably! Or, it may just be that I'm getting old.

Martin: Anything that we didn't cover that you want to mention?

Pipes: Just that I am very proud and honored to be in this position. I think that we're all called to service and I look at this as a chance to serve more people. It's something that I'm excited about.

Yes, it's a little daunting and there's a lot to be done. But I think it will be a great experience.

Martin: I know your theme for the Summer School and Annual Meeting is "A New Frontier, Ideas Abound." Good luck with those new frontiers.

Pipes: I appreciate it. It's different. Everybody started in March of last year, then everything changed. We'll see what it means.

C.A. (Hap) Martin III, a member in the Monroe law firm of Shotwell, Brown & Sperry, APLC, was sworn in as the 2021-23 Louisiana State Bar Association secretary and Louisiana Bar Journal editor in June. He served as the Seventh District representative on the LSBA's Board of Governors from 2015-18 and currently serves on the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program Board. (camiii@centurytel.net; 1101 Royal Ave., Monroe, LA 71201)

