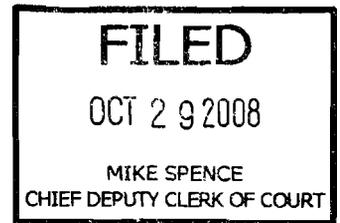


MEMORIAL
OF
JUDGE GORMAN E. TAYLOR
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
CADDO PARISH, LOUISIANA

October 29, 2008
Under Auspices of the
Shreveport Bar Association



Judge Gorman Eldon Taylor was born in Viola, Fulton County, Arkansas on September 13, 1924 to Ida and Orby Taylor, and passed away here in Caddo Parish on May 30, 2008. In 1934, his family moved to Shreveport, Louisiana. After graduating from C. E. Byrd High School in 1942, Gorman served his country during World War II in the Army Air Corps. He was assigned to an aircraft maintenance unit for Lockheed P-38 fighter planes. His unit remained in touch after the war and held an annual reunion for many years. After the war, Judge Taylor secured his undergraduate and a law degree from Louisiana State University in 1950. He practiced law after his return to Shreveport with Frank Blanchard and later Joe Bethard and Bob Hawthorne. As fate would have it, he gravitated to the Juvenile Court for Caddo Parish where he served as prosecutor. Upon the retirement of Judge Chris Barnette in 1964, Governor John J. McKeithen appointed Gorman as Judge of the Juvenile Court for Caddo Parish where he remained until his retirement in 1994. At the time of his retirement with thirty (30) years in service to the judiciary, Judge Taylor was one of, if not the longest tenured district court judge in the State of Louisiana.

Judge Taylor promoted, cajoled, pushed and by the sheer force of his will at times prompted significant changes in the Juvenile Justice System. In his time on the bench, he was in the forefront of the evolution of the juvenile court from a social service agency with the awesome power of contempt to a due process court. The United States Supreme Court in a series of landmark decisions in the middle 1960's began a steady march in the direction of providing elements of due process in juvenile cases such as the Fifth Amendment privilege against self incrimination, the right to counsel, and the right to specific notice of the charges. The juvenile court under Judge Taylor had implemented most of the provisions before the U. S. Supreme Court had addressed those matters. While there was little procedural law on the books in the Juvenile law area, Judge Taylor had key involvement in the enactment of the first Code of Juvenile Procedure and thereafter the Louisiana Children's Code solidifying the transition.

Shackled with the immense responsibility of overseeing the operation of a juvenile detention facility on top of his judicial duties, Judge Taylor staunchly refused to segregate youth on the basis of race even though segregation was the accepted practice at the time. He was instrumental in developing plans for a new Juvenile Justice Complex in Caddo Parish which opened in 1989.

Suffice to say, Judge Taylor had a positive impact on thousands of youth in the juvenile justice system that appeared before him. He was tough at times if the circumstances dictated but always fair. There was nothing like a “therapeutic hearing” before Judge Gorman Taylor which was his opportunity to get the attention of a troubled youth. Inevitably, Judge Taylor got the desired effect from the juvenile before him. Judge Taylor never gave up on the children in his charge, he simply ran out of time and jurisdiction.

Judge Taylor was instrumental in the establishment of the Rutherford House, a halfway house for adjudicated delinquents, and served on its Board of Directors for part of four decades. He had similar service on the Board of Directors of Holy Angels Residential Facility and the Baptist Children’s Home in Monroe, Louisiana. Judge Taylor was a Mason and a Shriner and a long time member of the Broadmoor Baptist Church.

On a personal note, in October 1964, I became the legal officer at the Juvenile Court after Judge Taylor was appointed to the bench. This was the beginning of a warm and lasting relationship. One would hear stories about judges not getting along, but that was not the case here. We may have disagreed at times but it was always a collegial relationship. Because of the physical location of the court complex away from downtown Shreveport, we frequently had lunch at the court. As Chief Judge, the menu was set by Judge Taylor. For a while it was chicken baloney sandwiches on white bread in the office.

Sometimes we would venture out on a mission of sorts. One day I borrowed a pickup truck to go to an address in west Shreveport. I wanted to purchase an old computer desk at a yard sale. While loading the computer desk I had failed to notice a Yamaha motorcycle close by. When I completed my transaction and returned to the truck Judge Taylor had the motorcycle in the truck. We delivered it to his house. I might add that by that time I was steering clear of his wife, Bonnie Taylor. He would appear in my driveway in full motorcycle regalia. He kept the bike and drove it for some time until I think his wife managed to sell it when he wasn’t looking.

While on the bench, the judge developed a keen interest in computer technology and the use of computers to better serve the administration of juvenile justice. Judge Taylor, however,

was self taught in computer technology, an education that left a few gaps. At his urging, I bought an early model Tandy computer. I had a program that put all my family financial information on it. He offered one day to make a slight adjustment on it to improve performance. The adjustment however removed all the data from the hard drive. When I complained, he never apologized, he just grinned his infectious grin and said, "If you ever need your hard drive cleaned, just call me." He was a renowned tinkerer. He did fix my washing machine with a nail at one time. He also blew the flywheel on my outboard motor out of the motor and through the wall. Life could be exciting with Judge Taylor. There were many other Judge Taylor stories and folksy expressions that he used, but whenever I use one, I am careful to attribute it to its author.

I treasure my relationship with this wonderful man. From 1964 through 1994 it was a precious time in the court. I can truly attest to his care and dedication to the youth and families that came before him over the years.

Judge Taylor was preceded in death by his first wife, Willa Mae Peek Taylor, and is survived by his wife, Bonnie Gamble Taylor, three (3) daughters of his first marriage, namely, Kay Taylor Sandlin, Renee Taylor Beard and Jan Taylor Hopkins; stepsons, Attorney Ronald D. Smith of the Louisiana Bar Association, Dr. Larry L. Smith and Kay Smith LeRoy. He is also survived by brothers Coy Taylor, Max Taylor, and Leon O. Taylor. Judge Taylor adored his fourteen grandchildren, namely, Benjamin Eldon Addison, Douglas Taylor Smith, Gretchen Swindle Murchison, Jennifer Lynn Smith, Curtis Taylor Sandlin, Jonathan Erick Sandlin, Kathryn Joy LeRoy, Patricia Dianne Smith Coffin, Lori Elizabeth Swindle Vallery, Christopher Lamar Smith, Daniel Ian LeRoy, Stuart John Smith, Kendra Renee Smith and Holly Bolyer. One grandchild, Josh Hopkins predeceased him. His grandchildren were the light of his life.

On behalf of the Shreveport Bar Association, we submit this Memorial of the life and times of Judge Gorman E. Taylor and formally move that it be inscribed in the official records of the First Judicial District Court, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, and certified copies be presented to the family.

Respectfully submitted this 29th day of October 2008.



Judge Andrew B. Gallagher (Ret.)



Bennett L. Politz