

Memorial to

G. RANDELL WHITMEYER

January 2, 1905 - November 5, 1973

Presented to the First Judicial District Court of Louisiana for Caddo Parish by the undersigned Committee designated by the Shreveport Bar Association to prepare and submit a resolution in memory of the late G. Randell Whitmeyer, a member of this Association.

.

On November 5, 1973, G. Randell Whitmeyer, an outstanding judge, and one of Shreveport's best known citizens, died at the age of 68. He had practiced law for more than 26 years and had been a highly respected member of the judiciary for more than 18 years in Shreveport. The loss of Judge Whitmeyer to his family, his colleagues of the bench, members of the bar, and his many friends will be forever remembered.

He is survived by his widow, Mrs. Marie Louise Whitmeyer, two daughters, Mrs. James R. Alexander and Mrs. W. J. O'Brien, Jr., two sons, Claudius Whitmeyer and Frederick Whitmeyer, and fourteen grandchildren.

A native of Shreveport, he was born January 2, 1905 to Mr. and Mrs. Fred G. Whitmeyer. As a young man, he attended Jefferson Military Academy, the Shreveport grammar schools, and Hope Street High School where he was an all state guard on the football team. Graduating in 1922, he attended Louisiana State University, financing

his college education by working in the afternoon and night from 3:00 to 11:00 P.M. at the Standard Oil Company in Baton Rouge. He graduated with honors from the Louisiana State University Law School in 1928.

While attending Louisiana State University, he married his lovely wife, Marie Louise Berret of Plaquemine, Louisiana, on August 16, 1925.

After passing the bar examination, he returned to Shreveport and practiced in the law office of the late W. M. Phillips. Later, when he opened his own law office, John A. Richardson, our present District Attorney, became his first law partner. Mr. Richardson left the partnership for a position as Assistant District Attorney. Edwin W. Goetz, Jr. was also a partner for several years, as well as his son-in-law, James R. Alexander, now District Judge. He was United States Commissioner from 1943 through 1946.

On July 27, 1954, he was elected City Judge of Shreveport and took office in January of 1955 and served until his retirement, May 31, 1973, because of illness. While serving as City Judge of Shreveport, Judge Whitmeyer gave of himself unselfishly to make a success of his court, being never too busy to lend an ear to anyone with troubles, whether of a personal or court related nature.

Possessing both a keen and creative mind, Judge Whitmeyer instituted many innovative features to the City Court of Shreveport, which has often been referred to as a Peoples Court.

In 1956, having become disturbed by the increasing number of teenage traffic offenders, he initiated "House Arrest". It was applicable to persons from 17 to 21 years of age who were dependent on their parents for support. He would not hear a teenager's traffic case unless at least one parent was present. If the parent agreed to cooperate, the Judge would sentence the offender to "House Arrest" for a time commensurate to the seriousness of the traffic infraction. The offender was sentenced to be at home from 6:00 P.M. until 8:00 A.M. Periodic unannounced checks were made by the Marshal's office to assure compliance. In all the years it was used, only one parent refused to cooperate, so he paid his son's fine. It is interesting to note that the records showed that only one teenager who served a "House Arrest" sentence ever returned to court with a second charge. Judge Whitmeyer's scrapbooks contain dozens of letters from parents and teenagers saying how beneficial the experience was and the one statement that was prevalent in the young peoples' letters was " . . . I got to know my family".

One very serious infraction was the case of a 17 year old high school student who was charged with driving while intoxicated just after he graduated. He was sentenced to "House Arrest" for the entire summer. Part of his sentence, in addition to staying at home nights, was spending every day at court, attending all of the court sessions, being a runner from the Judge's office to the Clerk's offices, filing and typing. Notations of the judge recognized a definite change in

attitude. The boy became a willing helper who was liked by all of the employees. His letter and a letter from his parents were most gratifying to Judge Whitmeyer. The Shreveport Magazine carried an article on "House Arrest" in its May, 1960 issue.

For such innovations and other court improvements, the American Bar Association presented him with special traffic court awards for 1955-56, 1958-59 and 1963-64, and he received a bronze plaque from North American Judges citing "House Arrest".

But he did not confine his rehabilitation methods to teenagers. Concerned because a jail sentence to a first offender usually caused economic destruction to him and his family, he looked for an alternative. He researched the Huber Law, a law that had allowed week-end sentencing in Wisconsin since 1943. After making sure there was no conflict with Louisiana Law, he put it into effect in Shreveport City Court. He carefully checked the man's character and with the cooperation of his employer allowed him to work all week and spend week-ends in jail. In some cases, he made arrangements with the man's pastor to have a responsible person from the church pick him up at jail, take him to services and return him immediately afterwards.

He also promoted the creation of a traffic bureau which facilitates the handling of tickets for traffic violations by allowing persons, under certain circumstances, to pay their fines without appearing in court. He was the instigator, with the cooperation of

Commissioner George D'Artois, of the uniform traffic ticket. This was done to stop the practice of ticket-fixing.

In July of 1957, he used his vacation to attend the Yale University School of Alcoholics. When he returned he organized his "Honor Court" for those he called revolving door drunks, prisoners who had served their terms by Friday and were back in court Monday, charged again. He patterned the meetings, which were held every Wednesday night from 8:00 to 9:00 P.M. in the criminal courtroom, after Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. A (sober) drunk chaired the meetings. Members of various AA groups helped out as speakers. Those in jail and alcoholics in the audience were allowed to speak. They always read from what was called the "Big Book of AA" and they ended each meeting with their serenity prayer: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference". There was Sunday School in the jail for these revolving door drunks. Some were allowed to work days and spend their nights in jail. When Judge Whitmeyer thought one was recovered enough, he helped find work for him.

Judge Whitmeyer served on the Board of Bridge House until his death. It is a half-way house for alcoholics situated on Stoner Avenue. The men cook their meals, clean and repair the house. Those who can work pay for lodging. There are regular meetings held there and most of the members attend AA meetings.

As a direct result of the Honor Court, Shreveport's first successful Negro Alcoholics Anonymous group was organized in May, 1964, at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church. The late Clint Reeves and Rev. James Austen, pastor of the church, were leaders in this movement.

When the North American Judges Association was organized in Houston, Texas in 1960, Judge Whitmeyer was a charter member and a lifetime board member, serving as membership chairman, treasurer, first vice-president and president in 1967-68. On November 6, 1967, in Montreal, Canada, he was made president-elect of this association. A meeting of the Louisiana City Judges was being held at the same hour in New Orleans. As he left the Montreal meeting he received a call from New Orleans telling him he had been elected, in absentia, president of the Louisiana City Judges Association.

Serving his community well, some of his community activities included: Chairman of the PTA City Council; a Director of Caddo-Bossier Safety Council; Director of Children's Service Bureau; and an active participant in the Shreveport Little Theatre. As president of the Broadmoor Community Club, he and several other Broadmoorites were responsible for the paving of the then existing graveled streets. He coached A. C. Sterre football team, taught teenage boys's Sunday School class at the First Presbyterian Church, and was an organizer and Trustee of the Broadmoor Presbyterian Church. He was a Mason

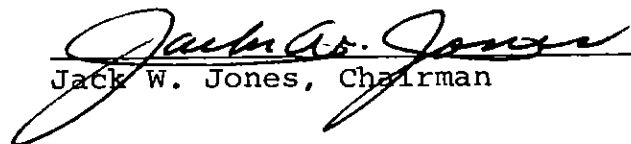
and a Shriner, Eastern Star, Member of Down Town Shreveport Lions Club, Elks Club, Honorary member of The Progressive Club, Board Member of Bridge House, Chairman of YMCA Hobby Show, and a member of the Shreveport Beautification Foundation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that we, members of the Shreveport Bar Association hereby affirm the respect, the admiration and the regard which we hold for G. Randell Whitmeyer, for his character and ability, his industry, skill and learning, and his example of the lawyer and judge at his best; and we extend to his widow, sons and daughters and other members of his family our sincere sympathy in their loss.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this memorial and resolution be made a part of the records of this Court and that copies of the record hereof be delivered to the members of the family of our departed brother and friend.


John A. Richardson


Ben E. Coleman


Jack W. Jones, Chairman

Shreveport, Louisiana
3 September 1974