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In Memoriam

Thomas Patrick Fitzgerald, Jr.

June 26, 1914 - February 27, 1993

Thomas P. Fitzgerald, Jr., was born on June 26, 1914, in Shreveport, Louisiana, and died on February 27, 1993. He was a graduate of St. John's High School and Centenary College. He attended Georgetown University Law School and practiced law in Shreveport from 1942 until his death. He was married to Eleanor Lemoine and had two children, Helen Fitzgerald and Thomas Patrick Fitzgerald, III. He was a veteran of World War II and a member of the American Legion. He was an advocate in the local Knights of Columbus Council and Co-Chairman of the Shreveport Round Table of the National Conference of Christians and Jews. He was a Director of the Caddo Chapter of The Red Cross. In 1982, Tom was appointed Knight Commender of St. Gregory by Pope John Paul II.

In 1946, Tom was elected to the City Democratic Executive Committee. In 1947, he ran for Police Jury but was defeated. In 1952, he again ran for Police Jury and this time was elected. Soon after his election, he became involved in one of the most emotional issues during the 1950's. During this time, one of the major social problems was the lack of adequate housing facilities for the black community. The Clark Terrace Negro Housing Project was proposed to help solve this problem. When the project was first proposed, the Caddo Parish Police Jury passed a resolution that requested the Shreveport City Council deny water, sewerage and fire protection to this new housing project. The vote was 18 to 1. Tom

Fitzgerald was the only juror who voted against this resolution. Tom's position was not politically correct at that time. However, Tom's deep religious faith carried over into his daily life and his decisions were made as a result of his religious faith. He was quoted in The Shreveport Times as saying:

When faced with a question such as this, and looking into my conscience to decide what I should do, I often try to think what Christ would have done in a similar situation. I believe that if Jesus Christ were a member of this Jury, he would vote against the proposed resolution and that is what I will do.

This was a commendable position, but was not a very popular one in Shreveport during the 1950's, especially for someone holding public office. Many people believed Tom was correct but did not want to publicly admit it. An ad was placed in The Shreveport Times on Sunday, December 20, 1953, supporting Tom's position. The people supporting Tom, only identified themselves as "a group of white Shreveport citizens".

In January, 1956, Tom was again nominated in the Democratic primary. In the 1950's, the candidates chosen in the Democratic primary were virtually assured of victory in the general election. However, two (2) months after the Democratic primary, and one month before the general election, a resolution came before the Police Jury that opposed the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in Brown vs. Board Of Education. The resolution called for the State of Louisiana to interpose its sovereign authority between the Supreme Court and the citizens of Louisiana; the resolution further endorsed the principles of segregation. Tom was quoted in The

Shreveport Times as saying:

I don't believe God made any separate creations. I believe he made one human race and the differences are due to climate and geography. An elected official has the duty of speaking and voting his conviction. These are difficult times for all of the people in the South, but I do not believe that our many problems will be solved by defying the Supreme Court of the United States.

Tom cast the only dissenting vote on both resolutions. In a matter of days a campaign began to defeat Tom in the general election. One of the local newspapers whipped up public opinion against Tom in a campaign referred to as "Thirteen and One". There were fourteen (14) Police Jurors to be elected from Ward 4. The campaign to defeat Tom called for the election of thirteen (13) Democrats and one (1) Republican. There had not been a Republican elected to the Police Jury since reconstruction, but in April, 1956, thirteen (13) Democrats and one (1) Republican were elected. Tom had been defeated by a Republican who favored segregation. The Republican stated:

I am and always have been in favor of the doctrine of interposition and I am against integration.

The Shreveport Times wrote of the election:

Fitzgerald's defeat was generally attributed to his anti-segregation views.

Tom was never bitter about his defeat. He was quite philosophical about the entire matter. He had voted his convictions and it was then up to the people to elect the person they believed was best qualified to represent them.

Tom believed in justice. He believed in upholding the

law. He did not believe in publicly condemning the Supreme Court of the United States when it was the popular thing to do. Tom's philosophy of the role of a lawyer was very similar to that of Abraham Lincoln, who said

Discourage litigation. Persuade your neighbors to compromise whenever you can....As a peace-maker the lawyer has a superior opportunity of being a good man. There will still be business enough.

Tom was a good man. Tom's life was an inspiration to all who knew him. He will be missed.

The committee is privileged to offer the following resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Shreveport Bar Association does hereby direct that the admiration and respect in which Thomas P. Fitzgerald was held by his fellow lawyers, his family, his friends and his fellow citizens, be made a permanent part of the records of the First Judicial District Court and a copy of this expression of admiration and respect be sent, with the sympathy of this committee and the Shreveport Bar Association, to his family.

Respectfully submitted this 2 day of November,
1993.

Robert McLean Jeter, Jr.

Keith M. Welch

Paul M. Cooke