

SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION

October 24, 2003

IN MEMORIAM

JAMES A. VAN HOOK SR.

FILED

OCT 24 2003
Dianne Doughty
DIANNE DOUGHTY
DEPUTY CLERK OF COURT

MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT:

James A. Van Hook Sr. was born here in Shreveport on September 10, 1910, and on July 11 he passed away at the age of (almost) 93. After graduating from Princeton in 1932 and from Tulane Law School in 1935, he was a solo practitioner for a while and then went to work at his father's firm, Barksdale, Bullock, Warren, Clark and Van Hook. Along the way – on a blind date during Mardi Gras – he met a pretty Newcombe girl, Betty Neild, and they were married at old St. Mark's on June 9, 1938. This union produced James A. Van Hook Jr. and Elizabeth L. Van Hook.

My long association with Mr. Van Hook (or "Hooker," as he was known to his friends) began in the early 40's when I was going into service and needed a will. I will note, in passing, that Jim was my father's lawyer and his father, Albert H. Van Hook, was my grandfather's lawyer. When I got out of law school in 1949 and went to work at Hargrove, Guyton, Van Hook and Hargrove, Jim Van Hook was my teacher and most serious critic.

I found myself working for a most versatile lawyer. The other lawyers in the firm had specialized areas of practice, but Jim was the epitome of the "full service lawyer." Thoroughness and attention to details were the hallmark of his approach to the representation of his clients. The law schools teach well about the law – chapter and verse – but not nearly so well about lawyering.

He was my first teacher of how to *be* a lawyer. He introduced me to those large books in the Clerk's Office and required full notation of everything I found in a title search. And the mortgage certificate from last week was to be supplemented on the morning of the closing.

My desk today looks like his desk looked back then. (That was in contrast to Mr. Hargrove's desk, where even the phone and fountain pen set went in the drawer at night.) Yet, he was a most meticulous lawyer! On the occasions when I went to court with him, he knew every case he would cite and those on the other side as well.

One of the ladies who worked at the firm during my tenure told me that he was absolutely unique in that when he was ready to dictate, he knew exactly what he was going to say and precisely how he wanted to say it. She said, "I've never known anyone so organized in his thinking."

In 1973, Jim moved his practice to 204 Milam Street and had a number of partners or associates over the next 30 years, including his son, J. A. Van Hook Jr. And to round out *my* "Van Hook Connection," it pleased both of us that his grandson, Alex Van Hook, came on as my law clerk in 1998.

He is aptly described as a true Southern Gentleman. As with many "old timey lawyers," his word was his bond. He was a lawyer's lawyer and a role model for me and many others who came in contact with him.

Our community has lost one of its finest lawyers, and many of us older folks have lost a dear friend. There are lots of funny "Hooker" stories that could be told – but for the time constraints and the dignity of the occasion. Later, maybe. But not now.

Memorials are not made solely from marble or stone. They can be as ephemeral as a passing thought that enriches the moment, bringing a smile or a tear.

John Donne, in his *Meditations*, wrote the famous words, "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind." That thought applies to me speaking about Jim Van Hook. It applies as well to each of the previous speakers.

The many good works and fond memories of Jim Van Hook will serve as a lodestar for all of us, and he will be sorely missed by those who follow in his steps.

Your Honors, I move that this memorial be spread upon the minutes of this Court and that copies be sent to members of the family.


Tom Stagg