

MEMORIAL
JESSIE NEALAND STONE
PRESENTED AT THE MEMORIAL EXERCISES
HELD IN THE
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
OCTOBER 30, 2001
UNDER THE AUSPICES
OF THE
SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION

FILED

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MIKE SPENSE
DEPUTY CLERK OF COURT

Jesse Nealand Stone was born in Bienville Parish on June 17, 1924. He died on Monday, May 14, 2001, in Shreveport.

Jesse Stone was a graduate of Webster High School in Minden, Louisiana and received his undergraduate degree from Southern University-Baton Rouge. He graduated from Southern University School of Law in 1950 and began his practice in Shreveport where he maintained a general practice with particular emphasis in criminal and civil rights law.

A limited pool of lawyers ready, willing, and able to tackle the burgeoning civil rights issues of the 1950s and 1960s virtually guaranteed that Jesse Stone would not have a low profile, ordinary law practice. He did not enjoy the luxury of sending potentially problematic cases down the street to another lawyer. Jesse Stone did not shy away from the tough cases nor the unique challenges that were presented in urban or rural courtrooms in Caddo, Bossier and surrounding parishes. His dogged determination to defend his clients accused of crimes and to successfully vindicate the rights of his clients who had been victimized by Jim Crow customs won him great esteem and admiration from the community and colleagues within the bar.

Moreover, many of the cases that he handled, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, were low fee or no fee cases. Notwithstanding that many of his clients were low income and no income persons, Jessie Stone uniformly exhibited excellence on behalf of his clients.

Having successfully practiced in the Shreveport area for many years, Dr. Stone was often called upon to provide expertise in a variety of public service capacities. During his career, he served as the Assistant Director of the Louisiana Commission on Human Relations. He served as an Assistant Superintendent of Education for the State of Louisiana. A high point in his legal career was his appointment as an Associate Justice Pro Tempore of the Louisiana Supreme Court. His counsel was sought by governors and numerous other public officials.

A pivotal point in his career was reached when, in 1971, he was named Dean of the Southern University School of Law. Dr. Stone was uniquely able to provide to eager law students and faculty

the benefits of his wisdom gained from many years of civil and criminal litigation. Additionally, his many public service roles equipped him with a keen awareness of the political nuances necessary to ensure the successful operation of a major center of legal education. He was ably prepared by experience and insight for his role as Dean of the Southern University School of Law.

Dr. Stone envisioned that the Southern University System should have its own President and Board of Governors in order to ensure its longevity. His idea became a reality and he served as the first Southern University System President, again utilizing his talents and skills as a lawyer and an administrator to serve in this capacity from 1974 to 1985. Following his tenure as President of the Southern University System, he returned to the Southern University Law Center to serve as a professor from 1985 to 1986. His commitment to Southern University continued when he served as a member of the Southern University Board of Supervisors from 1991 to 1995.

During his funeral services held in Shreveport on May 18, 2001 at the Galilee Baptist Church, numerous persons returned in order to celebrate the life of Dr. Jesse Nealand Stone. The common theme of the celebration of his life was that through the various roles that he played as a lawyer and as a public service leader, he was known as a bridge builder. Many of his close friends and colleagues shared personal stories which illustrated his devotion to the advancement of human rights. One of his most enduring legacies to our community will be his work toward racial accord and civil cooperation between white and black persons in Louisiana.

My first vantage point of Jesse Stone was as a child growing up in the 2900 block of Poland Street here in Shreveport, one block down from the residence of Dr. and Mrs. Stone in the 3100 block of Poland. Many of my childhood days were spent playing street football with his late son, Michael Stone. Often when we were in the block outside of the Stone house, we would see Lawyer Stone in the late afternoon leaving home with briefcases, obviously off to very important meetings or court. He would stop as he backed out of the driveway and say a word of encouragement to us and I would listen as Michael would speak words of admiration for his dad as he drove down the street. We could all tell that while Lawyer Stone was in route to something important, he was very devoted to his family.

On October 5, 2001, the Southern University Law Center honored the memory of Dr. Jesse Nealand Stone with a special program of commemoration and celebration of his contributions to the law and, in particular, to Southern University. When the events of his era are finally accounted for,

history will note that our society is better because Jesse Stone chose to practice law in northwest Louisiana and did so with a dedication and passion for the rights of his clients and for the standards of equal justice for all under the law.

Dr. Stone is survived by his devoted wife, Mrs. Willa Dean Stone; his daughter, Shonda Stone Williams; a son-in-law, Keith D. Williams, both of Shreveport; one brother, Eddie Bernard Stone of Georgia; and a host of other relatives and friends in Louisiana and from across the country.

We submit this memorial to the family of JESSE NEALAND STONE and ask that it be inscribed in the records of the First Judicial District Court, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, and that certified copies be presented to his family.

Respectfully submitted on this 30th day of October 2001.


JUDGE CARL E. STEWART