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MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

OF THE

SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION

HONORING

JOHN BENNETT JOHNSTON, SR.

Presented and Adopted

September 6, 1977

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

HONORING

J. BENNETT JOHNSTON, SR.

Death is a sombre event. It stills a productive human and it robs us of our loved ones and friends. In time our frail human memories falter and someone much a treasured part of our everyday lives becomes a dim image in our memory's eyes.

The assets of a succession are money and property. Riches are measured in coin and land. All too often they form the backdrop for judging the success of a man. But the assets of life are wholly different; significant in that inventory are a man's family, his friends, his interests. By that criteria John Bennett Johnston, Sr., was among the richest of the rich.

Born July 9, 1894, J. Bennett Johnston exceeded the biblical three score and ten, and every day of that life he lived to the fullest. In death he left behind a lovely and gracious widow, three charming daughters, a successful son and ten grandchildren. He loved all of them fiercely and deeply and their needs, triumphs, trials were never far from the surface of his conscious mind. Much of his time and considerable of his energies were spent in devoted attention to the welfare and happiness of his family. It was characteristic of the bigness of this man that no detail in their lives was too trivial to command his loving interest or so large as to make him oblivious to the needs and yearnings of the remainder. Some of us can vividly recall that glorious evening not so long ago when he and Mrs. Johnston celebrated their golden wedding anniversary, and we can remember the unmistakable pride in his eyes as the two of them, flanked by their family, graciously received the congratulations of their guests. On more than one occasion I have entered his office when he was re-reading letters from his children during those college years when guidance

was so fundamental. Always he was deeply moved as he reviewed and measured his performance as a husband and father. No family can ask for more; precious few receive as much.

God gave this man a precious bounty. I would describe it as a gift of the appreciation of life and people. Few men could count so many friends; it was a rare day indeed that old comrades did not move about the law office excited and happy at the warmth of their receptions. So often they brought their needs and left fulfilled. Bennett Johnston fervently loved life and people, and his genuine compassion for their tragedies and unstinting enthusiasm for their triumphs made them comfortable in his presence.

There was a kindness and generosity about the friendship he so freely and uncritically offered. He had that rare ability to accept people as they were, without reservation and, once offered, that friendship was the totality of all he was and everything he had. They were black and white, rich and poor, well known and scarcely known. They were never selected because of a hope of self-gain, because Bennett Johnston was incapable of exploiting friendship for small and selfish purposes. He was an attentive listener to their troubles, encouraging to their hopes, kind and generous to their needs. If he was rich because of his numberless friends, they were the richer because of his friendship.

Bennett Johnston was an energetic participant in life's avenues. His interests were wide and productive. We in this community are presently engaged in the analysis of something called Shreveportitis. But the areas being explored today involve questions Bennett Johnston has asked for years. You see, he adored his community, but unlike so many who find fullness in criticism alone, Bennett Johnston became throughout his life an active, energetic, unselfish participant in the life of his community. He believed that the blessings of living in a

democratic society commanded an unceasing obligation of the best of its citizenry to give of themselves in the political arena. He loved politics. He loved his country. To him politics was not a shabby venture but rather the enlightened process by which each new generation of Americans protects its rich and glorious heritage. He believed that only when men of good will and talent let cynicism still their efforts, only when society's best falter in the political process were we in peril of losing our bearings and our liberties. If our country was worth dying for, Bennett Johnston fervently believed it was worth living for.

His active life in the community was a mirror of his belief. He once offered himself as a candidate for office; he headed campaigns and he always infused into the political groups he joined his own integrity and enthusiasm. He served in World War I as a Captain of a machine gun company and in the aftermath as a commandant of a prisoner of war camp. Thereafter, he devoted his energies to veterans affairs, later serving as state commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. It was a gesture in unselfishness, because as long as I knew him he was never one to make strident demands for special privileges in behalf of veterans. But literally dozens of veterans today are receiving their legal benefits because of his quiet persistent efforts in their behalf.

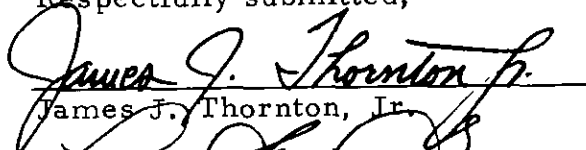
He was a devoted and generous member of his church, a Mason and a Shriner. Here, also, his participation was enthusiastic and steady; he was never a member of anything in name only.

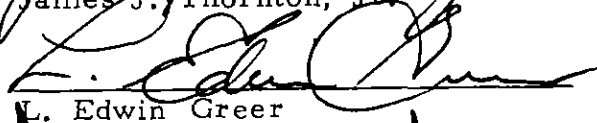
But I and his friends shall remember most of all his courage, because I never saw him cringe or show fear. It was not a belligerent courage but rather one of inner strength born of a conviction which he deeply held, that it was the duty of every man to defend what was right and good in our system.

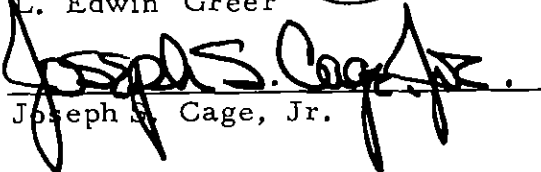
It marked his personal and professional life and the bar and the community are better places because of it. He was as fiercely loyal to his beliefs, never timidly held, as he was to his friends.

This is not the time to discuss the metaphysics of life after death, of immortality of the body and the soul. But with men like Bennett Johnston I suggest that there is an additional kind of life after death. Such men, because of the power of their vision, because they were doers and not watchers, are remembered long after they have ceased to walk this earth. I submit confidently that a little bit of Bennett Johnston will remain in all of us who were so fortunate as to be counted among his many friends.

Respectfully submitted,

  
James J. Thornton, Jr.

  
L. Edwin Greer

  
Joseph S. Cage, Jr.