

MEMORIAL

ROLLIN W. COLE, JR.

Rollin W. Cole, Jr. was born December 22, 1952, in Shreveport, Louisiana to Rollin W. Cole, Sr. of Ruston, Louisiana and Catherine Brewer Cole of Arcadia, Louisiana. He died February 23, 2005 of an acute heart attack. He was 52 years old.

He was raised in Shreveport and attended Creswell Elementary School until about the age of 9 or 10 when his family moved to Lake Charles. In due course he attended LaGrange High School. During his junior year in high school he was selected to take college courses at Louisiana State University. Thus, he spent a semester while still in high school at LSU in Baton Rouge. He returned home to Lake Charles for his senior year and graduated from LaGrange High School. He enrolled in LSU as an undergraduate in 1969. I learned that he spent the Summer of 1971 selling books door to door in North Carolina with his roommate, David Holladay, who would later become his law partner. At LSU he majored in English and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1973. After graduation he worked for a year before enrolling in LSU Law School. He obtained a J.D. degree from LSU Law School in 1977.

While in law school he met his future wife, Elma Sue McCallum, but it was not until several years after law school that they married. First, Rollin settled in Shreveport where he practiced for several years. He was admitted to the bar of the Western District of Louisiana in 1978 and to the bar of the Fifth Circuit in 1980. In about 1980, Rollin moved to Baton Rouge where he opened a law partnership with David Holladay, his former roommate, and Rick Stolzle under the name of Cole, Holladay and Stolzle. He and Elma Sue married in 1983.

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MINUTES	OCT 21 2005
PAGES	MIKE SPENCE DEPUTY CLERK OF COURT

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Unfortunately, the union did not last and they divorced in 1987. However, they remained on very good terms. I met Elma Sue at his funeral and she has provided me much of the information I have about Rollin. In all our conversations she appeared to recall him with fondness and affection. He never remarried and had no children.

Rollin returned to Shreveport in about 1993 where he lived the remainder of his life. His practice in Shreveport was primarily in the area of criminal defense. At the time of his death he was a member of the conflicts panel for the Caddo Parish Indigent Defender. He is survived by an older sister, Sandra Jean of Albuquerque, New Mexico, who recalls her brother with great pride and affection. She provided me many of the details about his upbringing.

I first met Rollin in about 1995 and we were friends from then until he died. It is fair to say that he was a complex person. He told me that he resembled his mother in that respect. His father, he said, was generally laid back and more at peace. But Rollin believed he took an unsettled and questing nature from his mother. And that may have been the case because he could at times be moody. But mostly he had a radiant quality that put people at ease. As Elma Sue told me, babies and animals loved him. And many of his clients also sensed a comforting protectiveness in him.

It was my duty to inventory his files under an order of this court and to protect the interest of anyone whose rights might have been affected by his death. In the course of that obligation I talked to a number of his clients. All, of course, were shocked at the news of his death, and many were concerned they would not be able to find a representative who took the personal interest in their matter that Rollin had. For in the service of his clients, he was a fierce advocate. On one occasion when Rollin and I were talking about the practice he told me that he could be a

very unpleasant person if necessary. While I never actually saw that side of him, I could imagine it. But he was no bully. He just was willing to do what he believe was appropriate and necessary where a client's rights may otherwise be in jeopardy.

As I said he worked mainly in the area of criminal law, and as you can gather he was not afraid to take on the State's representatives if the situation required it. On the other hand, from several short conversations with a few assistant district attorneys in Caddo Parish and in Bossier Parish, he was well thought of as a defense attorney who knew what he was about. He was respected both for his knowledge of the law and his skill at trial. But neither was he difficult to deal with - at least, for most of the time. In fact, an assistant district attorney in Bossier Parish, may have been one of the last people to speak to Rollin. The morning of February 23, 2005, Rollin had called the Bossier Parish office of the District Attorney to ask to put off an hearing scheduled for the next day, or perhaps the day after, because he felt so bad. He, Rollin, believed he had the flu. And, of course, he died later that evening. I spoke with this particular assistant district attorney in the course of my duties under the court order I described earlier. He expressed his regret at Rollin's passing and commented that Rollin had been both a good attorney and a good guy.

Rollin also contributed his time to the Louisiana State Bar Association. Specifically, for the years 2003 - 2004 Rollin was a member of the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Committee of the Louisiana State Bar Association. He may have served in that capacity longer than just two years, but I could not confirm that. I do know that he drew deep satisfaction from working with anyone, not only lawyers, seeking to recover from alcoholism. He willingly shared his experience, strength, and hope with anyone struggling with addition who wanted it, and there

were plenty whom he helped.

A few years before he died, Rollin moved his mother into a house with him on Roma Street in Shreveport. She was in declining health and Rollin was devoted to her. So rather than assisted living or a nursing home, he elected to move her into a home where the two of them could live. She died in September of 2004, about seven months before he did, and he was devastated by the loss. I believe he was grieving up until his own death.

What the people who knew and loved him remember of Rollin in particular were his keen intelligence, his wit, his gregarious personality, and his love of music. He was a large man with a quick smile and big laugh. And as for music, I know personally of his love of music, first, because he told me, and, second, because I rode with him from Shreveport to Lake Charles once in an automobile to pick up an automobile that belonged to his mother. On that trip I can tell you he would listen to almost any music - rock, classical, or country - with the same relish, and he was not embarrassed to sing along if he deemed that some assistance was appropriate. And his sister provided me the information that his mother used to brag that at the age of two he could sing Here Comes Peter Cottontail. I regret I did not know that before he died. So since his sister had commented on his early love of music, and I had made that trip to and from Lake Charles, I asked Elma Sue if Rollin ever played an instrument or took music lessons. She replied that he did not play any instrument but was an enthusiastic "air conductor". He liked to direct an imaginary orchestra to recordings or broadcasts of classical music. I can just imagine it.

I wish I could convey some of the large, fearless, boisterous, and contradictory spirit of Rollin W. Cole, Jr. A fierce advocate, a devoted son, an ardent air conductor, a giving and loyal friend, he was taken from us too early. He left no family behind except his elder sister. But he is

also missed by those of us who knew him. We know we will not see another like him. There is a short passage from Rainer Maria Rilke that goes:

Everyone once, once only. Just once and no more. And we also once. Never again. But this having been once, although only once, to have been of the earth, seems irrevocable.

The word irrevocable fits. The life and spirit of Rollin W. Cole, Jr. were irrevocable. He remains a part of those of us who knew him.

J. Broocks Greer III