MEMORIAL FOR

ROBERT W. GILLESPIE, JR.

PRESENTED AT THE MEMORIAL AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY

HELD IN THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

NOVEMBER 6, 2025

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION

GOOD AFTERNOON YOUR HONORS, MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT:

Robert W. Gillespie, Jr. passed away on October 2, 2024 after a lengthy illness. Robert was born in New Orleans in 1948 as the oldest of five sons to Lt. Col. and Mrs. Robert W. Gillespie. The Gillespies moved to the Shreveport/Bossier area in the 1950s. When Robert's father was transferred to an airbase in Michigan, the family dutifully followed. In time, however, the Gillespies returned to and made Shreveport their permanent home. Robert graduated from Byrd High School. He went on to attend Centenary College, Louisiana Tech, and Louisiana State University.

I first met Robby in 1975 while we were both studying law at LSU. I was in my third year of law school, and Robby was in his second. And yes, I always called him "Robby." Before coming to law school, Robby had honorably served as a paratrooper in the United States Army. From the beginning, Robby stood out. He possessed a quiet confidence—one that reflected both his experience and his deep sense of purpose.

Robby met his future wife, Josette Cassiere, in the LSU law library—a fitting place for two young law students whose paths were meant to cross. Josette was in the class of 1977. And while most guys might opt for dinner and a movie for a first date, Robby went with something much, much better. He brought Josette to her first LSU football game, where conversation had to compete with a marching band and 90,000 screaming fans. But somehow, in the middle of the purple and gold chaos, it worked. It also helped that Josette had a musical background and enjoyed the halftime performance by the Golden Band from Tigerland and the Golden Girls. By the time the band struck up "Hey Fightin' Tigers," Josette was hooked—for the team, the music and maybe just a little bit for the guy who thought football was the best place for romance.

After graduation, I moved to Shreveport, and before long, Robby and my paths crossed once more. I began working as an Assistant District Attorney in Caddo Parish in the spring of 1977, and Robby joined the office that fall—just days after marrying Josette. From that moment, a friendship was formed—one rooted in shared purpose and mutual respect—and it grew into a bond that endured for more than forty years.

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Robby dedication to being a prosecutor went far beyond a mere occupation—it was his calling. He was committed, persistent, and deeply ethical. You could always count on Robby to do the right thing, even when it was not easy. He worked hard, treated people with respect, and brought both skill and integrity to the courtroom.

At one point, Robby left the District Attorney's Office to enter private practice. He enjoyed a successful five-year run. When the opportunity arose, however, Robby returned to public service and was sworn in as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Western District of Louisiana. He prosecuted major fraud and corruption cases, as well as some violent crime cases. By that time, Josette had already joined the U.S. Attorney's Office, serving as an Assistant in the Appellate Section. While Robby tried cases in district court, Josette wrote briefs and argued appeals before the Fifth Circuit. As partners both in life and law, they shared a steadfast commitment to justice, supporting one another's work with mutual and unwavering admiration.

Recently, I had lunch with two former coworkers of Robby's and mine from the U.S. Attorney's Office. I mentioned Robby, the memorial, and this tribute to him. The Western District of Louisiana is a sprawling district that covers 42 of the 64 parishes in Louisiana and has unstaffed offices in Alexandria, Monroe, and Lake Charles. Trials in these cities could be especially stressful because attorneys had to manage everything without the support of a permanent office. Because of this, whenever there was a trial in one of these unstaffed offices, personnel from the Shreveport office would travel with the attorneys to provide essential support and ensure the trial ran smoothly. Both of these female colleagues traveled with Robby for trial work. They said Robby was one of the few attorneys who showed genuine concern and appreciation for them. Robby ensured they had eaten a good meal, and if they needed to work late at the courthouse, Robby stayed and escorted them to their cars. Even amid the pressures of trial work, Robby's first instinct was to take care of others. This exemplifies Robby's kindness in its truest form—not just his professionalism, but also the subtle integrity and genuine regard he extended to everyone around him.

Then there was Robby's relentless persistence. I remember one particular day in federal court that still makes me smile. Robby was arguing a position in his case, and the judge was clearly not convinced. Most attorneys would have backed down, but not Robby. He pressed on—firmly, yet respectfully. The judge eventually left the bench and walked out of the courtroom, apparently worn out from the debate. Without missing a beat, Robby turned to the spectators—mostly attorneys and co-workers from the office—and said, "He knew I was right." We all just laughed, because that was classic Robby: confident, determined, and never one to back down when he believed in something.

Outside of work, Robby's family was his greatest pride and joy. Robby was a hands-on, devoted father to his and Josette's three children: Sarah, Paul, and Michael. Whether it was helping with Boy Scouts, music

lessons, soccer, Junior ROTC, or one of the kids' many other activities, Robby was always present and engaged. And Robby and Josette's dedication as parents is reflected in the exceptional children they raised. Paul earned a 4.0 GPA in college, receiving a President's Medal in recognition of his achievement. And in a charming twist of fate, two of their children—Sarah and Michael—joined the LSU Marching Band. It beautifully brings their family's story full circle, linking the excitement of Robby and Josette's first date to the accomplishments and passions of their children.

Robby and Josette were active members of St. Jude's Catholic Church in Benton, and Josette continues to play an integral role, both as an organist and in preparing the liturgical music for the congregation. Over the years, Robby told me and others that marrying Josette was the best decision he ever made. And I have to say — knowing them both — Robby was right about that too.

Robert's life was defined by service — to his country, to the law, and to his family. He was steadfast, loyal, and kind. I am deeply grateful to have known him, and I know his example will continue to inspire all of us who had the privilege to call him a friend.

Respectfully submitted,

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