

**MEMORIAL FOR  
BEN E. COLEMAN  
PRESENTED AT THE MEMORIAL AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY  
HELD IN THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT  
OCTOBER 29, 2019  
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION**

**MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT:**

Ben E. Coleman was born on July 14, 1926 in Shreveport, Louisiana. The son of Ben E. Coleman, Sr. and Mildred Coleman. He was a graduate of C. E. Byrd High School. He then attended Louisiana State University obtaining his undergraduate degree in 1944. While at LSU, he was a member of Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity serving as its President. After his first military experience, he enrolled at LSU Law School graduating in 1949.

After graduation from law school, he returned to Shreveport where he practiced law for more than 60 years. His last partnership was as one of the "Three Amigos": Don Baker, Robert Mayo, and Ben Coleman. Both of his practice partners predecease him, all actively practiced past their eightieth birthday.

Ben Coleman is survived by his daughter Nancy Coleman Cowie and her husband Graham and their children, Andrew and Allison of Brentwood, TN; niece, Kay Collins Barnett of Lake Charles, LA; two brothers-in-law, Richard David of Homer, LA and Bert David and wife Liz, and nephews Bill and Brad David of Dallas, TX. His loving wife Lydia Coleman predeceased him. They were both long time members of St. Paul's Episcopal Church where he served on the Vestry and as a Lay Reader for over twenty-five years.

Ben Coleman was a veteran of both World War II and the Korean Conflict. He served as Commander of the Lowe McFarlane Post 14 of the American Legion and as Chef de Gare of Voiture 137 of the 40 & 8 Club here in Shreveport, Louisiana.

Ben Coleman was a long-time member of the Shreveport Bar Association and served as its President in 1980. Even after his retirement he attended Bar functions. In addition, he was a member of the Shreveport Downtown Rotary Club for over thirty years and a Paul Harris Fellow. He served as club director and achieved 100% attendance at

club meetings for many years. He served as Chairman of the Metropolitan Shreveport Zoning Board of Appeals and he was past President of Friends of the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum, an active and energetic community Board today.

Ben Coleman was the first Chairman of the Caddo Parish Indigent Defender Board. He came back to serve as Chairman in 1976 when this local program was recognized by the American Bar Association as one of the outstanding Indigent Defender Programs in the nation. To honor his work in this important and still crucial component of our state legal system, an endowment was created at the Community Foundation of North Louisiana in the name Ben E. Coleman and his long-time secretary Pat Broussard to provide legal aid to those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer.

Ben Coleman's passion was the development of the lake front property on Lake Claiborne in Claiborne Parish, Louisiana where he spent many happy weekends. Ben's family owned property that became part of the bed of Lake Claiborne. Once the lake was formed his father developed the property surrounding this beautiful lake in northwest Louisiana; Ben himself continued the project. Art Carmody told me that Ben Coleman could never understand why Art had not bought a lot and placed a house on the lake. Ben and his family spent many relaxing weekends and pleasant holidays on Lake Claiborne. His happy place was next to White Lightning Road which moniker came from the prohibition days. Consequently, an important portion of his legal practice involved the real estate of Claiborne Parish.

Ben Coleman was also known to be a very avid LSU Tiger football fan. He loved to take his wife Lydia and daughter Nancy to Baton Rouge to see the LSU Tigers and was disappointed that his grandchildren did not attend LSU as they grew up in Nashville Tennessee.

Ben Coleman was a classmate and long-time friend of the late Virginia Kilpatrick Shehee. As his father before him Ben Coleman was the attorney for Ms. Shehee and her many civic and business adventures. On one occasion while attending a visitation at a local church, I saw the two of them walking arm in arm down the aisle from the sanctuary.

Ms. Shehee stopped me and wanted to be sure that I knew Ben Coleman was her good friend, but also her advisor, and the "perfect gentleman".

Pat Broussard, a longtime secretary of Ben Coleman, confirmed that Mr. Coleman did not say an unkind word to her during all the years of working for him. As an example, if a clause had repeated in a legal document, he would simply point out that we "had stuttered a bit" and not blame the error on his secretary. His secretaries have also pointed out to me that he as well as his practice partners were a member of an older generation that did it right, for a reasonable fee, and enjoyed the loyalty of longtime clients and personal interaction with the bench and bar.

He loved to go to the courthouse and do his own filing. He did not send a runner or his secretary. He would use this occasion to have coffee and visit with the courthouse personnel in Caddo and Claiborne Parishes, most of whom have retired but some will remember pleasant mornings spent with Ben Coleman. He was a kind and gentle man always with a smile on his face.

Ben carried on the law practice of his father Ben Coleman, Sr. of which he was very proud. He liked to point out that he used his father's law books in his own practice. His clients were very loyal to him including some for whom his father had also provided legal representation. His secretaries finally recall that Mr. Coleman wrote out all of his legal work while his partner Mr. Baker dictated and the third partner, Bob Mayo dictated shorthand to the secretary while he stood at her desk. The practice started at 501 Market Street as Skeels and Baker. When Mr. Skeels died Bob Mayo came aboard forming Mayo, Baker, and Coleman. Mr. Mayo retired in 2010. Mr. Baker retired at the age of 95. Mr. Coleman retired in 2012 at the age of 85.

A long-time client reinforced the professionalism of Ben Coleman: No case was too big or too small. He made house calls. He always seemed available to answer the phone. He was generous with his time charging the same small monthly retainer for over forty (40) years. He showed up to check on his clients even after his retirement. After closing a complicated real estate transaction in which his fee was not included, as a cost of the closing, he simply asked the client if it was appropriate, "to put a little something on

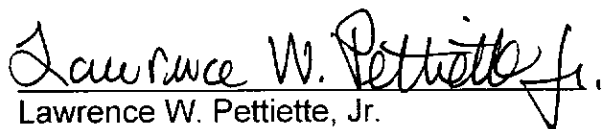
it for myself" and it was just a little. His secretaries and clients that I interviewed uniformly confirmed that he was reasonable with his time and expenses. He enjoyed traditions like his brother-in-law's cheese straws that he would personally deliver to his clients every Christmas. He was always smiling and encouraging.

He viewed fellow lawyers as colleagues not competitors. He was dedicated to the practice and never turned down a request to mentor the younger generation.

Ben Coleman's tall figure is a missing passage in the Caddo and Claiborne Parish Clerks, Mortgage and Conveyance Records, the halls of his office, and the sanctuary of his Lake Claiborne retreat. He passed away peacefully on April 15, 2019.

On behalf of the Bench and Bar and the Shreveport Bar Association I, Lawrence Wayne Pettiette, Jr. and my partner L. David Cromwell, submit this memorial to the memory of Ben E. Coleman and move that it be inscribed in the records of the First Judicial District Court, Caddo Parish, Louisiana and that certified copies be presented to his proud and loving family.

Respectfully submitted on this 29<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2019, in Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana.

  
Lawrence W. Pettiette, Jr.

  
L. David Cromwell