

**MEMORIAL FOR
GAYLE K. HAMILTON
PRESENTED AT THE MEMORIAL AND RECOGNITION CEREMONY
HELD IN THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
NOVEMBER 9, 2023
UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE
SHREVEPORT BAR ASSOCIATION**

GOOD AFTERNOON YOUR HONORS, AND MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT:

Family, friends, and fellow members of the Bar,

Gayle K. Hamilton was born on December 28, 1925, in Shreveport to Elizabeth Gayle Hamilton and Edward C. Hamilton. He died in Shreveport on April 8, 2023, at the age of 97. His mind was sharp until the very end. His family has deep roots in the Shreveport-Bossier City area as evidenced by the Gayle community in Bossier Parish, the Hamilton Terrace school and neighborhood in Shreveport, and Hamilton Road in Bossier City, all named for family members. Judge Hamilton preserved the road name a number of years ago when there was an effort to change the name. Based solely upon his strenuous objection and his force of will, the effort to change the name of Hamilton Road was quietly abandoned.

He was a graduate of C.E. Byrd High School in 1942. After graduation he enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and served from 1943 to 1946. After finishing boot camp, radio school, and training at Camp Pendleton, he was assigned to active duty in WWII in the Pacific Theater, first at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, then on Guadalcanal. On April 1, 1945, he was part of the Okinawa invasion with the First Marine Division, remaining there until the war ended. In November 1945 he was sent to Peking (Beijing), China, with the First Marine Division, returning home in February 1946. He then entered Southern Methodist University, where he received a B.A. degree in Psychology.

He only recently shared this “war story” with his good friend Dick Nelson and me. He could *now* laugh about it. It took place, probably on the island of Okinawa. He and another Marine were unloading small bombs from a truck when enemy aircraft flew low over them spraying the area with machine gun fire. They jumped under the truck to avoid the bullets. The machine gun fire



was quickly over before it dawned on the two of them that it wasn't too smart to hide under a truck full of bombs.

Judge Hamilton used his military training as a radio operator to provide communication for patients at Shriners Hospital in Shreveport, where he was a Board of Directors member. Many of the young patients there were from Central and South America. Long before the Internet existed, commercial international communication was expensive, if available at all. As an amateur radio operator, Judge Hamilton provided voice communication for free, so the young children who were undergoing serious surgeries could talk to family members unable to afford the cost of coming to the United States. Judge Hamilton was fluent in the Spanish language, as well as in French, and was instrumental in the hospital's outreach to these Spanish-speaking children.

His fluency in Spanish landed him the love of his life, his wife of 64 years, Gloria Hernandez of Barranquilla, Columbia. In 1957 Gayle knew several Spanish speakers locally, including Gloria's brother who was attending Centenary College. When Gloria came to visit that year, she met Gayle and they were married the next year, but only after he passed her father's inspection, and after the three marriage ceremonies required by her father – first at the American Consulate in Barranquilla, next in the Catholic Church there, and finally in a civil ceremony in New Orleans. Gloria said with a laugh, "That's why our marriage was so strong; it would have taken three divorces to end it."

His many civic, religious and business activities included: Chairman of the First Baptist Church School; Co-founder and V.P., International Trade Council of Red River Region; Founder and President, International Trade Council of New Orleans; Louisiana State Exhibit Museum Board member; and active membership in the local detachment of the Marine Corps League, whose members honored him at his funeral. He was also a 33rd degree Mason.

Additionally, Warren Perrin, Lafayette attorney and former Council on Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) president, described Judge Hamilton as "a visionary" who in the 1980s supported the creation of French Immersion programs in Louisiana schools. Perrin said, "Judge Hamilton conceived the idea of the French-speaking attorneys' forming the Francophone Section

of the Louisiana Bar Association. Finally, he suggested the idea of a CODOFIL newsletter *La Parole* which is still in existence today.”

Upon graduation from SMU, he was a Treaty Affairs Analyst for the U.S. Department of State from 1949-1952. When his father died, he returned to Shreveport and became a landman with Pan American Production Company while studying law at night, primarily under local attorney Horace Holder. He was one of the last attorneys admitted to the Louisiana State Bar under this process of “reading the law.” Passing the Bar Exam in 1956 gave him a new career path. After 20 years of practice, he successfully ran for District Judge, First Judicial District, Caddo Parish, which position he retained through three successive elections until he retired in 1994. He was one of the first local judges to attend the National Judicial College in Reno, Nevada, and was selected as a faculty advisor there in 1990.

His sense of fairness on the bench was beyond question, even when it didn’t match up perfectly with prior case law. Prentiss Smith, local opinion writer, gave a good example, published in the Shreveport Times, of the Judge’s fairness and compassion. Smith, who over 30 years ago was addicted to crack cocaine and heroin, had repeatedly appeared before Judge Hamilton. Smith said, “Most of the people who went before him once did not want to go before him again, but Judge Hamilton was tolerant of me. He knew that I was an addict and needed help more than I needed to be put in jail.” Smith believes the second chance the Judge gave him changed his life.

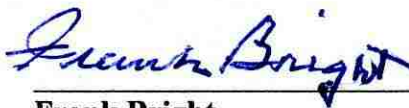
He loved his God, his country and his family. He also loved books and the things you could learn from them, particularly the history of our region. His library of over 4,000 books, some over 200 years old, is now a part of the Noel Collection housed at the Noel Memorial Library on the campus of LSU-Shreveport, where the books are available for academic research.

He is survived by Gloria, their four children; Herbie, Betsy, Gloria Elaine and Patricia; seven grandchildren; and five greatgrandchildren.

Your Honors, I now move that this Memorial Eulogy for Gayle K. Hamilton be duly recorded on this 9th day of November, 2023, in Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, and made part of the permanent record of the First Judicial District Court, Caddo Parish, Louisiana, and that copies be delivered to Judge Hamilton's family.

Thank you, Your Honors.

Respectfully submitted,



Frank Bright

