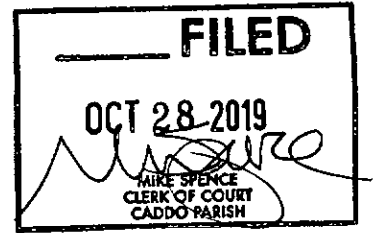


TWAIN KEY (“TK”) GIDDENS, JR.
October 24, 1923 – July 26, 2019

*The Shreveport Bar Association and
First Judicial District Court
Memorial & Recognition Ceremony
October 29, 2019*



May It Please the Court:

I have the honor of talking about the legal career of someone special – Twain K. Giddens, Jr., known simply as “TK.” TK was my law partner for over 20 years and my father for 67. If he were here today, he would be thinking, “Another boring speech about some old fogey lawyer who turned up his toes that no one remembers.” His words, not mine, and I, of course, disagree. Based on the number of thoughtful notes sent to our family after he died, he would have been gratified by the number of lives he touched. And, if it weren’t for the “old fogey” WWII veterans like him, none of us would be here today. Hitler and Hirohito were not exactly fans of our judicial system. So, it is appropriate that we gather and remember the deceased attorneys, especially those who were members of the Greatest Generation. Few are left.

TK was born in 1923 and died on July 26, 2019, at the age of 95 years, nine months and two days. He grew up in Shreveport, where he attended Barrett Elementary and Byrd High School. WWII broke out while he was in college. A scrawny 130 lb. TK enlisted in the Navy. He wound up as a Lt. JG on the YMS 440, a mine sweeper in the Pacific. After serving three years, eight months, and eleven days, he returned home with \$303.23 in honorable discharge pay, kissed the ground, and vowed never to travel again. He went to LSU law school, where he lived in the basement and locked up the building at night. When he graduated in

1949, war veterans were not required to take the bar exam. He simply got admitted to the bar, came home, hung out a shingle, and hoped for the best.

He was introduced to the local bar in this same courthouse 70 years ago. Along the way, he had one wife, Mary; five children, Josephine, Jeanette, Nina, Bill, and John; and lots of grands and great-grands. Exhibit 1 is his obituary, which has his family tree. In over 50 years of practice, he never had a bar complaint or a malpractice action filed against him. He had clients from all walks of life who trusted him with their legal problems. He was a humble person who was happy with a Timex watch and clothes from “Jacque Penay’s,” as he called J.C. Penney’s. When he died, he had most of his teeth, a full head of hair, good eyesight and hearing, and a sharp mind. He obviously did some things right in his life.

When he began practicing, there were no cell phones, computers, iPads, or Westlaw. There was no Code of Civil Procedure, which he later named “the Code of Silly Procedure,” or any of these other codes we now have. How did he survive? Tools of the trade were your civil code from law school, manual typewriters, legal pads, secretaries who knew shorthand, dictaphones, carbon paper, and some legal forms from ML Bath. This probably sounds awful to our new lawyers, but it had its advantages. A world without discovery disputes, motions to compel, and summary judgments sounds good to me! Lawyers back then did not have the luxury of going through unlimited drafts and revisions. No, they had to be precise and get it right the first time. If they asked their secretary to re-type something with all that carbon paper, they got the evil eye.

TK’s picture was never on a billboard or a bus. Advertising was not allowed 70 years ago. By choice, he was never in a large firm where there was a built-in client base. The first fee he received was a beat-up used car. He liked being in his

own small office where he could smoke a pipe or a cigar and sneak off to the Y if time permitted. He kept track of his time in a diary he kept by his civil code.

His office was always located close to this courthouse. He liked to file his own pleadings and documents. That way he met everyone who worked here. He practiced under seven different clerks of court, was friends with all of them, and referred to our current clerk as “young Mike” Spence! He and our mother were among the few civilians invited to the clerk’s annual Christmas party. Fun times were had on the Hunter Huff/Mike Spence bus to LSU football games with the courthouse gang.

Attorneys in small firms learned to handle anything that walked through the door. Many nuts walked in, but so did some golden nuggets, and he had them all. Whether a nut or a nugget, they all knew other people who needed a lawyer from time to time. He got his clients the good old-fashioned way—word of mouth. It is only at the end of a career that a lawyer like TK could look back and say with pride, “Wow, I handled everything from “A to Z!” That he did—adoptions to zoning and everything in between.

In 1964, TK received one of those golden nuggets. There was a small hospital known as “Tri-State” on the corner of Greenwood Road and Hearne Avenue. A young, energetic administrator was hired to keep it open and turn it around—James K. Elrod. Mr. Elrod needed an attorney, as he had some plans in mind. He asked the hospital’s banker, Ray Oden, for a recommendation. Mr. Oden suggested TK “as the smartest and most practical attorney I know.” (Mr. Elrod’s words, not mine.) Well, they clicked and the rest is history. TK spent over 40 fulfilling years representing Willis Knighton Medical Center a/k/a “Willie K.” When you drive around and see WK North, South, Bossier, and Pierremont,

remember that someone named TK helped do all that. The Trustee Boardroom at WK North is dedicated in TK's honor.

If life was fair, he would have been the judge and not me. Rumor has it he often was asked to run, but our mother's response was, "Twain, you know I like to smoke, drink and dance. I would not be a good politician's spouse." I disagree—she would have gotten him elected!! The Chief Judge up in the sky had other plans for TK. His job was to serve as a teacher and mentor for four very different attorneys. He taught them the practical things you did not learn in law school but needed to know. He did this job well.

First, there was a firm known as "Giddens & Hall." Hall was Pike Hall, who later became Chief Judge of the Second Circuit, had a building named for him, and made it all the way to the Louisiana Supreme Court! Later came "Giddens & McKenzie." That, of course, was Robert McKenzie. Robert knows more about real estate law than all the title companies in town and learned a lot of it from TK. Robert and TK handled the first "horizontal property regime" project (precursor to condos) in north Louisiana—the D & S Building, which is still standing at WK North. TK and Robert remained lifelong friends.

Next came "Giddens, McKenzie & Garrett." That's my better half, David Garrett. David learned how to tackle any kind of legal problem. How does an unincorporated association known as the "Do Right Church" mortgage its property? What do you do in your very first trial when your 300 lb. truck driver client on trial for a DWI, bursts into tears on the witness stand when you ask your first question – "Please state your name?" Ask David—he learned.

His last mentee was me. I took a little longer. We practiced together as "Giddens & Garrett" for over 20 years at 610 Milam Street. The building is no longer there, and it's just another parking lot. A treasure chest of memories was

created there. We never had a cross word. We churned out lots of work with the help of a very young but smart legal assistant, Trish Cascio, and a very old and opinionated bookkeeper, May Stacy.

The rare times we saw TK lose his composure occurred when the Shreveport mounted patrol police officers parked their horses in our parking lot while they ate at the Nanking Restaurant. They ignored our “no parking” signs. Then their horses would deposit some large smelly gifts for us. This really irritated TK, but he was astute enough not to complain to SPD or attempt to have the horses towed away.

He treated everyone the same whether they were Mr. Elrod, a pro bono client, or the janitor. Our janitor, Napoleon Barrett, and TK developed a lifelong friendship. They had a contest to see who could live the longest. Napoleon, who is now 103, won. TK was never condescending to any of the invaders, a/k/a the women attorneys, which was unusual for his generation. Perhaps he learned a thing or two from me.

I consider myself very lucky to have practiced with him. I would like to share with our new attorneys some things you would have learned if you were all so lucky:

- (1) A legal controversy is not a personal vendetta between you and the other lawyer.
- (2) You are the least important person in the courthouse. The judge, court reporter, minute clerk and bailiffs are more important than you, and you can learn from them if you will listen. The clerks who process your filings and those who serve your papers also deserve your respect. Be kind to everyone, learn their names, and they will be there to help when you have a problem. Kindness begets kindness.

- (3) Keep accurate time records and don't cheat on your bills. Eventually, you will get caught.
- (4) Don't have an office that is too fancy. Your clients will wonder if they are paying for your knowledge or that Oriental rug.
- (5) Watch your overhead. Why spend money on office supplies when a better place for it is in your bank account? When David got his first client, the 300 lb. truck driver, he asked where the file folders were kept. TK went to a filing cabinet, pulled out a 30-year-old file, dumped the contents in the trash, turned it inside out, and said "Here's one. Write your client's name in pencil on the tab so we can re-use it." It worked.
- (6) No matter how tacky, display items your children make for your office. You never know when they may come to visit. TK had this ugly decoupage map made by my sister on his wall. The pencil holder on his desk was an orange juice can spray painted black with gold stars pasted on it made by me. His clients probably wondered who his decorator was, but he did not care and it made us feel important.
- (7) Keep up with changes in the law. If you don't know something, go look it up. He routinely read all the "advance sheets" and legislative acts to keep current.
- (8) Keep contemporaneous records of receipt of letters and other documents. Always keep envelopes with postmarks on them. TK won a case by using an envelope to prove that a federal agency backdated an untimely filing of an administrative appeal. Who catches the U.S. government in a lie? TK did by keeping the smoking envelope.

- (9) Be considerate of your office staff. Don't expect them to work late because you procrastinated and couldn't get your work done timely.
- (10) Do your pro bono work and don't brag about it. TK graded bar exams and served on the ID Board, thankless jobs, for many years. He did all the legal work gratis to get Rutherford House started. His list was long. And, if a client stiffes you on a fee, that does not count as your pro bono.
- (11) If you receive a jury summons, don't try to get out of it. It's your civic duty. TK was one of the few attorneys to survive voir dire, and he served on a week-long trial presided over by Judge Ramona Emanuel. Our small firm took a financial hit with no billings by him for a week, but he learned some valuable lessons. One was that lawyers have no clue what jurors focus on and deem important. He wished he had the opportunity earlier in his career, as he would have revised his trial strategy.
- (12) Finally, and most important, have a standing lunch date with those dear to you. TK ate lunch with his mother and brother every Thursday. He later ate lunch with my sister, Nina, and me every Monday at the Piccadilly Cafeteria. She and I miss those Mondays now.

I can sense that he is telling me to sit down, as the judge and jury look bored. Before I do, here are a few excerpts from among the many letters our family received that sum him up:

Art Carmody shared:

“One [memory] particularly stands out. When Pike Hall was with this firm, we once had a difficult problem which called for a closed-door partners meeting. Pike posed the problem and said that he would like to run it by his former partner, T.K., and see what he had to say. We all agreed, and in the end, that was the correct decision, sound and solid. I believe T.K. is the only lawyer in the local bar that I have

never heard a negative remark about – only the highest of compliments.”

Julie Blewer wrote:

“I had my first case with him when I was a young but not baby lawyer. When I learned he was on the other side I was a bit intimidated. He was this highly acclaimed and well seasoned lion of the bar. I was a woman who had practiced law for about six years. From the beginning he treated me as a colleague and with respect. I suspect you understand why that was noteworthy.”

And, finally, “young” Mike Spence wrote:

“Mr. T.K. was a friend to our office. He always started the dancing at our Christmas parties with your mom. He was a great man and a friend.”

So, at the end of your career and when you have turned up your toes, don't you hope that people will have nice things to say about what you did with your law degree?

Respectfully submitted,


Judge Jeanette Giddens Garrett

Twain Key ("T.K.") Giddens, Jr.

SHREVEPORT - Twain Key ("T.K.") Giddens, Jr. was born at home in Shreveport on October 24, 1923 and passed away on July 26, 2019, at the age of 95. A private family memorial service will be held on Tuesday, July 30, 2019.

T.K. grew up in Shreveport where he attended Barrett Elementary School and Byrd High School with many lifelong friends. He proudly served our nation during World War II as a Lieutenant (JG) in the US Navy. His duties included service on a minesweeper, the YMS 440, in the Pacific Theater. When he returned home from the war, he vowed to never travel again.



T.K. graduated from LSU Law School in 1949 and returned to Shreveport where he practiced law for over 50 years. He handled matters from "A" to "Z" (adoptions to zoning) and everything in between. He was proud to have served as the attorney for Willis-Knighton Medical Center for many years and to have been involved in its growth. After retiring from the active practice of law, T.K. served on the Board of Trustees at WKMC.

In 1950, T.K. and Mary Elizabeth Brown were married in her home on Delaware Street. He was a devoted husband and wisely obeyed all of her "honey-do" orders. They had five children. Their youngest child, John David Giddens, passed away in 2004. Mary predeceased T.K. in 2005. T.K. is survived by his other children, Josephine Giddens and her spouse Rita Ovelgonne; Judge Jeanette Giddens Garrett and her husband David; Nina Giddens Glorioso and her husband Joseph; and William Twain Giddens. T.K. had seven grandchildren - CDR John Key Garrett (USN) (Jessica), Patrick Twain Garrett (Dr. Elizabeth), Dr. Sarah Glorioso Thrash (Jarrod), Marion Glorioso Kirby (Nathan), Julia Key Glorioso, Terra Giddens, and Amanda Giddens; and 10 great grandchildren, Jackson Garrett, Mason Garrett, Mary Elizabeth Garrett, Davy Garrett, Lillian Garrett, Joseph Thrash, William Thrash, Michael Kirby, Christopher Kirby, and Nina Catherine Kirby. T.K. was predeceased by his parents, Twain K. Giddens, Sr. and Nina P. Giddens; and by his brother, Dr. William R. Giddens. He is survived by his sister in law, Jacqueline B. Giddens, his brother-in law, Frank Reynolds, and many nieces and nephews.

T.K. became a Catholic in 1998 and attended St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic Church, where he enjoyed Mass on Sunday evening followed by libations at the Outback. He was also a founding member of the "Scotch Club" which met at his home on a monthly basis.

The family appreciates the good medical care T.K. received from all of his doctors. Special thanks also to his old "610 Milam Street" friends, Robert McKenzie and Napoleon Barrett, for their long and enduring friendship.

At T.K.'s request, please do not send any flowers, as he was allergic to them. Instead, please take an old friend out for a meal, conversation and laughter, as this is what he did for many of his friends, most of whom have now passed away.

T.K. lived a humble life and had friends from all walks of life. He was a special person who will be missed.

Centuries Memorial
Funeral Home 318-686-4334