

Memorial Resolution

Reverend and Honorable Samuel Houston Payne

1933-2018

The Reverend and Honorable Samuel Houston Payne passed from this life on December 31, 2018.

Sam Payne was born on February 4, 1933 in Chattanooga to James and Ernestine Payne. Having grown tired of school by the age of 16, young Sam convinced his reluctant mother to let him join the U.S. Air Force. After basic training, he volunteered to be a tail gunner on a B-29 bomber. He was sent to Korea where he flew 25 combat missions. On one of those missions, one of the plane's engines was hit by enemy fire. The Captain gave the crew the option to bail out. None did. The pilot was able to get the plane and the crew safely back to their base. After 4 years in the Air Force, Sgt. Sam Payne was honorably discharged.

Having developed a more mature attitude toward education, Sam applied to the University of Chattanooga, or UC, now University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, or UTC. After some testing, he was allowed to enter the University. While at UC, Sam showed some of his innate political skills and was elected Vice-President of his class. While at UC, he also met a pretty freshman named Carolyn Lowe. He was smitten. They married, a union that lasted for 62 years until his death.

After UC, Sam applied to the UT Law School. He was accepted and graduated in 1960. He returned to Chattanooga and worked for the firm of Kefauver, Duggan & McDonald, the Kefauver being Senator Estes Kefauver. He later formed the firm of Shattuck & Payne with Clarence Shattuck, who just retired after 36 years as a Sessions judge.

In 1974, Sam was elected judge of Division II of the Circuit Court in Hamilton County where he served until his retirement in 2006. I had and still struggle with the daunting task of filling some very large shoes.

In 1979, Judge Sam Payne was ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church. He served in various capacities at St. Peter's Episcopal and then St. Paul's until his retirement in 2013. At the beginning of this memorial, I mentioned the Reverend and Honorable Samuel Houston Payne. Sam said, if people insisted on assigning him titles, he wanted "Reverend" to be first. As honored as he was to be a judge, his service to the Lord came first.

In regard to his dual offices, the conventional wisdom in Chattanooga was that Sam Payne had performed the wedding for someone in 1/3 of the families in Hamilton County; presided over the divorce of someone in another 1/3; and buried someone in the final 1/3 of families in the County. Name recognition was not a problem for Sam Payne in his election campaigns.

Judge Payne was active in the Chattanooga Bar, UC and UTC affairs, including receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award from UTC in 1996. He gave of his time and money to numerous civic and charitable organizations, including the YMCA, Family and Children's Services, Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Orange Grove Center and St. Barnabas Nursing Home.

Judge Payne left behind his wife, Carolyn, 3 children, 8 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren and more friends than can be counted.

Sam Payne served his nation, his community and his Lord with great distinction. He is missed.

Therefore, Be it Resolved this 12th day of June, 2019 that this memorial in honor of the Reverend and Honorable Samuel Houston Payne be entered in the minutes of the Tennessee Judicial Conference and published accordingly.

Respectfully submitted,



W. Jeffrey Hollingsworth, Circuit Court Judge