

Memorial Resolution

THE HONORABLE JIM T. HAMILTON

JUNE 14, 2023

Jim Travis “Jim T.” Hamilton, 81, retired Circuit Court Judge of the 22nd Judicial District, died Sunday, September 18, 2022, at his residence in Columbia, Tennessee. He is survived by his wife of 23 years, Patty Wright Hamilton, of Columbia; sons, John (Frances) Hamilton of Jackson; Jim (Beth) Hamilton of Columbia; Cheyenne (Jennifer) McNeese of Columbia; brothers, Tom (Beth) Hamilton of Selmer; Mike Hamilton of Tennessee; grandchildren, John Travis Hamilton, William Hamilton, Brennan McNeese, and Chloe McNeese.

Jim T., as he was affectionately known, was born on June 15, 1941, in Selmer, Tennessee, the oldest of four sons born to the late James and Jacqueline Travis Hamilton. His mother taught school at Selmer High School for 37 years, and his father ran the Hamilton Family Dry Cleaners, which remained in business from 1916 until 1985. Jim T. graduated from Selmer High School in 1959. Jim T. played high school football for three years at Selmer High School, and it was during his senior year when he first began discussions with representatives from Memphis State, Ole Miss, Chattanooga, and Mississippi State about playing football for them.

However, Coach Bubber Murphy from Middle Tennessee State College (now MTSU) visited with Jim T. and his parents in Selmer. Coach Murphy told Jim T.’s parents that MTSC would pay for his books, his food, and give him a place to live. Jim T.’s dad replied, “When do you want him to be there?” Jim T. asked his dad, “What about all of these other schools?” His dad replied with, “They should have been here.” So off to MTSC he went to play football. He graduated MTSU in January 1963, with a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in history. He enrolled

in Memphis State University School of Law in 1963 and received his law degree in 1966. He returned to Selmer and started practicing law on September 1, 1966.

Shortly thereafter, he was elected Mayor of Selmer in 1967 at the age of 26, making him one of the youngest mayors in the United States. It was during that same time period when Buford Pusser of “Walking Tall” fame was the Sheriff of McNairy County with Jim T.’s hometown, Selmer, being the county seat. He later moved to Nashville where he practiced law until 1971, when he then moved to Mt.

Pleasant and opened his law office. He was later appointed part-time Assistant District Attorney in 1973 and served in that capacity while maintaining a private practice until his election to Circuit Court Judge for the four-county 22nd Judicial

District in 1982. He then served in this position until May of 2015. He was a graduate of the National Judicial College at the University of Nevada. He had for fifteen years been an Adjunct Professor for the Criminal Justice Department at Cumberland University and sat on the University Board of Trustees. He was also Adjunct Professor at Martin Methodist College in Pulaski, Tennessee. Jim T. was a TSSAA-approved high school football official, a long-term member of the Mt.

Pleasant Rotary, a Paul Harris Fellow, and a recipient of the Liberty Bell Award. In addition, he was a member of the St. Peters Episcopal Church and served as a lay reader and chalice bearer. He was also a member of the Tennessee Judicial Conference, serving as the Chairman of the Education Committee, also serving on the Executive Committee, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee, and Courtroom Security Committee.

Jim T. was also a member of an early morning walking group. It was once noted that his group looked like a bunch of hurt turtles, so the “Hurt Turtle Walking Society” was established.

Of course, Jim T. was declared King Turtle. Jim T. also hosted the annual golf tournament called “The Jim T.” for 22 years, which brought in friends, attorneys, judges, and dignitaries from across the State. Jim T. loved hosting his friend, fellow Judge and former Mayor of

Memphis, Wyeth Chandler, as both were larger than life characters who spun yarns and tales of their adventures in the courtroom and the characters they interacted with. Jim T. was known as a great storyteller who could bring his audience to side-splitting laughter in a heartbeat. He loved people, and he enjoyed the campaign trail where he got the opportunity to be amongst his constituents. Jim T. loved to duck hunt, even though he never fired a shot, but instead told stories and tales of clients that he had long represented before, in addition to the courtroom battles he had as an Assistant DA with some of the finest trial practitioners in the Mid-state, as well as the trials and travails of DA Arnold Peebles. Jim T. never met a stranger and was beloved by all who knew him. Each year prior to the “Jim T.” golf tournament, he would remind all of the players and attendees, “Remember who you are, where you came from, and who you represent. Proceed with complete and total confidence.”

Judge Jim T. Hamilton will be missed.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Tennessee Judicial Conference that the foregoing memorial resolution in honor of Jim Travis Hamilton, be entered on the minutes of this Conference, that a copy be furnished to West Publishing Company for inclusion in Tennessee Decisions and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies thereof be furnished to members of his family.

Respectfully submitted this 14th day of June, 2023.

Christopher V. Sockwell

Presiding Judge, 22nd Judicial District