

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION ON THE LIFE OF JUSTICE WELDON B. WHITE, DECEASED:

Pursuant to appointment by the Nashville Bar Association to prepare and present a Memorial on the life of Justice Weldon B. White, deceased, this Committee presents this Memorial in the form of a Resolution at the Memorial Services held by the Nashville Bar Association on Wednesday, December 6, 1967, in honor of the memory of Justice White and other members of the Association.

As is often the case, when at its zenith the life of a great and noble man has been brought to an end, those who survive find that the words at their command are inadequate to express the meaning and influence of that life and the loss which has been suffered in its untimely ending. We reach for words, for phrases, for symbols that will paint for all those who read, the picture of the man whom we knew, of the life that he lived, the sacrifices he made, the events he influenced, and the characters he helped to mold. We in admiration make this earnest and sincere effort, that posterity, while benefiting from that life and the contributions that were made by him who lived it, also may know something of the man for, indeed, Justice White was a man in the finest, noblest, most comprehensive and most idealistic sense of the word.

Like many others who have made effective contributions to history and influenced history in the making, the life of Weldon Bailey White had its beginning in Texas and Tennessee. His forebears came from Middle Tennessee; his mother and father moving to Texas from Winchester, Tennessee, before Justice White was born. He came into this world in Waxahachie, Texas, on July 22, 1907. He left this world on April 23, 1967. In this period of 59 years he made careers as a lawyer, a civic minded and public spirited citizen, a soldier, a successful businessman, a Mason and a jurist, and a private career as a friend and a man of strong and devoted family ties. These simple words might describe different lives of different ordinary men, but rarely, indeed, would they, as in this case, encompass the life of a man whose goal was excellence in every facet of his life and who excelled in each of his careers.

As a lawyer and member of the Nashville Bar, he was counsellor and advocate without superior. In the office, at the conference table, before the jury or before the bench, none outranked him; few equalled him. His civic minded and public spirited desire to contribute from his unlimited energy and unusual ability found its outlet in his service as a young man as President of the Nashville Jr. Chamber of Commerce in 1934; President of the Young Democratic Club in 1940; State Senator in the General Assembly of 1941; Vice President of the Lions Club in 1943; instructor and lecturer at Cumberland University School of Law; President of Nashville and Davidson County Bar Association in 1952; President of the Tennessee Bar Association in 1955; Delegate from Tennessee to the American Bar Association House of Delegates, and a Member of the American Bar Association's Jurisprudence and Law Reform Committee.

Although he was serving on the Circuit Court Bench early in 1943, Justice White left the Bench and volunteered to serve in the United States Army. He was commissioned a Captain and served in the Pacific Area, receiving three battle stars for the battles of New Guinea, Luzon and Leyte. After the war ended with the surrender of the Japanese forces, Justice White was stationed in Japan as Executive Officer of the Civic Affairs Group which had charge of the government of City of Tokyo. He also served as Liaison Officer between the 8th Army Headquarters of the United States Army at Yokohama, Japan, and the Headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur in Tokyo. He received an honorable discharge from military service in 1946 with the rank of Major and with a commendation for a very satisfactory military service.

As a businessman he was a leader in the organization and establishment of Home Federal Savings & Loan Association. He served as its counsel and as a director and as President. He retired from active participation in the affairs of the company upon his appointment to the Supreme Court of Tennessee. While he was associated with it, this great financial institution grew from a simple beginning to a complex financial giant and became a factor in the financial life of Nashville.

Justice White's career as a lawyer began upon his graduation from Cumberland University School of Law in 1931. From this time his career lead him unerringly to the highest position which a lawyer can hold in the State of Tennessee. He began the practice of his profession in Nashville in association with Raymond Denny, a member of the Nashville Bar. Later he was associated with Judge Harry B. Luck and Carmack Cochran, which association lead to the formation of the firm of Cochran and White. Justice White was a member of this partnership when in 1942 he was elected as Judge of the Second Circuit Court of Davidson County. Upon his return from military service he reoccupied his position as Judge of the Second Circuit Court of Davidson County and held that position until March 1947. Although he might have continued as Judge and conducted his campaign for Mayor, because of his devotion to the ethics of his profession and his fine sense of morality and right, he resigned from the bench to engage in the campaign for the office of Mayor of the City of Nashville. In this election he was defeated by a comparatively small number of votes. His defeat, while it deprived the City of Nashville of the services of a man who, no doubt, would have been one of the outstanding municipal administrators of our time, paved the way for the Bench and Bar and citizens of this state to derive an even greater benefit from his career as a jurist. Following this unsuccessful campaign for Mayor, Justice White returned to the

private practice of the law in association with B. B. Gullett, Louis Farrell, Jr., and Harry Phillips. In May 1957 the law partnership of White, Gullett, Phillips and Steele was formed with Judge White as the senior member of the firm. He continued his active practice with this firm until his appointment as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Tennessee in August 1961. Immediately upon his appointment, he devoted all of his abilities, his energies and his exceptional mentality toward adding to the high stature of the Supreme Court of Tennessee among the highest Courts of the nation. He sought to improve the work and efficiency of the Supreme Court and devoted himself toward improving the processes of the administration of justice in his state. His opinions record his legal ability, his vision and his concept of the law as the servant as well as the guardian of humanity.

As a young man, Justice White entered the Masonic Fraternity. The best measure of the influence which Masonry had upon him and the influence which he had upon Masonry is his Masonic career. Someone, in speaking of Masonry, has asked this question:

"What profound ministry may it render to a young man who enters its temple in the morning of life, when the dew is on his days and the birds are singing in his heart?"

And as to what the young man finds in the philosophy of this fraternal organization it also has been said:

"High, fine, ineffably rich, and beautiful is the faith and vision which Masonry gives to those who foregather at its altar. By such teaching, if they have the heart to heed it, men become wise, knowing that all evil ways have been often tried and found wanting. By it they learn how to be both brave and gentle, faithful and firm; how to renounce superstition and yet retain faith; how to keep a fine poise of reason between the falsehood of extremes; how to accept the joys of life with glee, and endure its ills with patient valor; how to look upon the folly of man and not forget his nobility-- in short, how to live cleanly, kindly, calmly, open-eyed, and unafraid in a sane world, sweet of heart and full of hope. It may not be a substitute for religion, but he who makes it a law of his life, loves it, and obeys it, will be most ready to receive the great passwords of religious faith. Happy the young man who in the morning of his years takes this simple and high wisdom as his guide, philosopher, and friend."

Justice White, indeed, accepted this simple and high wisdom as his guide, philosopher and friend. He opened his mind and heart to the teachings of the Order and applied those teachings to his daily life and in his dealings with all mankind, without exception and without stint. It was inevitable that with the flawless welding of a man of nobility, strength, humility, courage, tolerance, and ideals with this philosophy which represents the epitome of all human accomplishments, such a man would be called to higher duties to the end that the ennobling influence of his life would spread throughout and beyond the borders of the state in which he lived. Thus, Justice White advanced rapidly from his acceptance as an apprentice Mason in Doric Lodge No. 732 through the Scottish Rite Degrees. He was elected in 1945 as Knight Commander of the Court of Honor. In 1955 he was coroneted a 33^o Inspector General, Honorary. Then he was designated as Deputy of the Supreme Council in the State of Tennessee and finally in 1963 he was selected by the Supreme Council in Washington, D. C. for the highest position that Scottish Rite Masonry holds in the State of Tennessee and one of the

highest positions in the nation as Sovereign Grand Inspector General in Tennessee. He was named to the Finance Committee of the Supreme Council and was serving as Master of Ceremonies of the Supreme Council at the time of his death.

Justice White was a devoted and faithful churchman. He was a member of Hillsboro Church of Christ where for many years he taught a Sunday School Class and worshipped with his family.

These things of which we have spoken are a part of the public careers of the man whose memory we honor here. His achievements and his accomplishments are recorded in pleadings on file and in the minute books of our Courts; in the proceedings of the various organizations of which he was a member and an officer; in the Opinions of the highest Court of our state; in the public press; in corporate minute books and in the time hallowed records of Masonry. There is another facet of his life, however, which is the final mark of the complete man. Those who knew him came to understand how much he was loved in the circle of his home. Justice White was a member of a large family, having four sisters and two brothers. While on the very threshold of manhood he married Miss Ellen Wallace of Nashville. This happy and fortunate union of two wonderful people grew closer, if possible, during the years of their life together, which ended only with the death of Justice White. Any tribute to the nobility, accomplishments and the achievement of the high purpose of that life is also a tribute to his beloved wife. They were blessed with two children, a daughter, Ellen White, who became Mrs. W. W. Dillon, III, and a son, Weldon B. White, Jr., who is following the footsteps of his father in his chosen profession. Justice White shared the fulfillment which only a grandparent can understand in having had the opportunity to know, to see, to hold and to love two grandchildren, Ellen Dillon and William Wesley Dillon, Jr. To those who knew him and his family, the experience was as moving and as inspirational as the observance of a painting of one of the great old masters which, as watched, holds, absorbs and casts a soft and vibrant glow of life, of love, of hope and fulfillment.

"The purity and beauty of his family life tell us why the pride and interest we felt in him were always touched with the warm light of love."

When we review this life and think of this man the words with which we fumble at first begin to pour into the mind and we see why such words became a part of our language. Wise, gentle, kind, thoughtful, tolerant, unselfish, faithful, loyal, patient, understanding, sincere, generous, magnanimous--all of these but help to give us the picture which we seek to paint.

There are so many things which truthfully can be said of Justice White and his life in bringing to a conclusion this kindly labor of love. As a lawyer and a judge, his perception was swift and sure; his humor contagious; his imagination vivid and sensitive; his judgment prompt and sound. He was the epitome of serenity and tranquil self-confidence. As a citizen and fraternity man he combined the many necessary qualifications for high service in an unusual degree marking him for special admiration by his fellows and by the general public. As a man his heart was generous and open to all, and mankind received the benefits of his moral, intellectual and phusical nature. He was seasoned with the salt and spice of adversity and accomplishment. He was of the earth, but his thoughts were with the stars. As Joseph Choate said of his kinsman:

"This man's character surpassed even his exalted intellect and, controlling all his great endowments, made the consummate beauty of his life."

BE IT RESOLVED, THEREFORE, That this tribute to the memory of our brother at the Bar and our friend who became our exemplar be adopted by the Nashville Bar Association in meeting assembled for the purpose; that a copy thereof be delivered to the appropriate Clerks of the Court for enrollment in the permanent records of the Courts of Davidson County, Tennessee; and that a copy be furnished to his family as an expression of our sympathy and of our high regard for a great man whose life we shared in some degree with them.

Respectfully submitted,
Carmack Cochran
Louis Farrell, Jr.
Hugh C. Gracey
Thomas Wardlaw Steele,
Chairman