

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
FOR
MOSE JEPHTHA DAVIE

MOSE JEPHTHA DAVIE was born in Clarksville, Tennessee to the late Bessie Wooldridge and John Edward Davie. Due to the early death of his father and his mother's ill health, he was raised by his grandmother the late Annie Wooldridge. His family moved to Nashville, Tennessee where he graduated from Pearl High School.

Mose J. Davie was drafted into the Army in May 1941 while a junior at Tennessee A & I State University (now Tennessee State University), majoring in industrial education. After boot camp, he was assigned to the 382nd Engineer Construction Battalion at Ft. Knox, Kentucky. While he was at Ft. Knox, the 382nd trained the 758th and 761st Tank Battalions, that later became famous during the war under Army Gen. George S. Patton.

Davie was deployed to Bombay, India and Burma where he rose to the rank of battalion sergeant major, making him the highest ranking African American serving in the China/Burma/India theatre during World War II. Mr. Davie noted that "there was nothing but jungles, mountains, gorges, rivers, swamps and oceans of mud over there", upon his unit's arrival to India. His unit was assigned the task of building "Ledo Road", dubbed a miracle and later renamed "Stilwell Road" in honor of Army Gen. Joseph W. "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, World War II commander of the China-Burma-India Theatre. After the Japanese cut off the Burma Road between China and Burma, the only way for the Allies to send supplies to the Chinese was by air. The importance of a land route to China was so great that the United States assigned more than 15,000 American troops to construct the Ledo Road, which ran 271 miles from Ledo on the India Burma border at a junction on the old Burma Road. The construction of Ledo Road followed a steep, narrow trail through unsurveyed territory from Ledo, India, across the Patkai Mountains and down to Shingbwlang, Burma. Sometimes rising as high as 4,500 feet, the 103 mile trail required the removal of more than 100,000 cubic feet of earth every mile. More than 60 percent of the American troops that worked on that road were African-Americans. Mr. Davie would later recall that the black soldiers were faced with obstacles because of their race. He said that the black soldiers were issued hand me down equipment that had been used by white troops before they arrived and that said equipment often needed repair. Davie said that white soldiers had good food for breakfast, bacon and eggs and black troops were given hard tack and cold pork and beans. Other severe conditions that he endured during his service there included the extreme heat, monsoons, leeches, earthquakes, malaria and sub-standard living conditions.

After being discharged in 1945, Mr. Davie finished his bachelor's degree at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial College. After receiving his Maser's degree, Mr. Davie decided he wanted to go to law school. In the late 1950's Mr. Davie applied for admission to the YMCA Night Law School but was not admitted because he was black. "No law school in Tennessee would admit a black man in those days" Davie said. Mr. Davie approached some white lawyers, including C. Allen High, Charles Galbreath and Neil Brown about his idea of starting an evening law school for African Americans. Davie believed that the Supreme Court should allow a law school for persons of color, following the same curriculum as the YMCA Law School. Those lawyers agreed with his reasoning and filed a petition with the Supreme Court to establish the Tennessee Evening Law School. Mr. Davie persuaded practicing attorneys, including the petitioners and Bob Lillard and C.L. Ennix to join the faculty. The first class was about four or five students, mostly faculty from Tennessee A&I College. Mr. Davie found the location to hold classes and assumed the responsibility of upkeep of the site. In fact, Mr. Davie ordered the law books, paid the bills and was the administrator of the school.

Mose J. Davie successfully graduated from "his" law school and passed the bar examination in 1960. One of Davie's first successes as an attorney was to save the life of a black man on death row. The man had been convicted of killing the brother in law of the Memphis police chief. Scheduled to be executed in Nashville, the man wrote a letter to then Gov. Frank Clement saying he was about to be killed for something he wasn't guilty of. Attorney Davie was appointed to represent the man. Davie wrote a letter to Governor Clement where he argued that the 14th Amendment says you must have a black on the grand jury and therefore the man had not received a fair trial under the Constitution. The governor commuted the sentence to life, along with the sentences of several other black men who had been given the death penalty. Davie said "They'd never had a black man on the grand jury in any of the counties in the state of Tennessee, that's when I became very interested and they appointed me to defend him. I saved his life" He practiced law for 48 years earning an excellent reputation as a gentleman and a skillful attorney. Mose J. Davie volunteered to be a proctor for bar examinations and many lawyers recall that he oversaw their bar examinations, a fact that the examinee is not likely to forget.

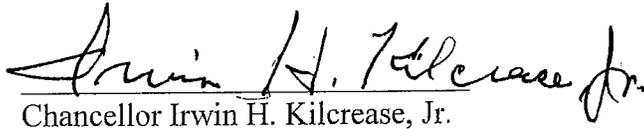
Mr. Davie served as a Special Judge in the General Sessions Court of Davidson County, Tennessee. He was a Fellow of the Nashville Bar Foundation. He was appointed to the Board of Parks and Recreation by the Late Honorable Mayor Beverly Briley. He was a lifetime member of the China-Burma-India Veterans Organization. He was a member of The American Legion. He was a member of the Scottish Rites Masonry, Master Mason, Sublime Prince (32 Degree) and Member of the Order of Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order of the Mystic Shrine. He was also a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church.

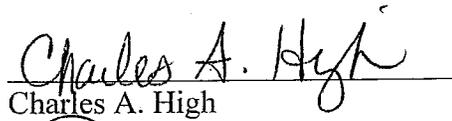
During his retirement, Mr. Davie continued to pursue his love of deep sea fishing and was an ardent supporter of the TSU football program.

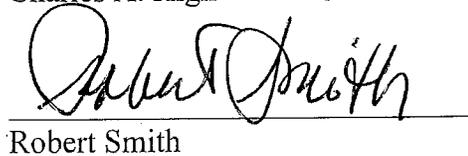
Mose J. Davie was survived by his wife, Constance Shelton Davie; daughter, Arnetta (Eddie) Hamilton; grandchildren, Janean Overton, Lance & Myles Hamilton; sisters, Marguerite David Pinkard, Gloria Davie Royal; and nephew, Patrick Shelton

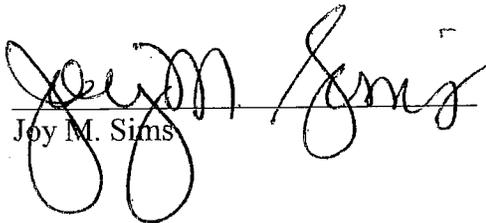
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Nashville Bar Association that we honor the life and work of Mose J. Davie and mourn in his passing the loss of a loyal friend, mentor and able lawyer dedicated to the finest traditions of his profession and that this memory be preserved by this resolution and placed in the Minutes of the Chancery Court for Davidson County, and that copies hereof be distributed to his family.

Respectfully submitted,


Chancellor Irwin H. Kilcrease, Jr.


Charles A. High


Robert Smith


Joy M. Sims

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*References for this Resolution:

Charles A. High, article in the Nashville Bar Journal
Rudi Williams, American Forces Press Service