

LEGENDS OF THE WYANDOTTE COUNTY BAR

The historical make up of our bar is what makes Wyandotte County a truly great place to practice law. My first job out of law school as an attorney in the spring of 1987, was working for LaVone Daily who has been practicing law for well over 50 years in Wyandotte County. LaVone knew everyone and all their stories. She possessed a treasure chest of stories about our Bar, a regular who's who. These stories and stories from other long standing bar members were informative, useful and quite frequently fun. Listening to our history helped me get to know and fully appreciate our bar. From that background, I discussed the historical background of our Wyandotte County Bar with the officers of our Bar Association and it was decided that we would all benefit from sharing a little bit about it's long membership, past and present.

We've decided to highlight past and present members of the Wyandotte County Bar at our monthly meetings, as well as our Advocate. We invite all members of our Bar who have institutional knowledge of legendary members of our Bar to share the stories of notable, colorful or even historical members of our Bar, such as Arthur Stanley, whose history was well preserved by his onetime law clerk, James Duncan. It would be interesting to hear about the names that make up Wyandotte County's largest

firm, McAnany, Van Cleave and Phillips to learn why the largest law firm in the county still chooses to bear their names a hundred years later. We personally invite anyone to share and present the wonderful stories of legendary Bar members from our Bar, past or present. With that in mind, we have decided to call this new addition to our meetings, “Legends of the Wyandotte County Bar”.

It is with great honor and privilege to present our chosen first legend of the Wyandotte County Bar.

In preparing for this first presentation, I began to study the history of our Bar. I started looking at many colorful characters, sifting through many stories. There are so many notable members of our bar association over the many years that I concluded it would take a dedicated historian to compile it and make some sense of it. The more I thought about the compilation of a history of our bar, the word history in and of itself grew in my mind to the point that it became absolutely clear what better way to start a historical type of project, then to honor a person who is actually dedicated to Wyandotte County history itself. The person our Bar unanimously chose to honor and present to you as the first Legend of the Wyandotte County Bar has dedicated a significant portion of his life to our “history”, the man who literally wrote books on the history of Wyandotte County, my father Loren

L. Taylor, which actually coincides with the presentation of his fifty (50) year pin in honor of his fiftieth year as a Kansas attorney.

Loren L. Taylor was born in Kansas City, Kansas, his family lived in the Armourdale district. His father was a lifelong butcher in the packing houses. His mother and his aunt had moved up from the Ozarks to the Kansas City area looking for work during the depression era. Growing up, Taylor's family shared his families' stories, particularly during Summers while visiting in the deep Ozark hill area with his grandparents and other old relatives. On the other side, he received the stories passed down by generations, including stories of his grandfather being a frontier marshall and US gold marshall or exploits of family members in the Revolutionary War and in the Civil War from both sides. His father's mother was from an Irish immigrant family. He now edits a publication in Kentucky on genealogy of related founding families and their culture. His love of these stories kindled a passion to learn more of his heritage and history, not to mention the desire to study and preserve the history of our own Wyandotte County and its people.

Along with his love of history came the natural companion of the love of the law, which for him also included law enforcement. Taylor was not from generations of lawyers, politicians or an affluent family. His family

was plunged into financial crisis when his grandfather died just after his father was born, leaving his grandmother with six (6) children to raise in 1899. His father's mother was from an Irish immigrant family and she was forced to give up their small property holding to move from their frontier home into Armourdale in 1899 to support her six (6) children by washing clothing for others. She became a true Irish "washerwoman". To complicate this existence was the great flood of 1903. Taylor's father was forced to leave school in his 6th grade year (as were his brothers and sisters before him) when he could gain employment in the packing house at age 12.

In the mid-1950's, it was difficult to break into the local legal or political community. Taylor was driven by a strong work ethic, however, which helped open doors. He started his work career as a young boy by acquiring a newspaper delivery route and then an associated sales of comic books. This was cut short when, within days of graduating from Central Junior High School, the devastating flood of 1951 struck. Taylor and his family watched their home become covered by river mud and water. His father's packing house temporarily closed from the flood. The next fall, he started high school. The family was forced to rent and live in the government "Trailer City" for over a year while their old house was rebuilt. He was to work during his high school period to assist with his costs,

working at the Crown Drug Co. At first, he worked the soda fountain but by his senior year, he was working full time as a department leader. While in college and law school, he worked full-time employment including at the railroad.

He married his high school sweetheart Helen F. Holec whose Croatian 2nd generation immigrant family was also a victim of the 1951 flood from the Croatian Community in the West Bottoms. She too possessed a strong work ethic, also working after school at Crown Drug Co. She attended Bishop Ward while he was from Wyandotte High School. It was during this period that a noted Sister of Charity, Sister Rose Carmel, a teacher at Ward High School, became a mentor and almost guardian giving spiritual, cultural and educational direction to both Helen and Loren. This gave direction for the study of history in college. During the years at the railroad, he was the Kansas legislative representative from his union local. He also became active with the KCMO Police Department during these years in their reserve training and patrol program.

They married midway through college and began a family raising six (6) children, 4 daughters and 2 sons. He completed law school and launched into his legal career in 1962 around the time his 3rd child, his first son, was born. About the time he was to enter law school, Taylor was active in the

local community and earned the attention of certain members of the bar and political circles and was taken under the wings of a prominent local historian and member of the Wyandotte County Bar who furnished extensive guidance on being a lawyer in Wyandotte County. This lawyer was appointed to the bench about the same time that Taylor's first son was born and out of honor to his legal mentor named his son after that Wyandotte County Judge, Donald Campbell Little. He did continue to make a name for himself and caught the attention of many community leaders. From his hard work he earned the opportunity to be appointed the first special Administrative Law Judge for the Kansas Division of Workers Compensation. This position is currently held by Wyandotte County Bar members, Mike Wallace and Mark Kolich. From there he worked part-time for the Kansas City Right-Of-Way department in areas such as land and security management for projects such as the I-635 corridor, which cut right through the then heart of Kansas City, Kansas.

As most that grew up during WWII, Taylor had great respect for the military. His patriotism drove him to enlist in the United States Marines Reserve. After law school he continued with his military career and accepted a commission in the United States Army Reserve as a Judge Advocate. By the time he finished his military career and after receiving

command and general staff training, he achieved the rank of Colonel. Taylor retired from the military in 1991 after serving six (6) years in that rank. He received many military awards, including the coveted Legion of Merit award.

Taylor's love of law and law enforcement drove him to become active as a police reserve officer during his years in college, law school and after. He gained recognition from several federal and state agencies during that period which led eventually to his return to law enforcement as the police legal advisor/officer with the KCKPD for over three (3) decades. The military, law enforcement, and teaching disciplines complimented each other and the cross-training and assignments were invaluable to the other. He gained recognition serving for over 30 years on the Kansas Judicial Council Criminal Law Advisory Committee. He still serves on that standing Committee. He was selected to attend the prestigious FBI National Law Institute in Quantico, Virginia, and other prestigious training schools. During that time he published a highly acclaimed monthly legal publication, *The Police Legal Review* for over 20 years. It was distributed far beyond the department itself. He has taught, and continues to instruct, all members of the police department during their recruit training and later in their mandatory continuing education. Upon retirement, he continued his training

responsibilities under contract and has thereby taught these classes for over 40 years.

While acting as part-time right-of-way agent, he was offered the opportunity to teach part-time for the KCKCC in a new program on law enforcement as its first instructor and is credited with starting the Administration of Justice section. This was to last for over 30 years with recognition for starting that program in their acclaimed school's history by the noted Paul Jewell.

But it is Taylor's devotion to history that makes him legendary in our community; his love of the history of Wyandotte County and its people drove him to devote the last 25 years to preserving the history of all of the people of the county. He has become a noted ethnic historian, producing three (3) books on the ethnic history of the county, one on the historic communities, one as an overview of the history of Wyandotte County and its historic sites, and one on the history of law enforcement in Kansas City, Kansas. To this he added a historical novel on Lewis and Clark. He has received a number of awards from ethnic organizations for his work in the preservation of local ethnic culture and history. One legacy that he will leave is that 20 years ago he originated and now edits the Historical Journal of Wyandotte County. Taylor is a past president of the Wyandotte County

Historical Society and Museum and is currently its historian. He is also on the Board of the Kansas State Historical Society. He relishes in helping the different ethnic cultures of our community to preserve their own cultures including working with the Kansas City Kansas Sister City program. This program includes developing our relationships with several cities around the world including the City of Karlovac in Croatia, the City of Linz, in Austria, Uruapan in Mexico, and is assisting in developing a County relationship with Limerick County in Ireland, as well as others. It's this collection, preservation, and education on the history of Wyandotte County that sets him apart, this year marking Taylor's Fiftieth (50th) year as a member of the Kansas and Wyandotte County Bar, making him a 50 year part of our history and a historical legend of the Wyandotte County Bar.