



Judge Samuel
McDowell Tate
June 10, 1923 - May 4, 2020

Judge Samuel McDowell Tate, 96, widower of Mary Alice Keeble Tate, passed away on May 4, 2020 at Grace Ridge Retirement Home in Morganton. Born June 10, 1923, he was the son of Franklin Pierce Tate of Morganton and Martha Thomason (Pattie) Tate, originally from Spartanburg, SC. He was the grandson of Col. Samuel McDowell Tate and Jane (Jennie) Pearson Tate. Judge Tate's father operated Glen Alpine cotton mills and was director of the First National Bank, both of Morganton. His mother's grandfather had founded the South Carolina School for the Deaf in Spartanburg, and in the family tradition, she herself served for many years as Principal of the North Carolina School for the Deaf in Morganton, teaching rhythm to the deaf and piano privately as well. Judge Tate's ancestral lineage derived from French Huguenots who fled religious persecution in the early 1700s, first to Ireland and thence to Pennsylvania, eventually settling in North Carolina.

In 1950 Judge Tate married his wife Mary Keeble of Hythe, Kent, England, with whom he parented five children. Mary was a nurse whom he first met while recuperating at a military hospital at Oswestry, England, during World War II, having been a prisoner of war. He had been captured by the Germans with a shrapnel wound to his leg and was held in a French hospital, where he was liberated by General George Patton's Third Army, later being awarded two purple hearts. Home-schooled

as a child by his mother, he then attended Morganton High School and graduated from the Asheville School. He was a student at Davidson College when the war interrupted his studies, and completed them there after the war. He then graduated from the University of North Carolina Law School and returned to Morganton to practice law in 1953.

Judge Tate was a lifelong member of the First Presbyterian Church, long serving in its choir, and as teacher of The Men's Bible Class, a deacon and elder, clerk of session, and lay minister in small local churches in the county. He was a president of the Kiwanis Club, and a member of the boards of the Moose Club, the Red Cross, NC Arts and Symphony, the housing authority, and the Phoenix Children's Home. In his legal profession of more than fifty years, he was president of the NC Bar Association, a specialist in juvenile law as district court judge, and served as Retired and Recalled Emergency Court Judge across the state.

At Davidson and UNC, he was a member of Phi Delta Theta. He was an enthusiastic gymnast in his youth, and was coxswain on the rowing team at the Asheville School. He had a pony and was a young equestrian, which served him well, as with his future bride he shared a first date on horseback, only to ride off to an afternoon tea invitation across the hills during his wartime recuperation in England. He grew up an avid tennis player, continuing into adulthood in the West Union Street Tennis Club with his more competitive wife Mary as his doubles partner. He was a birder and loved living in nature with the call of the songbird.

Judge Tate was predeceased by his wife Mary and son David. He is survived by his other four children and their families: Jane Tate (Art) and John Tate, both of Morganton, Susan Tate Henderson (Bobby) of Knoxville, TN, and Martha Tate Lyster (Norm) of Virginia Beach, VA; five grandchildren: Eleisha Tate-Hooper, Keely Henderson Doran (Jimmie), Anna Henderson Daniel (Drew), Stuart Lyster, Marley Lyster; and great-grandchildren James and Lillian Doran

A celebration of Mr. Tate's life will be held at 3 p.m., Saturday, July 17, 2021 at the First Presbyterian Church. You are invited to a reception following with historical pictures and memorabilia.

Memorial contributions may be made to First Presbyterian Church or to the American

Red Cross.

Sossoman Funeral Home and Crematory Center is assisting the family with the arrangements.

Tribute Wall

No tributes added yet.