

Donald L. Worthington



Donald L. Worthington, age 95, retired district judge of Payne and Logan counties, died Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at the Stillwater Medical Center. Strode Funeral Home and Cremation in Stillwater is in charge of the arrangements.

Judge Worthington was born in Dewey County near Canton, Oklahoma on August 3, 1926 to Maurice H. Worthington, a farmer and pioneer school teacher, and Ruth Williams Worthington. As a teenager, he moved with his family to a farm near Braman, Oklahoma and graduated from high school there.

He enlisted in the United States Army and served in the Pacific Theater of Operations during World War II in New Guinea, Leyte, Luzon, and Okinawa. At war's end he was serving in the Philippine Islands headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Pacific. He was awarded two battle stars for the Southern Philippines and Luzon campaigns, the Philippine Liberation Ribbon and one Bronze Star. He was present in General MacArthur's office on Luzon and witnessed the arrival there of the Japanese emissaries to arrange surrender terms to end the war. He continued to serve in General MacArthur's offices in Japan until his discharge from the army in June 1946. Throughout his life he remained a loyal supporter of General MacArthur and was quick to defend the general's place in history against any would-be detractors.

He was married to Virginia Drake in Ponca City, Oklahoma on August 9, 1947. They are the parents of Susan and David. On September 1, 2000, he married June Gilliam in Sedona, Arizona.

In 1950 he graduated from the University of Oklahoma School of Law. He began his legal career as an attorney for Phillips Petroleum Company before going into the general practice of law in Cushing in 1951. In 1965 he moved his offices to Stillwater and has since then maintained his home in Stillwater.

In 1987 he was elected District Judge of Payne and Logan Counties, a position he held until his retirement in 2010. He was appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Oklahoma in 1997 to represent the Judiciary of the State on a Task Force of the Criminal Justice System dedicated to the improvement of the state criminal justice system. In 2006 he received the Oklahoma Bar Association award of Judicial Excellence, and on June 29th of that year was inducted into the Stillwater Hall of Fame. In 2013 the Supreme Court of Oklahoma bestowed upon him its award of Judicial Excellence for his leadership in establishing and maintaining the competence and integrity of the Oklahoma Court System. In 2021 the Payne County Bar Association recognized his over 70-year service in the practice of law.

He is preceded in death by his parents, one brother, and two sisters. Survivors include his wife June; his daughter Judge Susan Worthington of Stillwater; his son David Worthington and wife Diane, and his grandson Ian Worthington, all of Oklahoma City. Also surviving him are nephews Jerry Hemple of Blackwell, Oklahoma, Martin Smith of Houston, Texas, and niece Melinda Marble of Austin, Texas.

Judge Worthington belonged to the Hanner-Sharp American Legion Post 129 Stillwater, Oklahoma.