



News & Trending

NEWS

JAMES KYE DORSETT, JR. 1916 - 2001

11.05.2001

We are deeply saddened by the death of our partner James K. Dorsett, Jr. on October 30. The following obituary was written by his sons [Jim](#) and Stuart.

James Kye Dorsett, Jr. of Raleigh, NC, died on October 30, 2001. Born on November 15, 1916 in Spence, North Carolina, the son of J.K. and Florence Terrell Dorsett, he was in all respects a member of "The Greatest Generation." He was well loved for his uniquely kind and gentlemanly character and lively sense of humor. Jim Dorsett graduated from Boyden High School in Salisbury, NC, where he was President of the student body, a member of the National Honor Society and a member of the Debate Team. He developed a life-long passion for the game of tennis while playing on the high school tennis team, and he continued to play a competitive game of tennis until age 82.

A 1938 cum laude graduate of Davidson College, Dorsett served as President of the Junior Class and President of the Phi Kappa Alpha fraternity. He was Editor of the Davidson Annual, and was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa, Omicron Delta Kappa and Sword and Scabbard honor societies.

Upon graduation from Davidson, Dorsett traveled throughout Europe, where he observed the signs of impending war, including the marching of the Hitler Youth and a speech by Italy's Mussolini. Dorsett returned to North Carolina and enrolled in the University of North Carolina School of Law, obtaining his Juris Doctor degree with High Honors in 1941. At UNC, Dorsett served as Editor-in-Chief of the Law Review and was elected to the Order of the Coif.

In 1941, young Dorsett was recruited to join Smith Anderson. However, as an Army Reserve officer, he was called to active duty following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japanese forces. After training in the U.S., Dorsett was stationed near Salisbury, England from 1943 to 1944. During this time, with Top Secret security clearance, he was engaged in planning and training for the Allied Expeditionary Force invasion of Europe. On May 30, 1944, Dorsett crossed the English Channel in an LCT flat-bottomed ship and landed on Utah Beach, Normandy, France on the morning of June 6, 1944 ("D-Day"). As a counter-intelligence officer in the 7th Corps under Lt. General "Lightening Joe" Collins, Dorsett played a major role in the First Army's campaigns extending from Normandy to the Elbe River in Germany. He participated in the Normandy peninsular campaign, liberation of Paris, invasion of Germany, Battle of the Bulge, taking of Cologne and crossing of the Rhine River to Leipzig to link with Russian troops. For his role in the conflict, Dorsett was promoted to the rank of Major and received the Bronze Star. He was also awarded the Croix de Guerre by the Government of France.

Following his discharge from active duty in 1945, he rejoined the law firm of Smith, Leach and Anderson in Raleigh. In 1950 he married the former Anna Lee Smith, daughter of Senator Smith, and they celebrated their 51st anniversary shortly before his death.

Dorsett became a partner in Smith, Leach, Anderson and Dorsett in 1949 and was engaged in a wide array of legal matters, including the representation of many corporate and banking clients. During these years, he was actively involved in the North Carolina Bar Association, and at age 41 was elected as its President in 1959.

In 1970, he joined The Wachovia Corporation as Senior Vice President and General Counsel, where he later became Executive Vice President and a Director. In 1978, he retired from Wachovia and returned to Raleigh and private practice with Smith, Anderson, Blount, Dorsett, Mitchell & Jernigan, where he remained actively involved in legal and business affairs until shortly before his death. An inspiration to younger lawyers, in 1995 Dorsett was awarded the Joseph Branch Professional Award by the Wake County Bar Association.

Dorsett leaves behind a rich legacy of service to his church and community. A founding member of White Memorial Presbyterian Church, he served as a Deacon, Chairman of the Board, a Ruling Elder and President of the Men of the Church. He also served on the boards of numerous civic and charitable organizations, including the Red Cross, the United Way, the Raleigh YMCA and the Raleigh Chamber of Commerce.

Actively involved in higher education, he served as Vice-Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Davidson College, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Peace College, Chairman of the UNC Board of Visitors and a member of the Wake Forest Law School Board of Visitors. Davidson College and Peace College named him their representative to the North Carolina Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, of which he later served as Chairman. He was named a "Distinguished Alumnus" by both Davidson College and the UNC School of Law.

A caring and generous man, Jim Dorsett loved above all spending time with his wife, children and grandchildren. His love of learning, passion for travel and the arts and zest for living remain an inspiration to his family and friends.

Dorsett is survived by his wife, Anna Lee Smith Dorsett; his sister and brother-in-law, Sarah Dorsett Boyle and B. Irvin Boyle of Charlotte; four children and their spouses, James K. Dorsett, III and Wynn Gregory Dorsett of Raleigh, Anna Dorsett Paschal and Robert C. Paschal of Raleigh, Rush Dorsett Coe and Kenneth S. Coe of Charlotte, and Stuart B. Dorsett and Josephine Scott Dorsett of New Bern; 12 grandchildren: Elise, Rush, James, and Grace Dorsett; Robert, Anna Lee, and Andrew Paschal; Sarah Dorsett, Kenneth, and John Coe; and Robertson and Zachary Dorsett.

