

# Memorial Resolution

## HONORABLE VERNON NEAL

1931 - 2017

Chancellor Neal said his last “Tally Ho” as he rejoiced in his eternal homecoming with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on March 3, 2017. He was born October 10, 1931 in Byrdstown, TN to Mary Cope and Levi Pearson Neal. In the summer of 1957, he met his future wife Mona Mahan while she visited family in Cookeville. They were married at Algood First Baptist Church on February 16, 1958.

Chancellor Neal graduated from Tennessee Polytechnic Institute in 1952, earning a degree in education and business. Following graduation, he worked for two years as a salesman for Spur Oil Company. He then attended the University of Tennessee College of Law and in 1956 obtained a Juris Doctor (JD) degree. In 1957, he returned to Cookeville and began his career and passion for the legal profession.

Chancellor Neal had a life well-lived and always prioritized his life accordingly: God, family and career. His priority was his faith and service to his Lord. He first attended Algood First Baptist Church where he served as deacon, Sunday school teacher and Training Union Director. He went on to be an organizing member of Midway Baptist Church where he continued to serve in leadership roles including deacon and Sunday school teacher. He and Mona attended Cookeville First Baptist Church where he served as Sunday school teacher and was recently appointed to the personnel committee. He dearly loved his First Baptist Church community where he loved traveling with the “Happy Travelers” and was known as the Candy Man to those that sat with him during church service.

In 1962, Chancellor Neal ran his first political race as Direct Representative of Putnam County, now known as State House of Representatives. In 1966, Representative Neal became State Senator, representing the 14<sup>th</sup> State Senate District and served two terms. In 1980, retired State Senator Neal was elected as Chancellor of the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District and served the Upper Cumberland area for 25 years. During Neal’s tenure, he was estimated to have heard over 35,000 cases.

As an attorney and Chancellor he was especially recognized for his integrity and ethical conduct by all who knew him. A consummate legal scholar, Chancellor Neal was blessed with the good common sense and the ability to make those that appeared before him feel at ease in the most stressful situations. In an interview at the time of his retirement, Chancellor Neal stated, "We are blessed with outstanding lawyers in the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District, and I believe they compare with lawyers anywhere in the state; good lawyers make a judge's job so much easier. I'd like to think I made a difference in people's lives".

Chancellor Neal is survived by his wife Mona; daughter and son-in-law, Drs. Belinda Neal Mandrell (Tim) of Memphis, son and daughter-in-law, Jeff Neal (Leana) of Chattanooga and daughter and son-in-law, Melissa Neal Gogonelis (Paul) of Memphis. Five grandchildren: David Neal and Annie Grace Mandrell, Taylor Marie and Ryan Oakley Neal, and Christopher Paul Gogonelis. He was preceded in death by his parents, Mary and Levi Neal and his sister Delcie Neal Wright and nephews Doyle and Charles Wright.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Tennessee Judicial Conference that the foregoing memorial resolution in honor of our departed colleague, Vernon Neal, be entered on the minutes of this conference, that a copy be furnished to his family and to West Publishing Company for publication in Tennessee Decisions.

Respectfully submitted this the 14<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2017, in Kingsport, TN, at the annual meeting of the Tennessee Judicial Conference.

Ronald Thurman  
Chancellor for the 13<sup>th</sup> Judicial District