



## The Hon. Joe D. Clayton

November 21, 1938 - July 14, 2023

Judge Joe D. Clayton, age 84, went home to be with the Lord on Friday, July 14, 2023, in Tyler, Texas. He was born November 21, 1938, in Bonham, Texas, to Melvin and Clementine Clayton. He married Jan Dennis on February 1, 1964.

A Celebration of Life Service for Joe Clayton will be held on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Tyler with Rev. Brendan McLean officiating. Burial will take place in a private family ceremony at Willow Wild Cemetery in Bonham, Texas. Arrangements by Stewart Family Funeral Home.

Joe was a member of First Presbyterian Church of Tyler. He graduated from Tulia High School in 1956 and he received his BBA from the University of Texas in Austin ("UT"), and after attending Baylor School of Law from 1960 to 1961, he returned to the UT School of Law, from which he received his JD. During his time at UT, he was a member and Vice President of Alpha Tau Omega Social Fraternity; member of Delta Theta Phi national legal fraternity; a UT Law School Keaton Fellow; and Director of UT Law School Association. While attending Baylor School of Law, he was Vice President of the first year law class and was on the Law School Board of Governors. Joe's many accomplishments are listed below.

#### ATTORNEY:

After serving as a Partner and Senior Partner with law firms in Tyler and Fredericksburg, Joe began his service in the judiciary.

#### JUDICIAL:

Senior State District Judge; Judge – 241st District Court – Tyler, Texas; Judge – County Court at Law – Tyler, Texas; Judge – Municipal Court – Bullard, Texas; Texas Center for Judiciary, Chairman – Peer Committee – Developed the Bench Book for Texas Trial Judges; and Texas Center for Judiciary, Faculty – Judicial Ethics.

#### STATE AND SMITH COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATIONS:

Director – State Bar of Texas; Director and Life Fellow – Texas Bar Foundation; Director of State Bar Young Lawyers Association; President of Texas Young Lawyers Association – during his term as President, Texas won the American Bar Association's Award of Achievement for outstanding Young Lawyers Section of the Bar Associations in large states of the United States; Member of Continuing Legal Education and Professional Efficiency Committee; Chairman of Grievance Committee; Chairman of Long Range Planning Committee; Member of the Smith County Bar Association; Member of the Smith County Bar Foundation; Director and Treasurer of the Smith County Bar Association; Recipient of Outstanding Young Lawyer award – Smith Co. Junior Bar Association.

#### AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION:

Section Delegate on Executive Council – Young Lawyers Section – representing the States of Texas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas; Member Judicial Section and Chairman of Jury Systems Committee.

#### CIVIC:

President – Bowie Kiwanis Club; President-Elect and Director – Bowie

Chamber of Commerce; President – Montague County Heart Association; President – Rose City Kiwanis Club; President – East Texas Estate Planning Council; Director – NW Texas Area Council Boy Scouts of America; Recipient of Historical Preservation Award from Fannin County Historical Commission; President – Fredericksburg Heritage Foundation; President – Smith County Texas Exes Association; Director – University of Texas Law School Association; President – Exotic Wildlife Association; President – East Texas Chapter of the Association of Attorney Mediators; and President – Tyler-Smith County Heart Association.

Joe was an avid hunter and fisherman. He was a life member of the following: NRA; Foundation for North American Wild Sheep; and National Wild Turkey Foundation. He was a member of Ducks Unlimited; President of Exotic Wildlife Association; Charter member and Director of Texas Wildlife Association; President Emeritus of National Ruger Collectors Association; and author of The Ruger No.1 Rifle. He also belonged to the Ruger Owners and Collectors Society. Sturm-Ruger and Co. made a limited edition of 125 Ruger No. 1 rifle in his honor named the Joe D. Clayton Classic. He was a former Director and Member of Dallas Chapter Safari Club International and Member of Dallas Safari Club. Joe had the honor of being inducted into the Tulia High School Hall of Fame.

Above all, Joe valued his faith in God, loved his family dearly, cherished his many friendships, was dedicated to his profession, and was determined to live his life to the fullest.

Joe was preceded in death by his parents, Melvin and Clementine Clayton; his wife, Jan Dennis Clayton; brothers, Bernard Clayton, Gene Clayton, and John Clayton. He is survived by his loving family including his two sons, Joe D. Clayton II and his wife, Amy Clayton, of Lexington, Kentucky and James D.

Clayton and his wife, Cindy Clayton, of Sydney, Australia; one daughter, Catherine P. Clayton of Tyler, Texas; granddaughters, Ashley Clayton, Caroline Clayton, and Clementene Clayton.

Honorary Pallbearers will be George Adams; David Carothers; Hon. Webb Baird; Joe Bill Belue, M.D.; Taylor Burns; S. Edwin Duncan, M.D.; Mike Ellis; F.R. "Buck" Files; Sean Hester; Travis Hester; Mark Lawrence; Jim Mason; Mark McBride; Lee Newton; Hon. T. John Ward; William "Tojo" Ward, D.D.S; and Gordon White.

Joe left his body to U.T. Southwestern Medical School for medical research.

If desired, memorials may be made to Texas Bar Foundation, 515 Congress Ave., Suite 1755, Austin, TX 78701(<https://donate.txbf.org>); American Heart Association, National Center, 7272 Greenville Ave., Dallas, TX 75231 ([www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)); or Hospice of East Texas Foundation, 4111 University Blvd., Tyler, TX 75701 ([www.hospiceofeasttexas.org](http://www.hospiceofeasttexas.org)), or a charity of your choice.

# Previous Events

## Memorial Service

OCT **21**. 10:00 AM (CT)

First Presbyterian Church  
230 Rusk St.  
Tyler, TX 75701

# Tribute Wall

BX

“ *Breville Group xx purchased the Serenity Wreath for the family of The Hon. Joe D. Clayton.*



---

**Breville Group xx** - October 18, 2023 at 10:37 AM

BX

“ *Breville Group xx planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of The Hon. Joe D. Clayton.*

---

**Breville Group xx** - October 18, 2023 at 10:37 AM

TB

“ Judge and I spent many hours together, traveling to hunting and fishing destinations, arguing about the Longhorns and Aggies, sitting in boats while catching fish, shooting doves, etc. I often chastised him for his lack of regular exercise, and his diet. His response was always the same: "Burns, you aren't going to live longer, it's just going to seem longer." He enjoyed good food and being around his friends.

We ate a lot of good bar-b-que at Louie Mueller's and Pat Gee's. Once we went to northeastern Wyoming to hunt antelope. The night before the season opened, I received a phone call advising me of a family emergency. Without hesitation, Joe said that we would leave the next morning. He drove the entire distance, spending eighteen hours behind the wheel. I don't know of another friend who would do that for me.

We'll miss him a lot, but we will always cherish the time we spent with him.

*Taylor Burns*

---

**Taylor Burns** - July 19, 2023 at 03:13 PM