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Biography of Strom Thurmond

Strom Thurmond

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Thurmond, James Strom - Lawyer and Farmer, at Edgefield; born December 5, 1902, at Edgefield; son of J. William and Eleanor Gertrude (Strom) Thurmond of Edgefield; married Miss Jean Crouch, of Elko, S. C., November 7, 1947; graduate of Clemson College, B. S., 1923; studied psychology and other special courses in summer schools thereafter; studied law at night and admitted to South Carolina Bar December 13, 1930 and subsequently admitted to practice before the various federal courts, including the U. S. Supreme Court; served as County Attorney, City Attorney; served as agricultural teacher in McCormick, Ridge Spring and Edgefield High Schools, 1923-29; member County Board of Education, Edgefield County, 1924; County Superintendent of Education, Edgefield County, 1929-33; State Senator from Edgefield County, 1933-38; while in the Senate, he was a member of the Social Security Committee that prepared and sponsored the first law providing for assistance to the old people, the blind and needy children, the joint committee of the Senate and House that prepared and sponsored the first rural electrification act, and the joint committee that prepared and sponsored the act to construct the Santee-Cooper power and navigation project, sponsored legislation for increased State-supported school term, school textbook system, school attendance law, prevention of chiseling of teachers' salaries, new buildings at the State colleges and other legislation for the promotion of education, soil conservation act, the Wade Hampton state office building, and legislation for betterment of labor conditions and protection of farmers; Circuit Judge of South Carolina, 1938-46 (served in Army in World War II for about 4 years during this period), and on occasions served as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the State.

Served in Officers' Reserve Corps 1924-37 and subsequent to World War II, and as Officer in State Guard, 1941-42; Volunteered for service in World War II the first day war was declared against Germany, obtained a leave of absence from his position of Circuit
Judge and entered upon active duty April 17, 1942, member of the First Army and attached to the famous 82nd Airborne Division for the invasion of Europe, served in all battles of the First Army, which fought through France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, Czechoslovakia and Germany, transferred to Pacific Theater after the war in Europe ended and was serving in the Philippine Islands when the war against Japan terminated, discharged from service January 20, 1946, received the following decorations, awards and medals for his war service; Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services on the continent of Europe, Bronze Star for heroism on the field of battle in France, Army Commendation Ribbon for service of an exceptionally high order in both quality and volume output, Purple Heart for injuries received in action against the enemy in Normandy, France, on June 6, 1944 (D-Day), Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action in the initial assault on the Coast of France, Bronze Arrowhead for service as a member of the Assault Troops landing in enemy-held territory, France, on D-Day, Five Battle Stars for campaigns in Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe, the Cross of the Officer of the Order of the Crown by the Belgian Government for services to the cause of freedom, Croix de Guerre, avec Etoile de Vermiel by the French Government for exceptional services of war rendered in the course of the operations for the liberation of France, medals for service in the American, European and Pacific Theaters, and the Victory Medal, also the Cross of Military Service by United Daughters of the Confederacy for faithful and honorable service and Selective Service Medal for patriotic services.

Upon release from the Army he returned to the Circuit Bench; resigned from the Bench when he announced for Governor on May 15, 1946; and in the race for Governor was elected over ten opponents; has served in such varied capacities as Superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School, County Chairman of American Red Cross, President of the Clemson College Alumni Association, Trustee of Winthrop College (the S. C. College for women), State Councilor of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics, President of the Lions Club, Vice-President of the South Carolina Bar Association, delegate to the National Democratic
Conventions of 1932, 1936 and 1948 (Chairman S. C. Delegation and elected National Committeeman); States’ Rights Democratic candidate for President of the United States 1948, carrying 4 states and receiving 1,169,312 popular votes and 39 electoral votes, and member of State and National Defense Committees of American Legion; is also a member of the American Bar Association, Reserve Officers Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Military Order of World Wars, Masonic Order, Woodmen of the World, Knights of Pythias, Loyal Order of Moose, Sons of American Revolution, S. C. Historical Society (Charleston) Grange and South Carolina Farm Bureau; honorary member of the National Council Boy Scouts of America, U. S. Jr. Chamber of Commerce, Clariosophic Literary Society of the University of South Carolina, the Strawberry Leaf Club (Forensic) of Winthrop College, Tiger Brotherhood and the Blue Key (Leadership fraternities) of Clemson College and Philomathen Literary Society of Erskine College; a prominent street in Edgefield was named for him, and also "Thurmond Hall" the new Home Economics Building at Winthrop College; Chairman Freight Rate Committee of Southern Governors’ Conference and past member Executive committee of National Governors’ Conference; Baptist; Democrat.