

Desmond B. Toler, Class of 1959

Desmond B. Toler was a participant, leader and servant throughout his life. These characteristics showed during his time at Murphy. He played JV football, ran track, was a member of the Spike Shoe Club, and kept score for basketball. He served on the M-Day Committee and belonged to the French and the Camera Clubs. Desmond was also a journalist, working as sports editor on the MOHIAN and also writing for the Hi-Times, earning membership in Quill and Scroll and the journalism honor society. His scholarship and obvious character and leadership qualities earned him the honor of membership in the National Honor Society.

After graduating from Murphy, he attended Louisiana State University for his BA, and then continued his education at the University of Alabama Law School. He felt called to religious life and enrolled in New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, earning a Master's Degree. He put both of these advanced degrees to use, practicing law and serving on the staff of several local churches. His combination of studies allowed him to represent and assist local churches that faced legal problems. Desmond was a member of the Alabama and Mobile Bar Associations, and also served as a Municipal Court Judge.

What he saw in court as a lawyer and a judge inspired his actions in his community. Many of those in court were there due to drug problems, so Desmond was inspired to create a path to rehabilitation for those hooked on illegal drugs. The Manna House Drug Rehabilitation Center, Inc., and Helpline, Inc., grew from this need. Working with others, they secured a residential facility for Manna House, hired staff and began hands-on work with young drug addicts. Helpline grew from the general assistance needs of the community. Anyone can call the Helpline and be directed by its volunteers to local and regional agencies that can help the anonymous caller with his particular problem. This service has evolved with modern communication but still exists today.

While he made his living in the legal world, his faith was his center, followed closely by family. He served as Chairman of Deacons at two local churches and served on the Benevolence committee at Cottage Hill Baptist church up until his death, serving the needs of our community's down and out.

Desmond Toler was a good and faithful servant who had a strong positive impact on the lives of those in need, and we are proud to claim him as a Murphy Panther.