

Gerald L. Michaud – Lawyer Extraordinaire

By Cameron V. Michaud and Patrick J. Michaud

Gerald L. Michaud was born and raised in the rural community of Morganville, Kansas. Coming from a family of modest means, Gerald learned to work hard for his success.

After graduating high school two years early, at the age of 16, Gerald continued his accelerated education and attended Washburn University on a football scholarship. Here, he obtained undergraduate and law degrees by the age of 21.

He then moved to Wichita, Kansas to begin his legal career. For the first five years after graduation in 1951, he rode the bus to work and dreamed of making \$10,000 a year.

His legal career was stellar from start to finish. His efforts created and advanced new law in the fields of medical negligence and products liability. His work in these areas was a great public service, having spared the lives and serious injuries of an untold number of product users, particularly women. A few of Gerald's legal accomplishments included:

- Gerald L. Michaud and his law firm proved that super absorbent tampons caused toxic shock syndrome and won \$11 million from International Platex in the 1983 death of a Wichita, Kansas woman. The company voluntarily recalled the product about two weeks after the trial and changed it to make it safer.
- Gerald L. Michaud proved that birth control pills caused strokes, kidney disease, heart disease, blood clots and hair loss and forced drug companies to reformulate the pill making them safe for hundred of thousands of women.
- Gerald L. Michaud proved that benzene caused cancer and won a \$34 million verdict against Texaco. Gas pumps now have protective shields to minimize the fumes that escape.

His success as a trial lawyer resulted in his acceptance into the Inner Circle of Advocates, an organization limited to 100 plaintiff's lawyers nation-wide. This organization requires members to have tried 50 personal injury cases to a jury conclusion and have obtained one or more \$1 million verdicts, exclusive of interest, punitive damages and costs.

During his legal career Gerald lectured at numerous law schools, medical conventions and bar associations throughout the United States. He was a lecturer and instructor at the American Trial lawyer's Association, National College of Advocacy and at Harvard law School. He also authored a number of publications for various journals. Professional associations included: life member of the Kansas Bar Association, life member of the Wichita Bar Association, member and past president of the Kansas Trial Lawyer's Association, member of the American Trial Lawyer's Association, member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, member of the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, and member of the International Society of Barristers.

Not only did Gerald excel in the legal field, but he earned national acclaim as a bridge player. In 1951, he paired with fellow law student, Bradley Post, and won the national collegiate bridge championship. Gerald went on to win numerous regional and national tournaments, earning enough duplicate bridge points to achieve the status of "life master" several times over. Selection to the U.S. National Team verified his status as one of the nation's premier bridge players. In 2004, Gerald was honored by the Wichita Eagle newspaper as Wichita's All Time Greatest Bridge Player.

Gerald was a believer in giving back to the community. He wanted to leave the world a better place than he found it. He chose to do this many ways, outside of his legal battles.

In the 1980's, Gerald and his law firm donated \$1 million to Washburn University School of law to provide scholarships to law students and fund the Ahren's Tort Seminar; both of which are still in existence today. The law school also benefited from Gerald's love for art. He and his wife, Shannon, beautified the law school campus with several bronze sculptures, included an eagle with a 12-foot wing span, and life-size renditions of Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson.

Gerald continued helping people who could not help themselves when he and his wife started Disability Supports of the Great Plains in McPherson, Kansas. This organization provides assistance to those living with disabilities.

Gerald also had a love for Wichita State Baseball. He was a loyal fan and strong supporter. Along with his donation of bronze statues, his monetary support helped create a section of the stadium, now known as, “The Michaud Pavilion”.

Continuing his passion for law, Gerald was an active member and supporter of the Kansas Trail Lawyer’s Association. Through his generous contribution, he was instrumental in finding a permanent home for KTLA.

These donations, along with many other philanthropic gifts, were Gerald’s way of leaving the world a better place than he found it.

Gerald continued practicing law in Wichita, Kansas until his death in July of 2005. The knowledge and guidance that Gerald passed on to so many lawyers, and the reputation and legal-style of Gerald L. Michaud will have an impact on the legal profession in Kansas for many years to come.