

Biographical Description for The HistoryMakers® Video Oral History with The Honorable Joseph Roulhac

PERSON

Roulhac, Joseph, 1916-2008

Alternative Names: The Honorable Joseph Roulhac;

Life Dates: August 18, 1916-March 5, 2008

Place of Birth: Selma, Alabama, USA

Residence: Akron, Ohio

Occupations: Civil Rights Lawyer; Municipal Court Judge

Biographical Note

Joseph Daniel Roulhac was born on August 18, 1916, in Selma, Alabama. His father, Robert, was a Presbyterian minister and his mother, Minerva, was a teacher. Roulhac earned a reputation in Akron, Ohio, as a humane and fair judge who gave his personal attention to every individual who came into his courtroom.

Roulhac's family moved to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, when he was ten, and to Titusville, Georgia, four years later. He attended religious schools and received his high school diploma from Stillman College in Tuscaloosa in 1934. In 1938, Roulhac graduated with his B.A. degree in sociology from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. He worked there after graduation as a sociology instructor for a year while earning his M.A. degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1940. He taught at Fort Valley State College in Georgia until 1941. The U.S. Army drafted him in 1942, and Roulhac attained the rank of master sergeant within months. Everything went well until he refused to justify the Army's segregation to his black subordinates. Weeks later, Roulhac was shipped to the Philippine Islands. When he returned to the United States in 1946, he used the G.I. Bill to attend the University of Pennsylvania, earning his J.D. degree. In 1948, Roulhac moved to Akron and went into private practice as an attorney. He became an assistant county prosecutor in 1957. In 1967, Roulhac was elected as a municipal judge, serving thirty years before retiring in 1987.

Roulhac was a member of the Phi Beta Sigma fraternity and has served in the NAACP, the Urban League, the Methodist Church and the American Legion. He was honored with the Thomas More Award in 1979. He and his wife, Frances Phoenix, have one child, Delores.

Roulhac passed away on March 5, 2008 at the age of 91.

Roulhac was interviewed by The HistoryMakers on August 2, 2002.

Related Entries

University of Pennsylvania [STUDENTOf]
[from ? to ?]

City of Akron [EMPLOYEEOf]
[from 1967 to 1987]

Municipal Judge