



HILLIARD C. BRITE, LAWMAN

Hilliard C. Brite, Jr. was a veteran lawman in Dallas County. He was the oldest son of Hilliard C. Brite, Sr. and Georgia Ellen Lochard. Hilliard Brite, Jr. served as a deputy sheriff under several administrations, including that of Sheriff Smoot Schmid. He was often written up in area newspapers. Some of the unusual cases he was mentioned in are as follows:

– In the early 1920s, a Rowlett man was one of three individuals arrested and convicted of operating an illegal whiskey still. While in the Dallas jail under a sentence of 40 years in prison, the man and two others attempted to escape. The convicts overpowered the attending officer. In the process, the Rowlett man shot and killed an assistant jailer named Champion who had bravely tossed the jail keys out of a sixth floor window before he was fatally wounded. Deputy Brite and three other officers intervened to end the escape attempt. The Rowlett man was wounded and one other convict was killed. In 1925, after an unsuccessful appeal to Governor Miriam “Ma” Ferguson, the Rowlett man was executed in Huntsville for killing officer Champion.

– In February, 1929, a Dallas businessman was on trial for forgery in a complicated case that originated over an election bet. The defendant and another man had each bet \$1,000 over the Democratic primary election of Senator Earle B. Mayfield, endorsed by disgraced former Governor Jim Ferguson. Mayfield, the incumbent, lost to Tom Connally in the primary. Connally went on to win the general election. The stakeholder, one Orville Mathews, was given two cashier’s checks for the bet. Mathews, a Republic Bank employee, was shot to death at noon on a downtown street by the winner of the bet after Matthews was duped by forgery of the businessman into erroneously paying the money to him, though he had lost the bet. Brite was called as a witness in the forgery case and testified that the businessman had told the deputy that he should have a better job than law enforcement, and that the businessman could secure it for him, presumably if he were to testify in favor of the businessman, who was convicted of the forgery. The killer of Mathews was tried twice, and finally acquitted, essentially having claimed self defense.

– In November, 1931, a 25 year old man walked up to Deputy Brite and handed him a bundle of mail. The man (not identified) said he wanted to go to Leavenworth Penitentiary and had broken open a post office box to accomplish his goal. The man would not tell the arresting officers why he wanted to go to that particular facility, but nevertheless, he was arrested and taken to the county jail.

Deputy Brite retired due to disability after suffering injuries in a police chase accident. Brite, a World War I veteran, passed away at the veteran’s hospital in Collin County in 1956 at the age of 71.

Hilliard C. Brite, Jr.



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