



United States District Court District of Montana

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF MONTANA
RUSSELL E. SMITH COURTHOUSE
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COURT ANNOUNCEMENT

The United States District Court family is saddened to announce that Senior United States District Court Judge Sam E. Haddon passed away on November 26, 2025, at the age of 88. Judge Haddon had been on inactive senior status after 22 years of service on the federal bench in the District of Montana.

Judge Haddon's obituary is attached to this announcement. In 2023 the Court produced a biographical film documenting Judge Haddon's life and career. The film can be viewed at <https://www.mtd.uscourts.gov/district-montana-history>.

The judges and staff of the District of Montana deeply appreciate Judge Haddon's contribution to the administration of justice in Montana.



Sam E. Haddon, 88, died peacefully in the early morning hours of Wednesday, November 26, 2025.

Sam was born June 19, 1937, in West Monroe, Louisiana. He was the second son, and the second child of James and Letha (née Daughtry) Haddon. He spent his early years in West Monroe, until the death of his grandfather, which necessitated a family move to Blanket, Texas, to take over the family farm. Sam graduated from Blanket High School in 1955 and moved to Houston, TX on a football scholarship at Rice University. And thus began a lifelong love affair with all things football. He graduated from Rice with a degree in Physical Education in 1959. During this time, he met a young nursing student from the University of Alabama, and after a short courtship, he and Betty Loyd were married on December 22, 1959. Sam knew Betty was the one when she came to visit the family home during their courtship, and during the visit, he saw Betty enjoying a cup of coffee and chatting with his mother.

After their marriage, they moved to South Texas where Sam was a Border Patrol Agent. It was during this time that oldest daughter Elizabeth was born. He then went to work for the Federal Bureau of Narcotics in New Orleans, LA, where son Steven was born. As an agent for the Bureau, Sam was exposed to the inner workings of the court of law, and his interest in the legal field began.

With Betty's able support and consent, Sam applied to law school. He received a full-ride scholarship to the University of Montana in 1962, and Sam loaded up his young family into the family Corvair to move to Montana. It was love at first sight for Sam for Montana, and his passion for flyfishing was born.

Upon completion of law school in 1965 (with honors), Sam and Betty moved to Billings, where Sam was first a law clerk for William James Jameson, U.S. District Judge for the District of Montana. He then began private practice as an associate with the Billings firm of Anderson, Symmes, Forbes, Peete and Brown from 1966-69. It was during this time that daughter Allison was born. From 1969 until his appointment to the federal bench in 2001, he was a partner with the Missoula law firm of Boone, Karlberg & Haddon, practicing complex civil litigation and appellate advocacy.

Widely regarded as one of Montana's premier trial and appellate lawyers, Sam was elected a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers, and the American Law Institute. His professional memberships also included the American Board of Trial Advocates, the American Judicature Society, the National Institute of Trial Advocacy, the American Bar Foundation, and the State Bar of Montana.

While in private practice, he prepared and tried cases in 18 of Montana's 22 judicial districts and in all divisions of the United States District Court for the District of Montana. He briefed and argued appeals in the Supreme Court of the State of Montana, the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit and the United States Supreme Court. His clients included private citizens, public officials, homeowner associations, taxpayer groups, physicians, lawyers and other professionals, local and Montana business organizations, national business organizations, local and state-wide labor organizations, insurance companies, the Montana State Legislature, the University of Montana, various state agencies and the State of Montana.

He served as Chairman of the Montana Supreme Court Commission on Rules of Evidence. Sam also served as a member of the Commission on Practice of the Montana Supreme Court and was Chairman of the Commission from 1996 until his appointment to the federal bench.

Sam maintained a part-time teaching affiliation with the University of Montana Law School that spanned more than 30 years and served as Course Coordinator for the program from its inception in 1985 until taking the bench.

In 2001, President George W. Bush nominated Sam to the federal bench upon the recommendations of Montana Senators Conrad Burns and Max Baucus. He was confirmed to the bench on a 95-0 vote in the United States Senate.

Over his 22 years on the federal bench, Judge Haddon conducted more than 150 jury and 45 non-jury trials. A substantial percentage of the jury trials involved criminal charges. Non-jury trials were both civil and criminal. Judge Haddon was known for meticulous preparation, high standards, and opinions marked by clarity and intellectual rigor. His chambers in Great Falls and Helena became a training ground for 36 law clerks who went on to distinguished careers in the judiciary, private practice, and public service. Lisa Ferkovich, Judge Haddon's Judicial Assistant, stood dutifully by Judge Haddon's side during his tenure and was always on watch.

Judge Haddon is preceded in death by his parents, James and Letha, his beloved wife, Betty, his brother and sister-in-law, Jimmy and Pearl Haddon, his infant granddaughter, Catherine Haddon, and his niece, Melinda Morgan. He is survived by his children, Elizabeth (Rodney) Alexander, Steve (Joanna) Haddon, and Allison (Dan) Conover; grandchildren Hannah Alexander, Rachel (Jordan) Minton, Haddon (Rachel) Alexander, Haley (Brian) Hough, Calen (fiancé Maddy) Conover, and Jackson Haddon; great grandchildren include Jane and Brynn Minton; Sam's sister and her husband, Bertie (Ray) Morgan, their children and Loyd family members.

Private family burial will be held on Friday, December 5, 2025, in Helena, MT. A memorial service will be held in Sam's honor in the spring of 2026. Memorials can be made to St. Labre Indian School, Trout Unlimited, or the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation. Arrangements are under the care of Anderson, Stevenson, Wilke & Retz Funeral Home.