John Kermit Haynes was born on February 16, 1907 in Gloster, Louisiana, a small rural community within the borders of DeSota Parish, in Louisiana, 21 miles south of Shreveport, Louisiana. He was the second son of the late Mr. and Mrs. Elmo Mitchell Haynes (Mary Samuels). His mother was born in 1876, in the Northwestern Louisiana city of Keachie, Louisiana. She was the daughter of Jerry and Elizabeth Samuels. The Samuels, just as the Haynes, were also farmers. They owned over 100 acres of land. In 1903, the Haynes and Samuels families were forever bonded by the marriage of Elmo Haynes and Mary Samuels. They had four children, Robert, John, Mytrice and Lessie. He was affectionately known as “J.K.” by friends.

From the beginning John Kermit displayed a bright mind. He and his siblings began their education at the Northwest Institute, and African American Baptist Academy in Mansfield, Louisiana. John attended the academy in 1912, and his college degree was obtained from Bishop College in Marshall, Texas. Subsequently, he did graduate work at Atlanta University. During his years as a student his interest in reading increased. His exposure to the works of some of the classical writers such as Shakespeare and some of the Black Renaissance writers helped him develop his vocabulary. His favorite subject was math. In his final years at Northwest Institute, he began to display exceptional mathematical skills, and also became a promising athlete. He graduated from Northwest Institute with honors in 1924.

John began working during the summers of his junior and senior years in high school, and he and his brother Robert worked on the railroad. While working on the railroad, they along with several others, broke the picket lines and were forced to hide for the fear of being killed. He continued to work months doing immense labor on the railroad in order to raise enough money to pay tuition to attend Bishop College, a historically African American Institution, in Marshall, Texas. At Bishop, he majored in Mathematics Education. After four years of study he graduated in 1930.

Less than a year after he left Bishop College, John Kermit was soon hired by Lincoln Parish School Board, Ruston, Louisiana and began his career as an Educator. From the years of 1931-1936, his popularity at the all black school grew immensely. He gained a reputation as a “no nonsense educator.” He spent a great deal of his time in 1936, working as both Math Teacher and the Football Coach at Lincoln Parish Colored High
School in Ruston, Louisiana and from 1936-1949 Haynes served as Principal of the Lincoln Parish Colored High School (LPCHS).

While his tenure at LPCHS he met and married Grace Ross in 1939. She was the daughter of Dr. Dan Ross of Monroe, Louisiana. Grace Ross, just as Haynes, at the time of their marriage was also an educator. She studied at Spelman College and Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia and was once a prize student of the famed African American intellectual, W. E. B. DuBois while he was a professor at Atlanta University. Years later she continued her education and earned a Master’s degree in Education from Atlanta University. The two were parents to three children; John Kermit, II, A. Maurice, and Darryl Haynes.

The family lived in the northern city of Ruston, Louisiana until 1950. Grace and her children moved to Atlanta while John protected his business interest and built the Louisiana Education Association (LEA). During those years he had begun to set an example as an Educator. As principal, he also became a member of the then productive and promising, Louisiana Colored Teachers Association (LCTA) and with his leadership, in 1948, the Charter of the organization was amended, changing the name from the Louisiana Colored Teachers’ Association to the Louisiana Education Association. While Haynes was President, the membership of the organization increased substantially.

He led the movement in the 1940’s for the equalization of teachers’ salaries, and in 1950, escorted the first African American student to enroll in Louisiana State University. He led the movement to integrate many of the other higher education institutions in Louisiana and the desegregation movement for primary and secondary schools. As a key voice for black students, he lobbied to let black students ride school buses and sponsored a successful lawsuit to get black teachers paid as much as white teachers. From the years 1946-1948, Haynes served on Governor Jimmy Davis’ Commission Council on the Improvement of Negro Education.

In 1949, John Kermit Haynes received the Distinguished Service Citation with the Key from Bishop College, his alma mater. In 1954, he was given the Key to the City of New Orleans and designated an Honorary Citizen. In 1955, Haynes became the Executive Secretary of the Louisiana Education Association and moved to Baton Rouge, Louisiana. While working in this capacity, he received numerous awards for his contributions to education but, one of his proudest moments as Executive Secretary came in 1968, when he received an Honorary Doctor of Law Degree from Bishop College, in Marshall, Texas.

He was the founder of the J.K. Haynes Foundation, Our Christian Funeral Home, and Superior Life Insurance Company; a 33rd degree Prince Hall Mason, charter member of the Board of Regents for Higher Education in Louisiana, Chairman emeritus of Bishop College Board of Trustees, member of the Louisiana Constitution Convention,
and Founding member of the **Louisiana Interscholastic Association and Literary Organization (LIALO)**, member of **Leland College Board of Trustees**, member of **Grambling State University Hall of Fame**, member of **Omega Psi Phi Fraternity**, past **President and Executive Secretary, Louisiana Education Association**, past teacher, coach and principal of **Lincoln High School**.

He is survived by three sons, John Kermit, II, Atlanta, Georgia, A. Maurice and Darryl, both of Baton Rouge, LA, two daughters-in-law, Carolyn, Atlanta, GA and Diana, Baton Rouge, LA, two grandchildren, Kimberly and Oran-Jon, both of Baton Rouge, LA. He was preceded in death by his wife of 57 years, Grace Ross.

He became a part of the Christian family early in life and was affiliated with New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Gloster, Louisiana and the New Hope Baptist Church, Ruston, Louisiana. Upon moving to Baton Rouge, he became a member of the Mount Zion First Baptist Church and remained a faithful member up until his passing. He was Chairman of the Trustee Board for many years and took a very active role in the development of the church.

He departed this life on October 23, 1997.

The **J. K. Haynes Building** [formerly the **Southern University School of Nursing**] on the campus of Southern University and A&M College is named in his honor.

The **J. K. Haynes Charter School** located in Baton Rouge, Louisiana is also named in his honor.

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