

IN RE: MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR:
WALTER L. PETERS, ESQ.
JACKSON M. SIGMON, ESQ.
JOHN WATTS BARRETT, ESQ.

Memorial Service held in Courtroom No. 1, Northampton County Government Center, Easton, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday, October 1, 1996, at 9:00 a.m.

HONORABLE ROBERT A. FREEDBERG, PRESIDENT JUDGE
HONORABLE JACK A. PANELLA, JUDGE
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1996

MORNING SESSION

PRESIDENT JUDGE FREEDBERG: Good morning. The Court recognizes James Zulick, President of the Northampton County Bar Association.

MR. ZULICK: May it please the Court.

Your Honors, fellow members of the Bar, family, and friends, we gather together this morning to continue a time-honored tradition of the Bar Association to recognize and honor those members of the Bar who have passed away within the past year.

This ceremony affords the organized Bar an opportunity to reflect upon the lives of our fellow deceased members and review not only the contributions of these members to the legal community, but also to the community in general and to their families in particular.

Today represents an especially poignant day for me as president of the Bar Association as one of the members to be eulogized is my senior partner, Walter L. Peters.

Mr. Peters had a profound effect upon my practice of law and for this I am eternally grateful. My partner, Charles J. Peischl, will present the eulogy for Walter. Mark Sigmon will offer the eulogy for his father, Jackson M. Sigmon, and Ellen Kraft, the president-elect of our Association, will offer the eulogy for John Watts Barrett.

The Bar Association notes with sadness the passing of fellow member Conrad C. Shimer, who died on September 13, 1996. By agreement of Conrad's family and the Court, his eulogy will be delivered at next year's Memorial Service.

All parties present are invited as guests of the Bar Association to meet in a reception in the jury lounge immediately following the service. At this time I eulogy for Walter L. Peters and thereafter Mr. Sigmon and Ms. Kraft for the presentation of their respective eulogies.

PRESIDENT JUDGE FREEDBERG: Ms. Kraft.

MS. KRAFT: May it please the Court.

Mrs. Barrett, members of the Bar, ladies and gentlemen, I have been asked today to say a few words about John Watts Barrett. I didn't know John as well as many of you here today and I certainly didn't know him for as long as many of you knew him, but perhaps I knew a different part of John than did anyone else.

One thing that John and I shared was a rather intense desire to be self-employed. Well aware that the solo practice in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, would not produce vast economic rewards, we both chose to chart our own course professionally and for a myriad of reasons some of which wouldn't make sense to anyone else. John and I shared many of those reasons.

The main difference between John and I in this regard was that John saw self-employment as a means to work for as long as possible in life whereas I saw self-employment as a means to work for as briefly as possible.

When I passed the Bar and began working as a law clerk for Judge Williams, John Watts Barrett was already an established member of our Bar and in the City of Bethlehem John was an institution of sorts. After all, even his name was statuesque, John Watts Barrett.

Although born in Philadelphia, John was raised in Bethlehem. He graduated from Liberty High School, worked nights in Bethlehem Steel's Fire Department and served as a communications specialist in the Second World War before graduating from Lehigh University with honors in 1947.

John served as a lecturer in business law at Lehigh from 1947 through 1949 and graduated from Harvard Law School in 1950 beginning his private law practice that same year.

In 1953 John married Catherine Louise Dugan, the only love of his life, and together they raised three daughters, Carol, Lynn and Joanne. John's family was the focus of his life. He was a proud father and loving husband first and foremost, but he somehow found time to be intimately involved in his community as well, both professionally and socially.

In addition to being a 32nd degree Mason in Bethlehem Lodge No. 283, John was the nominating and membership chair of the Bethlehem Commission on Alcoholism in 1957. He was legal counsel to the Bethlehem Housing Opportunity Association as a volunteer for many years, a member of the Bethlehem Club, the solicitor and board member of the Greater Bethlehem Savings and Loan Association, a secretary to the Bethlehem Lions Club, a committee chair and charter member of the Morning Star Rotary Club, assistant treasurer of the Bethlehem Y.M.C.A., solicitor to the Northampton County Sheriff from 1960-64, First Assistant District Attorney for Northampton County from 1964 to 1965, solicitor to the Bethlehem Area School District from 1969 to 1972, chair of the Northampton County Special Gifts for the 1972 Easter Seal Campaign, solicitor and legislative chair for the Bethlehem Area Counsel of

Parent Teacher Associations and he held many other positions of honor too numerous to mention.

As a sole practitioner, John dealt with clients and colleagues on a personal level. He didn't speak in legalese and didn't try to impress anyone with his educational achievements or with lofty legal analyses. He dealt with the problem at hand and tried to solve the problem, not just cast blame on someone else for its existence.

John's gentle ways were a calming presence to many of his clients. He was an enigma to those in our profession who believe that a lawyer should be loud and nasty in order to be effective.

I am convinced that people like John Watts Barrett come into our lives as gifts from God and they are sent for a reason. John's life, built around family, profession and community, was an example for all of us.

In preparing this eulogy for John, I came across one of my favorite poems. To me it illustrates the life choices that John made, that we all make every day. It is titled

"The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost.

Two roads diverged into a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth:

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that, the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged into a yellow wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Good-by, John Watts Barrett. You shall be missed.

PRESIDENT JUDGE FREEDBERG: Thank you for your remarks. Judge Panella will respond for the Court.

JUDGE PANELLA: Thank you, Judge Freedberg.

The Court joins counsel in their eulogies to these respected and valued attorneys.

A transcript of these proceedings shall be filed and copies sent to the families of those whom we recall today. When the Court adjourns today, it will do so in honor of Walter Peters, Jackson Sigmon and John Watts Barrett and out of respect for these fine lawyers.

The Court will stand in recess to greet the families and friends of Mr. Peters, Mr. Sigmon and Mr. Barrett.