

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR
ATTORNEY BENJAMIN F. BLACK
ATTORNEY WILLIAM F. BRODT, JR.
ATTORNEY WILLIAM B. JOACHIM, JR.
ATTORNEY DOMINICK A. LOCKWOOD
ATTORNEY ROBERT MARGOLIS

Memorial Services held in Courtroom No. 1, Northampton County
Government Center, Easton, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday, October 1, 2002,
at 9:00 a.m.

ALSO PRESENT:

HONORABLE WILLIAM F. MORAN, JUDGE
HONORABLE F. P. KIMBERLY McFADDEN, JUDGE
HONORABLE JACK A. PANELLA, JUDGE
HONORABLE EDWARD G. SMITH, JUDGE

THE COURT: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and particularly good morning to the members of the families of those who we honor this morning.

This Court is convened today en banc to recognize and to recall members of this bar who have passed away during this year. I wish to express my regrets that Judge Freedberg, our President Judge, could not be here today, and I will serve in his stead.

The Court recognizes the President of the Northampton County Bar Association, Joanne Kelhart.

MS. KELHART: May it please the Court, colleagues, friends and family of Benjamin Black, William Brodt, William Joachim, Dominick Lockwood and Robert Margolis.

This year is an especially sad one for the Northampton County Bar. We have lost five beloved members of this bar. And we are reminded by

Samuel Johnson that it is not your death that is the most important event but how you lived your life.

The men we eulogize today were shining examples of public service, philanthropy and hard work. They were soldiers, husbands, fathers, brothers and our brethren at the bar. They heeded a call to uphold the rights and freedoms we enjoy by the common goal of being a lawyer. These men brought honor to our profession, and they brought integrity to their dealings with their colleagues and with this Court. They were compassionate, and a common thread among them was their love of the law. They held it in their hearts, and they represented their clients with zeal, and honesty.

These men are shining examples to those of us who continue in this profession, and they exhort us to be better lawyers and better people. The standards they set are high. They understood that this is a noble profession that requires high standards. And we celebrate their legacy today and hold fast to the treasure they have left for our bar.

At this time I would like to thank the Court for designating this day to commemorate our colleagues. And I would also like to thank the participants who will be eulogizing the members of our bar this morning, The Honorable Alan M. Black, Michael Riskin, Thomas Maloney, Gus Milides and The Honorable Jeanette Reibman.

At this time I would ask the Court to please recognize The Honorable Alan M. Black.

JUDGE MORAN: Judge Black.

JUDGE BLACK: May it please the Court.

I never expected to be uttering these words again in this courtroom, but it is appropriate that I speak at this time in the memory of my father, and I very much appreciate the opportunity you have afforded me to do so.

I have always appreciated the cordial relationship that exists between the Northampton County and Lehigh County Bar and judges. Some of you may not be aware of this, but many of us old-timers began the practice of law when there was no such thing as statewide practice. A lawyer was permitted to practice only in the county where his principal office was located. But there was always one exception. There was a reciprocity agreement between Lehigh and Northampton County, so that an attorney in Northampton County could also practice in the Lehigh County Courts and vice versa. I am pleased that this spirit of cooperation between the counties continues.

Although I'm somewhat disappointed. Mike Riskin said he would get me a seat up there today, but it never quite materialized.

My father, Benjamin Black, passed away last April at the age of 93. He was born in 1908 in Bethlehem, the son of Morris and Rebecca Black. He had three children; myself, the oldest; my brother Ron, who is president of Morris Black and Sons in Bethlehem; the youngest child, my brother

Neil, who had a career in the Air Force and then worked for a number of years in Morris Black and Sons and is now retired, living in California.

My dad lived his entire life in the City of Bethlehem except for his college and law school years. He attended the Bethlehem Prep School, which is no longer in existence. In fact, the school closed down at the end of his junior year of high school. He decided then to skip his senior year of high school and was admitted to Lehigh University as a freshman. After one year of Lehigh, he transferred to the University of Pennsylvania, from which he was graduated in June 1929.

My dad had originally planned to be an architect, and he continued his entire life to have an interest in making drawings and sketches. At one point he even took art lessons.

But at some point in college he changed his career plans and decided to attend law school. He attended the University of Wisconsin Law School and was graduated from that school in June of 1932.

If you think the economy is in poor shape now, try to picture the situation in 1932. The country was then in the depths of the Great Depression. It was a terrible time for a lawyer to be starting out. My dad's first job was with a Bethlehem law firm headed by an attorney named Castellucci. In those days the tradition was that a beginning lawyer would get office space and perhaps some overflow work from other members of the firm. It was not always financially rewarding. However, despite the difficult economic times, my dad was able to succeed to the extent that he could afford to get married a few years later and soon afterwards to purchase a home and begin raising a family.

One of the items we located among my dad's papers was a letter from the Auditor General of Pennsylvania dated December 31, 1937, certifying to my dad's appointment as Special Appraiser of Inheritance Taxes for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This was a part-time position, but it added significantly to his income. And for me the timing of this appointment is of special interest, because within two months after my dad received the appointment I was conceived. Apparently this additional income was the impetus for my dad to start his family.

My dad had met my mother while they were both students at the University of Wisconsin. My dad was in law school at the time, and she was a nursing student. After they had been on several dates, my mom wrote this in her diary: "This is a great chap, and he showed me a lovely time. Always peppy and loads of fun." They were married several years after my dad graduated from law school, and they had a very close relationship. Their marriage of 57 years, until my mother passed away, was a very strong one.

Beginning in 1940, my dad's legal career took a surprising turn because of events beyond his control. First, my grandfather, Morris Black, had a severe heart attack and had to retire from the Morris Black Building Supply business that my grandfather had been running with my Uncle

Sam. As a result, my dad had to begin helping my uncle with some activities of the business. And then in December 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, and America was at war.

My dad was then practicing law in a partnership with Terry Goodman, Allan Goodman's father, on the south side of Bethlehem. Their office was in the former Union Bank Building on Fourth Street. Because of the war, the country had to mobilize quickly, and many thousands of young men were drafted, including my dad. In those days the need for troops was so great that when a young man reported for his physical, if he passed, he was immediately shipped out for basic training. So when my dad received his draft notice in 1942, he went to see his family doctor for a checkup to see if he was going to pass his Army physical. His doctor told him after the examination, "Ben, you're in. There's no way you're not going to pass the physical." So my dad, being a careful planner, proceeded to close up his law practice. He put our house up for sale, and my mom and I were to move to Chicago to live with her parents.

Then the big day came for my dad to report. He received a shock. The Army doctor told him he had a heart murmur and was ineligible for military service. I was only four years old at that time, but I still recall how disappointed I was. I wanted my dad to wear a uniform and to help fight for our country. But I was also frightened. Was my dad going to die soon and leave me without a father? Fortunately, my fears were unfounded. He lived many more years and had an active and productive life.

Nevertheless, having closed up his law practice, he now had to make other plans. He decided to move into the offices of the Morris Black Building Supply business with the idea that he would work part-time in the business and part-time in the practice of law. However, as time went by, the business grew, especially after World War II when so much construction took place. So my dad found himself spending more and more time in the business and less and less time in the practice of law. Eventually the business came to occupy almost all his time. And except for an occasional will or agreement, his legal work was limited to representing the business which became known as Morris Black and Sons.

Those of you who represent clients in the construction industry know that bankruptcies occur all too frequently in that field. Therefore, most of my dad's legal work for the business was collection work and bankruptcy work.

My dad and my Uncle Sam ran this business for many years with great success. What was so impressive to me was the wonderful relationship that the two of them maintained throughout their lives. I am sure there must have been issues on which they did not see eye to eye. But I can honestly say I never heard my dad say an unkind word about my Uncle Sam; not once. This is surprising, because in the practice of law I saw many family businesses fall apart because of petty jealousies between members of the same family.

I am so proud that my father and my uncle were able to work together for so long in such harmony. The result of their example is that the business, Morris Black and Sons, is still run by family members, currently the third generation, with several members of the fourth generation also employed in the business.

My dad was also very active in the community. He was President of the Bethlehem Rotary Club, President of Lehigh Valley Association for the Blind, President of the Brith Sholom Community Center, an active member of the Chamber of Commerce, and one of that group of farsighted individuals responsible for the planning of the creation of Lehigh Valley Industrial Park.

My dad also continued to have a great interest in the legal profession. Even though he did not actively practice law for many years, he always maintained his law license. And to do so, he was careful, even at age 93, to attend the required continuing legal education programs. At first I could not understand why, in his eighties and nineties, he would be attending courses such as "The Art of Cross-Examination" or the new "Rules of Evidence" when it was obvious he was never going to be appearing in a courtroom. He did this because he had a continued love for the law. He still identified himself as a member of the legal profession, a profession for which he had the highest regard.

Unfortunately, my dad developed a habit of falling asleep at these programs. Some of you who have attended these programs probably noticed this. A few years ago while I was on the bench I received a frantic call from someone at the Lehigh County Bar office. I was informed that my dad had collapsed while attending a CLE program at the bar building in Allentown. After some investigation, it turned out that my dad was fine. He had simply fallen asleep and, in doing so, had rolled off his chair onto the floor.

Last April my dad fell asleep for good. He was a wonderful father, and we miss him very much.

Thank you.

JUDGE MORAN: Thank you, Judge Black.

Members of the families of Ben Black, Bill Brodt, Bill Joachim, Dominick Lockwood, and Bob Margolis, to all of you this Court expresses its sincere condolences.

One of the best writers in the English language living today, V.S. Naipaul, had a comment that I think is apropos to today's proceeding. He wrote about our identity. "A man's identity is the sum of his achievements." We join you and the members of the bar association in recalling the lives of those we remember today and rejoicing in their achievements. Each of these men achieved much in their personal and professional lives. They created loving families who will live on beyond them and who will carry on their personal virtues. You, the members of their families, carry those virtues and their love, both of which will be with you and your children and your grandchildren for as long as memory remains.

We, the members of the bar and the bench, recall and rejoice in their professional achievements. Each contributed something distinctive and significant to our profession, their profession.

Ben Black, as Judge Black has told us this morning, began his career as a general practitioner at a difficult time, during the Depression. Like many who were called to the law, he moved on from that general practice to serve in business as a corporate executive in his family business, Morris Black and Company.

All of us who practice law are familiar with this pattern, for the legal education and the experience of the practice of law forms a solid background for achievement and success in business. We who are relatively young—and I'm approaching age 60 but still consider myself relatively young—did not see Ben Black in court as an active practitioner. But we all saw him as an active and contributing member of the bar and of this community. I frequently attended the bar association meetings over the past several years, and it was a joy to behold Ben Black and his constant companion, Milt Riskin, having a true time of their lives at those bar association meetings. They didn't need to be there for professional reasons. But they simply wanted to honor the bar and to enjoy the company of their peers.

I used to suggest to Milt Riskin, since the two of them drove to the bar association meetings, that the car should have a beacon or a light that said, "We're over 90, and we could go at any time. Beware." Never an accident, though. They continued to attend.

As Judge Black has pointed out, his father was a good family man—probably the most important thing any of us can be—a successful businessman, and an active member in the community. He, like another member of our honorees today, helped to establish the Lehigh Valley Industrial Park, an achievement which has brought much good to our valley. He and other community leaders had the foresight to recognize the end of the industrial age was at hand, something few of us would have noted. But they did. And they established something lasting which provides jobs and opportunity for the entire Lehigh Valley. We miss him.

Bill Brodt, as pointed out, was one of Portland's most distinguished citizens and always will be. He was the very model of a true general practitioner of the law. A former Marine during the Korean War, he served his country well. Then he went on to law school and on to a career which provided services to individuals and corporations in need of legal advice, particularly involving transactions in real estate, banking, and estate planning.

His career and his life is the very embodiment of what Norman Rockwell would use as a model for a lawyer, a man who offered his experience, his training, and his education to his clients and who could be relied upon for his advice and his outstanding judgment.

Bill Joachim was another general practitioner and a former partner of Bill Brodt. His practice focused on business and corporate law. Like Bill Brodt, he served his country as an aviator in World War II. He served his community and our bar for over 50 years. Again, like Ben Black, he had the singular foresight to work to create the Lehigh Valley Industrial Park and other associated organizations. As I said before, that was no minor achievement. For today thousands of men and women find employment, find a good life as the result of Ben's and Bill's achievements. With the decline of Bethlehem Steel, if these men and others had not had that foresight, we obviously would be a poorer community.

Dominick Lockwood, a truly interesting man, a lawyer, an entrepreneur, a man who loved life and lived it to the fullest. He was a general practitioner with both an active office and courtroom practice, a man constantly on the move, both figuratively and literally: He and his signature bow tie were fixtures in this courtroom for years until he moved his primary practice to Monroe County. There he continued his varied practice and his entrepreneurial skills.

As Gus Milides pointed out to me when we talked about Dominick, he was one of those few people who offered 24-hour a day practice. You could pick up a telephone at any hour, and Dominick would be there to offer you his advice and his good humor. His joie de vivre, his distinctive personality, his professional achievements did much to enhance this bar and to bring joy to his family.

Finally, we recognize today Bob Margolis. Bob was one of those few who enjoyed a dual career both as a lawyer and as a certified public accountant. Like Ben Black, Bob was not one we saw in court in recent years. His service came through his advice to businessmen in complicated transactions and, in an important aspect of those transactions, tax advice.

The office practitioner, particularly one of Bob Margolis' ability and skill, is every bit as much a member of the bar as the skilled trial lawyer. Both provide to their clients that most precious product: Their good, solid advice.

Bob, like each of those we honor today, contributed greatly to this community. As Senator Reibman has pointed out, he helped establish LARC, the Kurtz Training Center, and many other programs to aid those who are mentally challenged. Society is often measured by how it cares for those who cannot care for themselves. Bob measures well in that respect and in every other respect.

These five men who we honor today each in their own distinctive way practiced their profession in a way which brought honor to our profession. Each of these five men in their own distinctive way gave great personal service to the community and, in so doing, brought honor to their profession and to themselves.

Finally, Ben Black, Bill Brodt, Bill Joachim, Dominick Lockwood, and Bob Margolis brought joy, knowledge, stability, and a valued moral compass to their spouses, their children, and their grandchildren. That is their most important and lasting legacy, their greatest achievement.

Ladies and gentlemen, we will now recess in honor to those who have departed. There will be a brief reception in the jury lounge sponsored by the bar association. We encourage you to attend that reception.

We will adjourn until quarter of 11:00 and then call the Argument List.

Thank you all for attending and honoring these fine men.

(The memorial service program concluded.)
