

MEMORIAL FOR  
GEORGE F. COFFIN, JR.

---

Remarks by Thomas P. Stitt, Esquire

---

MAY IT PLEASE THE COURT, members of the family of George F. Coffin, Jr., fellow attorneys, friends and relatives.

If the law is a jealous mistress, as has been recited many times, then the law certainly loved and was loved by George F. Coffin, Jr. He was one of the hardest working and most intelligent men I have ever known.

His father, George F. Coffin, Sr., was a teacher, an attorney in our Courts of Northampton County and an executive in the cement industry. He appears to have been a stern man and to have raised George F. Coffin, Jr. in a stern way as one can see from the look in his picture which hung in George's law firm. He had a furrowed brow and looked as though he was very demanding. However, from the twinkle in George's eye and his ready smile which can be seen from many younger photographs of George, I am sure that George enjoyed his life and his upbringing. But his father's influence in George's work habits was easily seen. Unfortunately, his father knew misfortune in his later years which was brought on by The Great Depression in 1929 but his father continued to practice law and, at the time of his death, was a receiver of bankruptcy.

George F. Coffin, Jr. was educated at Mercersberg Academy, from which he graduated in 1921, at the Pennsylvania State University, from which he graduated in 1925, and at the University of Pennsylvania Law School, from which he graduated in 1928, thereafter soon being admitted to the various Courts in which he practiced in Pennsylvania, primarily being in Northampton County.

George practiced briefly with his father until his father's death and later had as his partners, The Honorable Richard D. Grifo and later Raymond J. DeRaymond, Ronald W. Shipman, Thomas P. Stitt, Theodore Lewis and Thomas Walters, at one time heading a firm of seven lawyers including April Cordts, which was the largest in Northampton County. Mr. Coffin lived to be 82 and was a busy man in every one of those years,

I am sure. He represented countless clients in businesses throughout eastern Pennsylvania. As a lawyer, he was highly respected and hard working, at one time having three secretaries who worked only for him, and also representing nine different insurance companies at the same time. His son, William Coffin, Esquire, who presently practices law in Northampton County, informed me that he was the last surviving Assistant District Attorney for Northampton County of those who were involved in cleaning up the City of Easton of prostitution by organized crime in the 1940's. He was Solicitor for the City of Easton and the Easton Suburban Water Authority. In the later years of his career he was known as the best condemnation lawyer in Northampton County, having never lost a condemnation case.

When I first knew George, it was when I interviewed him and I was struck by the fact that he would ask me to see him in the evening rather than during normal business hours. When I would come to visit him in his office often at 8 or 9 P.M. in the evening, he would still be working. He would question me about cases that he was working on and after our discussion, when I left, he would continue working on the cases involved. I came to find out that this work ethic was not unique to George's practice and that he worked every day from early in the morning till late in the evening. It was never too late to see George at his home or call him to discuss a business matter and he often worked Saturdays and Sundays as well. As an example, when George and I would return from a long day of negotiating a labor contract, despite the fact that there were many phone calls and other work to be done, George wanted to reduce to writing immediately the contract clauses which had been negotiated that day. He would either call me on the telephone or walk into my office, telling me that "There is nothing else in the office to be done that is more important than completing this labor contract language." We would then sit down immediately to draft by hand the language involved no matter how long it would take and regardless of what else there was to be done. Of course, the other work was always done on a timely basis, but George always insisted on finishing the most important matters first and then being sure that everything else was done as well and getting it done promptly.

When George was feted at the Country Club of Northampton County for being a member of the Bar Association of Northampton County over 50 years, following his recognition by his fellow attorneys, George's comments were brief as he quoted the old saying, "See you in Court!" George was ready to work and always had work on his mind. But it should not be

noted only that George was a hard worker because he also had a great sense of humor. I remember one time shortly after I had joined George's law firm when he was trying a condemnation case shortly before the Christmas holidays. After the case was concluded and George had won a substantial victory for his client, the appraiser for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania approached George and began to apologize for his low appraisal which was far below the appraisal presented by George in the presentation of his case and also was far away from what the jury eventually awarded George's client. Instead of recriminating the witness, George turned to him with a smile and a twinkle in his eye and said, "There's no need to apologize; in fact, I was just trying to think of what I might be able to give you for Christmas."

As a businessman, George F. Coffin, Jr. garnered more respect. Sitting on the board of directors of various corporations, he eventually rose to be Chairman of the Board of Directors of Victor Balata Belting Company and the Easton Publishing Company, the latter of which published newspapers which were widely circulated in eastern Pennsylvania and western New Jersey, being *The Express*, *The Free Press*, *The Star Gazette* and *The Forum* and oversaw the operations of the various corporations involved as well as the operation of two radio stations, WEEX and WQQQ. He was Solicitor, Trust Officer and on the Board of Directors of the Lafayette Trust Bank for many years.

When he took time off from his work, he would be found at his home working in his garden with his wife, Claire, and comparing notes with farmers as to what crops were doing what. He was also a great outdoorsman, enjoying hunting and fishing, and belonged to the Easton Anglers' Club located in the Pocono Mountains, where he would often go to relax and to fish and to hunt. He enjoyed this so much, that eventually one of the bends in the creek running through the Anglers was named "Coffin's Corners" after George Coffin because he liked to fish there so much.

George, in all your years before the Bench and practicing in the Northampton County Bar, I can only think of one thing that would be appropriate to say to you in conclusion and that is what you said to the Bar Association, wherever you are, "See you in Court!" (September 4, 1987)