

J. LAWRENCE DAVIS

by George Weitzman

J. LAWRENCE DAVIS was admitted to the Northampton County Bar on October 29, 1928. From that day to his death on March 6, 1974, he practiced law and life gracefully, magnificently.

Although his law office was in Bangor, his influence was felt far beyond that Borough. He had time in a pressure cooker of a world for all things and all men — and without losing his composure. He could work with kings and clowns without being marred by either, but conferring upon them something important from his many-fingered personality.

He early left the clangor of the arena of the Court Room in contested matter, but his mark there was such that when he did later appear in Court, he was persuasive. He felt he owed the Court preparation and respect, for he owed himself these things.

Later he came to feel that he had failed somehow in a particular matter if he did not reconcile the needs and demands of his client with the position of the opposition. Negotiation with a result acceptable to both sides was his hallmark. It was not a weak-kneed thing; it was a good thing; the proper thing; the just thing.

He said of another: "There goes one with a mailed fist in a velvet glove". The same could be said of him when the occasion warranted.

What a great responsive companion he was! He loved his family and his church. He loved life, and the people and places in it. He traveled; he dined; music and the theatre fascinated him; and yet he was a tireless worker; and in this set an incredible example for his law partners that he really did not expect or mean for them to emulate.

We, and his clients, and all of us knew we could call him Saturday afternoon or Sunday, or any time, with your legal problems or his. He afforded you a warm reception no matter how disturbing the situation.

The Court and his community called on him for countless tasks, usually sticky ones. He discharged them promptly, uncomplainingly, and with consummate tact.

His family will miss his blessed person; his clients, public and private, importantly named and otherwise, will miss him, his diligence and his wise counsel. His friends, who were legion, will suffer an abiding sense of loss for a long time to come. To his law partners, he is irreplaceable.

And now he is in another jurisdiction. I feel he is in safe hands and in a safe place, but wherever it is, he will be pursued there by the imperishable admiration and affection of his fellow members of this Bar.

I pray this Court to adjourn this day out of pride in the accomplishments and memory of J. LAWRENCE DAVIS.

September 9, 1974

J. LAWRENCE DAVIS

by George F. Coffin, Jr.

May it please the Court, it is entirely fitting that this Bench and Bar suspend for a moment its activities to honor the memory of one of its most outstanding members, J. Lawrence Davis, who died on March 6th of this year after over forty-five years of continuous active and successful practice of the law. He was born in Philadelphia on February 3, 1905, the son of James Thompson Davis and Martha Upperman Davis.

I was personally fortunate in having known Larry Davis for over 50 years. In college we were both members of the same greek letter fraternity and I met him while attending a social function at the University of Pennsylvania when he was an undergraduate. Thus commenced a friendship which continued without interruption until his death. You can imagine the pleasure I had when I discovered that he, like myself, had entered Penn Law School. I fondly recollect his kind actions in introducing my friends and myself to the various social features of Philadelphia life.

While Larry was an excellent student, he was on the Law Review and was elected to the Order of Coif, he also found time to enjoy social life to the fullest and was a most pleasant and entertaining companion.

In 1928 Larry began the practice of law in the office of T. Fred Woodley in Bangor, and shortly thereafter we became closely associated in politics while working together for the election of Herbert F. Laub as District Attorney of Northampton County. Larry Davis was appointed on Judge Laub's staff as an Assistant District Attorney, and I served on the same staff. We were closely associated in the Kutz-Laub election contest which followed that election.

In those long-past years, my recollection is that Larry Davis never sought the actual trial arena with the same zeal that some of us other young lawyers did, but he could and did adequately try cases as occasion required. Above all, he held his appointment as an Assistant District Attorney, not as a vehicle to persecute, but as a vehicle through which justice should be administered fairly and the rights of the defendants protected at all times. This was commendable since at that time defendant's rights were not protected to the extent that they now are.

Larry was invited by Judge Frack, upon his election to the office of District Attorney, to serve as an Assistant, but Larry refused this appointment because of the demands that were then being made upon his time and energies in order to serve his many clients in the Slate Belt Area. At that time, the slate industry, on which the economy of the Bangor-Pen Argyl Area was based, had collapsed, and Larry became immersed in rebuilding the commercial and financial structure of this area. Since that time, there has scarcely been a worthwhile project in that community in which he was not involved.

He served on the Board of Directors and as Solicitor for the Citizen's Bank of Wind Gap and the First National Bank of Bangor. He represented the Borough of Bangor and many municipalities. His ethical approach to problems instilled confidence in his clients. His demeanor and the concentration with which he discharged his duties as an attorney were at all times of the highest caliber. He had the knack of getting to the heart of a problem and wasted no time and no effort. He was astute and resourceful. An illustration that comes to my mind is some years ago when I was trying to prepare the Parsons Slate Company condemnation case in which I was associated with Larry, I was unable to find any valuation witnesses who had sufficient knowledge of the slate industry to qualify as experts. After agonizing over this problem without success, I sought out Larry who quietly suggested "Well, why don't you consider using Ex-chief County Assessor, Fred Parsons, who is now in the Real Estate Department of the Bethlehem Steel Company?" That excellent suggestion had not occurred to me. I immediately acted on it, and our success in that case was due in no small part to Larry's quick appraisal of the situation.

He handled the most difficult matters without ever losing his temper. He was a doer, not a delayer.

On all occasions in which I have been involved with Larry Davis, I never saw him take an unfair advantage of his adversary, if such opportunity presented itself. Fairness was his motto, and the client who had retained him could rely upon Larry having fully and completely prepared his case and presented it in the most advantageous manner. He was a lawyer in the true sense of the word. To my mind, it is not necessary that a lawyer belong to one of the prestigious firms from the urban areas, which may number over 100 partners and associates, in order to be recognized as an outstanding attorney.

Larry Davis was never a complainer. If things went badly, he never blamed the Court, or blamed the Jury, or blamed his adversary, or found an excuse for a dissatisfying result. On the other hand, he was modest, almost to a fault, in his many achievements. He shunned the limelight and although frequently urged by his many friends, he never sought public office. He had respect for the Courts and for the law at all times. His devotion to the law was shared with his devoted and beloved wife, Madge Wise Davis, and his daughter, Martha Altieri, who survive him.

This Bar has lost a real lawyer in every sense of the word, and I have lost a valued personal friend.

September 9, 1974