

In Re: MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR:

GEORGE A. HAHALIS

---

Memorial Services held in Courtroom No. 1 in the Northampton County Government Center, Easton, Pennsylvania on October 3, 1995.

---

HONORABLE ROBERT A. FREEDBERG, PRESIDENT JUDGE  
HONORABLE JAMES C. HOGAN  
HONORABLE WILLIAM F. MORAN  
HONORABLE F. P. KIMBERLY MCFADDEN  
HONORABLE ROBERT E. SIMPSON, JR.  
HONORABLE JACK A. PANELLA

---

JUDGE PANELLA: Good morning. The Court having convened this morning for our Annual Memorial Service, we are here to hear from the family and friends of the late George Hahalis. However, before we commence our Memorial Service, I'd like to call to your attention and ask you to join me in a moment of silence in respect for the passing of Attorney Walter Peters, who recently passed away. The family of Walter Peters has asked us to delay his eulogy until the next Memorial Service, which we have acknowledged.

We would also like to recognize the passing of Cecilia Hogan, the mother of both Judge James Hogan as well as Attorney William Hogan.

The Court is saddened by both the passing of Mr. Peters and Mrs. Hogan.

I would like to now recognize Roseann Joseph, the President of the Northampton County Bar Association.

Attorney Joseph.

ATTORNEY ROSEANN JOSEPH: Thank you, Your Honor. May it please the Court, members of the Northampton County Bar Association, family and friends of the late George Hahalis.

It is with a great sense of pride and honor that I stand here as part of this Memorial Service. This is one of the most important functions of our Bar Association. As you can tell from the Courtroom, lawyers take time from their busy schedules and the Judges take time from a very hectic Court schedule in order to make this an event of importance in the Court calendar.

Today we honor and recognize the death of George Hahalis. We honor his accomplishments and achievements and in doing so the time on the clock stops

for all of us. We reflect not only on his personal achievement, both as a lawyer and as an individual, but we look and reflect on our own personal goals and accomplishments as lawyers and members of this community.

This is an important time for us to recognize the accomplishments of Mr. Hahalis, and we are proud to be doing this today and to let the family and friends of Attorney Hahalis know how much he meant to us, to the Bench, and to the Bar. This Memorial Service is also reflective of the very unique relationship that our Bench and Bar share. It is an indication of the closeness and the feelings that exist between Bench and the Bar.

At this point on behalf of the Bar Association, I would like to thank Judge Freedberg and the rest of the members of the Bench for continuing to make this an important part of this Court calendar and recognizing the accomplishment of members of the Bar Association in the past year.

I would also like at this point to thank Thomas Maloney, who will deliver the eulogy on behalf of Mr. Hahalis, and I would request that the Court acknowledge Mr. Maloney at this time.

JUDGE PANELLA: Mr. Maloney.

MR. MALONEY: May it please the Court, members of the Bar, President Roseann Joseph, members of the Hahalis family.

George A. Hahalis, after 56 years of life, 31 of those years as an active member of the Bar of this Court, died on June 3, 1995. George was the son of the late Alexander and Irene Anamisakis Hahalis and is survived by three children, who are here today, Alex, George and Stacey and his sister, Kathy Bakis.

Education was a significant focal point in our colleague's unfortunately shortened life. After graduating from Liberty High School in 1957 George entered Lehigh University, received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1961. As a bright and inquisitive young graduate of that fine local university and endowed with a passion that his beloved parents, Alex and Irene, instilled—this love of education, George entered Villanova University Law School and received a Law Degree in 1964.

It was during these formative legal years that George first acquired his lifelong reputation for friendliness and fellowship and he endeared himself to many of his colleagues at Villanova whose many friendships endured throughout his life.

George was an early student of networking, as that mode is used today, and it stood him in good stead, as he began to prepare for his career with the Bar. It was that networking and the talents—George had to recognize the talents of others which caused him to return to the Lehigh Valley for the next decade to serve with and work for several of the leading practitioners in the Lehigh Valley, including clerking for Tom Kubelius, working as an associate with Wallace Worth, one of the leading trial attorneys in the Lehigh Valley, and then with that consummate practitioner of law, Justin Kevin McCarthy of Bethlehem.

During those formative years he took the advice of those for whom he worked to strive to improve the practice of law, and George acquired the

necessary skills to become in later years a very successful trial attorney with emphasis on the defense side of the Bar, in both criminal and civil matters.

Just prior to establishing his own law firm in Bethlehem, education once again became a focal point in his life and consistent with George's philosophy of sharing with and returning to his community the benefits of his legal education and training, he taught business law at Lehigh University, Northampton County Area Community College and Liberty High School.

Once again, George's candid approach to matters and his friendly concern for the plight of others enabled him to use the friendships that he developed in these educational activities as a springboard for establishing a law firm in Bethlehem. Its practice spans not only the counties of Lehigh and Northampton but the eastern part of the State of Pennsylvania. George's client base was the envy of his peers and included such significant clients as Aetna Casualty Insurance Company and another insurance company, both very large and leading insurance companies in this country. The defense of doctors and medical malpractice cases, the legal tenure to be very complex, as we know, came as steady work and a joy for George and his associates. And the fact that he retains those clients in his death and even during the illness of his last years was an indication of the respect that those clients had for the advice of George and his law firm.

At the same time he was rendering the important work of defending difficult litigation cases he took out time to attract, educate and develop a number of young members of our Bar, who have since become outstanding trial lawyers in their own right, including but not limited to Nick Noel, now practicing in Easton and Ed McKarski, now practicing in Bethlehem. George was generous in allowing those with whom he usurped himself within his practice and assuming promptly the heavy responsibility of litigation and allowing others to grow in the profession that he loved so much.

During his operative years at the Bar, George volunteered his services as an assistant public defender in Northampton County and was one of the earliest participants in the Federal Defender program, assisting our United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania in representing criminal defendants in Federal Court. He tried many difficult cases in that capacity and was respectful of our Federal Judges and it gave him an exposure and insight into the Federal Judicial system that he was to use later on here as a more business-oriented lawyer in the emergence of the malpractice field. George labored long and hard to establish himself as a respectable member of the legal community in the Lehigh Valley. And while as zealous in the task of the advocacy necessary for the instant case, advocacy and truth of the day were always accompanied by his typical reserved smile, his left-handed compliments, for which he was famous and a handshake after leaving the Courthouse given to his opponent.

In preparing these remarks for this day I felt my close friendship with George for over 45 years. I thought it important to ask leaders in our community, legal and otherwise, for their insight into how George's career impacted on them.

And in summary given that what really took place was George practiced people as much as he practiced law. He had a somewhat unique asset to get to the heart of the issue and disarm people from their nervousness about their legal problems and leave them with the confidence and knowledge that the best results would be obtained for them.

My recitation about George's life wouldn't be complete without mentioning his being a risk taker of the highest. Those of us who knew him well knew of his ability in this regard. He had the courage and conviction to take the necessary risks inherent in the litigation practice. He always tried to do that with the same precision of the aviation pilot that he was. He was smart enough to calculate the orders correctly to solve and then go with the ones in his client's favor. In George's view justice was the product of advocacy and hard work. While his legal accomplishments were many, too many to go through all total in the time that I have, two certainly deserve a medal. Two cases that completely changed the law in Pennsylvania. The first one was the Mazzeos (phonetic) case involving a malpractice situation and you, my colleagues and Bench, will recall that in the early days of malpractice there appears on the books of Pennsylvania a statute which required all claimants to submit their cases to a medical panel that convened in Philadelphia, appear prior to being able to proceed before a jury of your peers. George didn't believe that was constitutional and with the help of his office, his staff and others he ended up persuading the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania to rule that provision of the medical malpractice statute as being unconstitutional and that result remains today, notwithstanding the language that still remains in the statute.

The second case equally as significant but more personal to George, and I refer to the matters in admiralty of the boats accruing area. Not many of us have been exposed in our practice in Northampton County, no doubt due to the absence of navigable waters, to the practice of admiralty, certainly a subspecialty in the practice of law. But our ingenious friend saw to it that he would have an exposure, one that all of us should fondly remember. But the case goes beyond just George's personal involvement because it too changed the law in Pennsylvania. And it changed when the final result was obtained in the case; it changed the language of over 8 million homeowner policies issued in Pennsylvania in those days.

Let me briefly remind you of the case. The Bretta Kruger, a German merchant vessel 300 feet in length and probably 10 stories high, it had the temerity to enter the harbor in Bermuda at the same time that Captain Hahalis, along with mate Joel Ziev and Bobby McFadden of the Lehigh and Northampton County Bars embarked on a sailing trip in a 16-foot sailing vessel, also in the same harbor. And unfortunately push came to shove. The harbor in Hamilton, Bermuda, was very narrow and George was there and relying on the old admiralty rule that sail comes before power. George made some lefts and some rights that later became a problem and lo and behold this 300-foot German vessel ended up being beached in the harbor in Bermuda. And to the concern for the safety and well-being of the people on the 16-foot sailing vessel, as it turned out,

the thought that everyone believed that it turned out pretty well everyone was safe. Several months after returning home from their Bar Association-sponsored trip to Bermuda, George received a letter, along with a bill from the lawyers for the Bretta Kruger, for \$375,000 for repairs to the ship. George, being the consummate practitioner, turned the matter over to his homeowner's insurance company. They defended the case and ultimately it was resolved, but it resulted in changing the law for homeowners in Pennsylvania. And if you take your policies out you will see a provision that deals with vessels being hired for sale that are less than 16 feet in length.

Many of us were present when this happened and we happened to be later that evening at a cocktail party in the penthouse of the beautiful hotel known as the Southampton Princess and you had this beautiful view of Hamilton harbor and as we were having our cocktails and talking about the incident thanking God that everyone was safe you were able to see in the harbor the many tugboats and what have you with the brilliant lights on this huge 300-foot vessel trying to get it off the beach. George quipped that it was the first time in history that a Greek captain with a Jewish sailor ever sunk a German vessel.

With his vast litigation experience George's advice was sought consistently by many of our elected public officials in the Lehigh Valley and once again using his great ability to practice people, to give legal advice in plain and clear terms coupled with the common sense that he possessed, he was called upon by many governmental organizations to serve as our investigator. This included Lower Saucon Township, the Allen Township Zoning Hearing Board, the Sheriff's office in Lehigh County and the Valley Airport Authority Board, of which he became chairman in 1992.

These accomplishments tell us many things but most importantly, that in this facet of his career George affected the lives of many regardless of gestation of life. And it was in solving these legal problems that was of consequence. His compassion for others was exorbitant. Having the benefit of a wonderful education, George always impressed that on his children. He went to great lengths to be with them on many important occasions as they progressed through the undergraduate and graduate programs of their educational careers. George loved his children deeply and they represented that which he lived for. George's hobbies included flying. He was an accomplished pilot and that was the nexus for his involvement with the Airport Authority in which he served society with. He took a decadent interest in insuring that the plans for the future of aviation in the Lehigh Valley were properly drawn, well thought out and in the best interest of the community. He never hesitated to stand toe-to-toe with the politicians who needed to be persuaded to insure the future of aviation, even though it might have come at the expense of being slightly unpopular in the present. He loved his automobiles and sports and when his health started to fail him, and he had severe health problems in his early days as a teenager, he was always active in sports, tried to be a participant and was a loyal fan of Lehigh University, participating in their athletic programs. There is a trophy for the outstanding lineman at Lehigh University given every year in memory of

George's dear father, Alex. At one time in his life he became very close to bringing a minor league hockey team to the Lehigh Valley. He had the love and support of his family and no doubt that made easier his health problems, which plagued him for many years prior to his death. His children cared and supported him and took care of him, along with others, including his dear friend, Marge, who is here today. He had the able assistance of Terry Palmer, his right-hand gal, who saw to it that his practice continued and that his various business interests, which were extensive, were in good hands. And this tells us of another character trait that George had and that is he was loyal and because of that he elicited loyalty from others with whom he associated himself. George Hahalis, the advocate lawyer and successful businessman, was not a person who advertised. He did mind his own business and never meddled in the affairs of others. He was ferociously proud of his Greek heritage, of his profession and of his family. George's word was his bond and he never required confirming letters granting extensions for other lawyers in the true tradition of the Bar of this Court, a tradition that I find sometimes not being followed by some of the younger members of our Bar. He had a sense of accomplishment and pride, which should be an inspiration to all of those who follow him in their profession.

Another lasting tribute that we could pay to George and acknowledge was that he assisted more than one first generation American to accomplish the American dream. For there is more than one very wealthy client of George Hahalis, who had the benefit of his loyalty, his sound legal and business advice and he did indeed help those achieve the American dream.

It must be noted in closing that it was a love for his children and his parents that transcended all of his vigorous and active life. And it was that love and sacrifice that went both ways. That love of others, including his dear Marge, permitted him to endure the devastating health that took him from us. I move this Court, with resolve, to have these proceedings and remarks and those to follow of Judge Panella made a permanent record of this Court. Further, to have those remarks printed in the Bound Volume of the Northampton County Reporter, the volume bound and given to the Hahalis family as a memory of today. And when Court is adjourned today I ask that it be done in the memory of our colleague, George Hahalis, Esquire.

JUDGE PANELLA: Thank you, Mr. Maloney.

Judge Freedberg, Judge Simpson, fellow members of the Bar and friends and family of George Hahalis. It is always with deep sadness that this Court convenes during this ceremony to reflect upon the lives and work of the members we have lost during the past year. As a Court, we are honored to have the family and friends of George Hahalis with us for this Memorial Service. Although it is a privilege to speak at this morning's program I approach this responsibility with great humility. George Hahalis had the type of career which combined an extensive private practice with municipal service, that is the envy of many attorneys. Certainly, words cannot fully capture the way he deeply touched the lives of those around him and those he represented. I remember fondly the years I was involved with George regarding the airport commission.

It comes as no surprise to anyone that when they have problems in America, sooner or later they end up in the hands of the legal profession. Lawyers are now involved in matters which were traditionally the responsibility of other branches of government, or indeed the responsibility of the family itself. George Hahalis knew the grave responsibility to act in a competent and responsible manner in the conduct of his business. In this regard, he was held with respect and affection by the Judges and the lawyers of this county.

As a Court, we, of course, feel the loss which occurred too early in George's life and career. We fully concur and join in the presentation made by the memorial committee and by Mr. Maloney. As a Court, we express our deep sense of sorrow and loss to the family of Attorney Hahalis. His accomplishment and career bring honor to his family, his friends and to the Northampton County Bar Association. The resolution presented is unanimously adopted by this Court and the record of this proceeding is ordered to be transcribed and entered upon the minutes of this Court. Thereafter, copies will be sent to family of our deceased colleague.

The Court will now stand adjourned in honor of and out of deep respect for George Hahalis. The Bar Association invites all those in attendance this morning to a reception in the Jury Lounge on the first floor of this Courthouse. Argument Court will convene in approximately 10 minutes in Courtroom Number 1. We stand adjourned at this time.