

## CHARLES D. HOGAN

by

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The death of Charles D. Hogan on July 9, 1970, marked the end of an era. His career at the bar spanned the period of the roaring twenties through the soul searching sixties. As a giant of the criminal bar, Charlie would reminisce about the good old days when the rules were simple and constant. Though in the sixties he would jokingly refer to the Act of 1939—as the *NEW CRIMINAL CODE* and lament the passing of the Pennsylvania Practice Act of 1915—he was keenly attuned to change and welcomed it. Much as Judge Traynor so often said—Charles Hogan believed:

“The common law was not built in a day and with luck it will never be finished.”

Charles Hogan read the advance sheets with a keen insight and an awareness that the law, just like the world about him, was constantly in the throes of change. He was attuned to that change, and reveled in it. At age 70 he was an amazing amalgam of the very best in our law—holding on to such of the old that was valid and accepting the new as it proved relevant.

To me as a young lawyer in the forties, Charlie appeared as the earliest people's lawyer. In a sense he was the first of the public defenders. He did not list among his clients the giant corporations or the affluent insurance companies, nor did he represent the established wealth of the community. His was a practice dedicated to the representation of the little fellow—the working man who found the awful awesome power of the Commonwealth pitted against him. To many “Reds” Hogan was their own ombudsman—the one person who stood in for them and reduced the odds to even money—even though the state with all its resources and power was arrayed against them. That they were well represented could be attested to by every District Attorney who held office in the last 40 years. Charles Hogan was a truly able defense counsel and his adversaries well knew it!

Charles D. Hogan was born at Widewater, Virginia on October 3, 1899. He was the sixth of the seven children of William Hogan and Pauline Harper Hogan.

His childhood was spent in that community, in a home with many mature and some elderly relatives. His early education included much tutoring from aunts and older brothers and sisters.

His father's work as a foreman on large construction projects took him far and wide in the northeastern part of the United States, and on some occasions the entire family would move with him.

In 1912, his father retired from construction and the family settled on a large farm near Washington, New Jersey. Young Charlie's education continued in the public schools of Washington where he was graduated from high school with high honors.

Farm chores had naturally alternated with his studies during his schooling, and he had a great fondness for the many kinds of animals then kept on the farm. Years later, as a young lawyer in Easton, he kept coops full of prize chickens of all kinds, with a scattering of rabbits and pigeons. It wasn't uncommon for his city neighbors to see him come home with a young goat as a pet for the children.

Charlie's out of court language, many considered earthy. He never put on airs. Nor did he ever use two words where one would do the job. He was a warm and understanding person, never in spirit, very far from the Washington farm that he loved so much.

In 1919 he entered Lafayette College, still spending his summers on the farm. Many of the friends he then made in Easton and Washington endured a lifetime. He was graduated with the Class of 1923. During his college days, he had renewed his acquaintance with Cecilia Curnan, a high school girl in Easton who had also lived in Washington, and had visited there often.

He went on directly from college to Georgetown Law School in Washington, D. C. There, lecture hours were tailored to the needs of students who needed to work to support themselves. He was graduated with the Class of 1926, and returned to establish himself in Easton, where he was admitted to practice on February 27, 1927.

His first association was with Francis E. Walter, Esquire, then a prominent lawyer with offices in the Drake Building. Shortly afterward, Charlie opened his own office, adjoining Mr. Walter. Thus began a lively and interesting general practice which was always centered around cases for trial by jury.

It was apparent from the beginning that Charlie's niche was to be the trial court. During his college and law school days he had developed an uncanny capacity to get to the core of any problem. He had developed a talent, so rare today, the ability to communicate. It was this talent which made him so formidable an adversary before a jury. He was able to "get through" to the juries, because he was telling it to them *like it was* 40 years ago!

In the late thirties and early forties, it was not uncommon to see most of the young lawyers at the bar sitting in Criminal Court to hear Charlie Hogan try an important criminal case.

In addition to a wide criminal law practice, which included numerous homicide cases, his name appears as counsel of record in many important civil cases. *Silfies v. American Stores Company*, which he tried with the late T. McKeen Chidsey, was the highest personal injury verdict in Northampton County for many years.

On February 29, 1929, Charles and Cecilia Curnan were married in St. Bernard's Church in Easton. Over the next thirteen years, six children were born: William, Charles Jr., James, Sheila, Joseph and Francis. Cecilia's contribution to his welfare is spoken of most eloquently by the warmth, understanding and depth of her devotion in the performance of her duties as wife and mother. As a community oriented girl and woman, she provided that solace and sounding board so essential to so vital a man.

In 1935, Charlie and Leighton R. Scott, a young lawyer from the coal regions, formed a partnership for practice of law under the firm name Hogan & Scott, still with offices at the Drake Building. Together they enjoyed a relationship of trust, confidence and affection for more than twenty years, ending only with Scotty's untimely death in 1956.

In those same years, the children were growing and completing their educations, and beginning to provide the grand-

children which were the delight of his mature years. Twenty grandchildren have so far arrived.

Those of us who had occasion to visit his office could easily follow the expansion of the Hogan clan by noting how many additional pictures appeared across from Charlie's desk—since our previous visit.

Charlie's sense of humor never left him. He used it as a weapon. One which could be as telling as a rapier in the court room and as effective as a four year course in sociology—in fighting bigotry.

Charlie kept the firm name of Hogan & Scott when he was joined in practice by sons William in 1957 and James in 1960. Both had also followed him in studying at Lafayette College and Georgetown Law School.

There was in Charlie a deep pride in his profession. To many he tried to give the appearance of indifference. In reality, he was proud to be a lawyer—proud to have the opportunity to fight for the underdog. He had the tools to do a good job. He was intelligent, wise, industrious and human. His great record of acquittals before Northampton County juries bespeaks the effectiveness with which he used those tools.

But Charlie Hogan was more than an outstanding criminal lawyer—more than a devoted husband and father. He was a rare combination of self-assurance, and humility—one who often used humor to further more serious purposes—one who bridged the generations not because he sought to do so—but rather because he saw no gap. He reveled in his good fortune in being able to represent those less fortunate than himself. He had the charisma of a successful trial lawyer. It helped instill confidence in his clients and served to create a rapport with every juror before whom he appeared. He had the genius to attack ideas—not people. Witness the fact that some of his greatest trial successes involved devastating cross-examination of police officers—yet those same police officers remained his closest friends throughout his life.

In addition to his practice, Charlie had a lifelong interest in the affairs of the Democratic party in Easton and Northampton County. As a young lawyer, he was active in many campaigns on behalf of individual candidates for judicial and

legislative offices, not just in the speechmaking but in the organization of precinct workers and their rallies, picnics and affairs.

He later served as Chairman of the Northampton County Democratic Party organization and as chairman of the Easton City Democratic Committee. His political ties also led to service in the early 1940's as Easton City Solicitor and as Northampton County Solicitor.

His wide acquaintance in the county and his involvement in the community brought him a continuous flow of people with troubles or problems, mostly of a personal nature but involving the law. It was Charlie's pride and his satisfaction that he was able to help many of them.

During World War II he was recognized by the award of a civilian medal for his services as a special counsellor to young men dealing with the Selective Service System.

He continued his law practice and his interest in community affairs to his last days. He died suddenly on July 9, 1970, during a visit to the farm homestead at Washington, New Jersey.

Surviving, in addition to his wife and children and grandchildren, are a sister, Mrs. Marie Eckel, and two brothers, John A. Hogan and Frank P. Hogan, all of Washington, New Jersey, all of whom helped nurture him through his younger years, relied on his advice through his adult life, and remained close until his passing.