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IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PA
CIVIL DIVISION - COURT MINUTES

IN RE: **MEMORIAL OF ROBERT H. HOLLAND, ESQUIRE**

Held before the Honorable Judges Hogan, Moran,
McFadden, Simpson and Baratta, Courtroom Number One,
Northampton County, Third Judicial District, Easton,
Pennsylvania on Tuesday, September 28, 1999.

ALSO PRESENT:

Joel Scheer, President, Northampton County Bar
Association

Alfred T. Williams, Jr., Senior Judge

Family members of Robert H. Holland, Esquire

Karen A. Mengel, RPR, Official Court Reporter

1 JUDGE HOGAN: Good morning, ladies and
2 gentlemen, members of the Bar. We're here this morning
3 to call the argument list, the regular monthly argument
4 list; but more importantly, we're also here in
5 connection with memorials of the Bar Association to our
6 departed lawyers of the community and the county. And
7 the Court is prepared to recognize Joel Scheer,
8 president of the Northampton County Bar Association.
9 Mr. Scheer.

10 MR. SCHEER: Thank you, Your Honor. May
11 it please the Court, members of Northampton County Bar,
12 friends and family of Robert Holland. It is my solemn
13 duty as President of the Bar Association to recognize
14 and honor those members of our Association who passed
15 away during the last year.

16 This year we remember Robert H. Holland.
17 At a time when we as lawyers are sensitive to the
18 erosion of professionalism, we celebrate the life and
19 career of a man who can best be thought of as a paragon
20 of our profession.

21 Robert Holland was a gifted attorney and a
22 true gentleman. He bestowed title to the practice and
23 may have made us all better practitioners merely by
24 being associated with him.

25 On behalf of the Northampton County Bar

1 Association, I thank the Court for setting aside the
2 time this morning and for participating in the Memorial
3 Service. I thank the friends and family of Robert H.
4 Holland for joining us today.

5 I respectfully request that the
6 proceedings be transcribed, and that when the Court
7 adjourns today, it does so in memory of Robert H.
8 Holland. I request this Court to recognize Senior
9 Judge Alfred T. Williams to present the eulogy on
10 behalf of the Association.

11 JUDGE HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Scheer.
12 Judge Williams.

13 JUDGE WILLIAMS: May it please the Court,
14 President Scheer, family and friends of Robert H.
15 Holland:

16 As this Court continues with the Bar to it
17 long standing tradition of noting the death of its
18 members, as well as their admission to practice on the
19 official minutes of the Court, it is my melancholy
20 privilege to present a brief memoir of Robert Harry
21 Holland: Attorney-at-Law, Irish man, family man, lover
22 of fine (and almost every) cigar, and friend.

23 On June 1, 1952, Bob stood in the well of
24 this Court and swore to represent his clients with
25 fidelity and to serve as an officer of this Court. He

1 died on December 4, 1998, having fulfilled that oath to
2 the end.

3 Bob was raised in Bethlehem, a graduate of
4 its high school. In 1943, he was graduated from Lehigh
5 University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering and
6 entered the U.S. Army.

7 He was discharged three years later as a
8 Captain in Army Ordinance. He returned to Bethlehem,
9 and he soon determined that neither engineering or
10 steel was in his future.

11 He attended Temple University Law School
12 and after graduation, returned to Bethlehem to practice
13 law with H.P. McFadden and Milton B. Riskin.

14 I first met Bob when I became an associate
15 of that firm in 1955. The firm had just moved to
16 Market Street from a second floor office on Third
17 Street in South Bethlehem above the Sterling Cafe and
18 across the street from the young partnership of Morris
19 Mindlin and Jackson Sigmon.

20 Bob was my mentor and protector. He
21 taught me much about the practice of law and the
22 relationships among lawyers.

23 He frequently protected a young neophyte
24 during somewhat intimidating conferences with H.P.
25 McFadden concerning legal research and case

1 preparation.

2 In 1959, he opened his own office on
3 Linden Street in Bethlehem. I can remember his wife,
4 Marie, being there to help him decorate it with his
5 diplomas and Toby Jugs.

6 In 1961, he formed a partnership with a
7 rather disparate group of lawyers: Jake Kolb, Tom
8 Kubelius, Al Antonelli and Earl Heffner. This lasted
9 until Bob returned from a trip to Spain to find none of
10 his assignments had been completed. In typical Irish
11 fashion, he pounded the table and announced, "This
12 partnership is dissolved!"

13 As the firm moved to a new office building
14 on East Market Street, Robertson Taylor joined with Bob
15 in a substantial civil practice.

16 Bob had begun to limit his practice
17 largely to workmen's compensation matters when the firm
18 merged with LaBrum and Doak. After he retired, he
19 became "of counsel" to Leeson, Leeson and Leeson.

20 Bob's lovely wife, Marie -- and we are
21 delighted she's here this morning -- was an Irish
22 mother and, as was not unusual at the time, she was
23 primarily responsible for raising their six children:
24 Jane, Meg, Bernadette, Bob, Jr., Mike and Tom, the last
25 also a lawyer in Wilmington, Delaware.

1 They in turn have produced twelve
2 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. We note and
3 appreciate the presence of the members of Bob's family
4 who are with us today. They were a source of much
5 pride to him.

6 For more than twenty years of his
7 practice, Bob had one secretary, administrative
8 assistant, scheduler, keeper of the records, reminder
9 of birthdays and anniversaries: Emily Vasily (now
10 Schoeny). The singular type of assistant that permits
11 an attorney to truly practice law.

12 Bob loved the art of negotiation, whether
13 it was a labor agreement or grievance or a civil
14 matter; and he was good at it.

15 Interestingly, for a Democrat, he largely
16 represented employers or corporate clients. He was a
17 first-rate trial lawyer for whom preparation was the
18 key. His engineering background frequently gave him an
19 edge in complex litigation.

20 Bob believed in the maxim that a lawyer
21 has the responsibility to participate and to provide
22 leadership in the community. He was a member of the
23 Bethlehem Charter Study Commission, which was one of
24 the first in the Commonwealth to successfully change
25 the form of local Government.

1 He was President of this County Bar
2 Association and served several terms as a member of the
3 House of Delegates of the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

4 Bob served as solicitor to the Allentown,
5 Bethlehem, Easton Airport Authority during its major
6 renovation and expansion in the late 70's. He was
7 active in a variety of community and religious
8 organizations.

9 On a personal note, Bob was one of those
10 who strongly encouraged me to seek the Bench when Judge
11 Woodring retired, and he then served as Chairman of my
12 campaign committee.

13 The personal recollections of Robert H.
14 Holland are many: his pride in being Irish and his
15 temper, or the lack of it; reputedly he taught Robbie
16 Taylor the proper way to enjoy a cigar; when you could
17 still smoke in the Courthouse, he found a variety of
18 niches to stash his cigar before entering the
19 courtroom; especially, there used to be an old fuse box
20 in the corridor just outside this courtroom that was
21 almost exclusively his; his way of pointing a pencil
22 while he was questioning a witness and say: "Now, sir,
23 let me ask you this --" launching into his question; he
24 enjoyed the camaraderie of the Bar. He was not above
25 tweaking the well-known rage of Jackson Sigmon by

1 sitting on Jack's counsel table while questioning a
2 witness, which invariably would bring Jack to his feet
3 objecting to the Judge.

4 Bob was known and respected as a lawyer
5 with integrity, whose word or handshake was his bond.
6 He was intolerant of incompetence and made high demands
7 of his partners, associates, his family and himself.

8 Integrity, competence, skill and a sense
9 of humor have always been the hallmarks of a good
10 lawyer. They came together in Bob Holland, and it is
11 proper for us to pause, to reflect, and to emulate
12 those qualities. Thank you.

13 JUDGE HOGAN: Thank you, Judge Williams.
14 With the permission and consent of the Court, President
15 Judge Freedberg, Judges Moran, McFadden, Simpson,
16 Panella and Baratta and Senior Judges Grifo and
17 Franciosa, Members of the Bar, family of Robert
18 Holland, ladies and gentlemen: It is an honor to have
19 been asked to speak for the Court and pay tribute today
20 to the memory of Robert H. Holland, Esquire, a
21 practicing member of this bar beginning June 1, 1952.

22 We meet today in this historic room to
23 record in the minutes the warm resolution and
24 recollections of Senior Judge Williams, and also the
25 appreciation of this Court for the significant

1 contributions to the legal system made by Mr. Holland.

2 Bob Holland had a rare presence before the
3 Court and other lawyers. In informal discussions, his
4 smile and ever-present cigar, that has already been so
5 adequately referred to, were always welcome in any
6 conversation. The Court and his colleagues at the Bar
7 knew that cloud of smoke was undisguised lawyering at
8 its best, with a polish we would all like to achieve.

9 In Court, minus the cigar, the speech was
10 the same. It wasn't difficult for his opponent to know
11 where Bob Holland stood. His deference to the Court --
12 and all who surrounded him in the room -- reflected the
13 confidence of a lawyer who had studied well and
14 prepared his brief for all eventuality, and knew when
15 it was his turn.

16 Bob Holland maintained with ease the
17 precise good manners that the Court expects from its
18 best advocates.

19 For those who come after, his memory
20 remains for us among the models for the art of standing
21 four square on all the facts, and all the fair
22 inferences.

23 Molding the true information to his
24 client's benefit with great common sense was his great
25 talent.

1 He had the kind of class in the fray that
2 never goes out of style. He had strength and had
3 marked grace equally on the heels of success or in the
4 face of defeat.

5 Mr. Holland's promise had already turned
6 to success at the time I and my contemporary
7 practitioners came to this Bar. Those were the days
8 when the small law office still prevailed, even in the
9 area of the growing civil defense bar.

10 It was a large firm then that could boast
11 four members. It was as difficult then as now to think
12 that more than four egos could survive, in the same
13 office, the daily travails of a lawyer's day.

14 That was the day in the 60's, before the
15 time clock had become so prominent, and setting
16 compensation for legal services was itself a matter of
17 art.

18 But people with important issues came to
19 know Bob Holland as a superb champion. The work
20 arrived, and with his associates and partners, we began
21 to see the birth of the large, local civil defense law
22 offices as they appear today.

23 The combination of lawyers that gathered
24 under the Holland rainbow was a thing of itself to
25 behold. The different backgrounds of these legal

1 warriors emerged, converged, and congealed with time;
2 and their opinions stiffened and softened in turn --
3 and sometimes union dissolved -- but the challenges of
4 the law practice during the last quarter or so of this
5 century were met well by them all.

6 Mr. Holland served in many legal quarters.
7 Although he did not practice prodigiously in criminal
8 matters in his most productive years -- with other
9 stalwarts of the Bar -- he led his Association in the
10 establishment of the legal services office for the
11 poor.

12 He was also a timely voice and one of the
13 important leaders in the Bar Association's formation of
14 the Public Defender's Office.

15 He served with distinction through the
16 chairs of his Association. In his term as president,
17 he lead the Association admirably in the public work
18 lawyers are meant to do.

19 I have a fond personal memory of Mr.
20 Holland in a case which the former President Judge
21 Alfred T. Williams, Jr., with whom many you have all
22 been acquainted, sat as the trial judge. On behalf of
23 my client, as a young lawyer, I rejected as inadequate
24 Bob's substantial pretrial offer of funds to settle a
25 claim that my motorcyclist client had been negligently

1 injured by Mr. Holland's auto driver client.

2 In an eloquent and overpowering
3 presentation at the end of the case for the plaintiff,
4 which the then young lawyer had so dutifully presented
5 before the jury, Mr. Holland in the defense convinced
6 the trial court of the error of the plaintiff's case,
7 that it was my client who was negligent -- as a matter
8 of law -- and the judge thereupon entered a compulsory
9 non-suit, in essence booting me out of Court. "Woe was
10 me"! as they say.

11 Sensing that somehow his zest or his
12 position and significant skill had overborne the Court
13 and me with his argument, Bob came to me within three
14 minutes of the winning decision he had just so
15 arduously won, and successfully persuaded me and my
16 client to gratefully accept the identical substantial
17 pretrial offer.

18 Those are the elements of character one
19 doesn't forget. My recollection is that we never
20 related the ultimate settlement to Judge Williams, who
21 by then, I am sure, had moved on to the next case. Of
22 course, he knows now.

23 Even in the middle of a case, it was not a
24 difficult task to get Bob to pass a word about his
25 family, whose members were never far from his mind.

1 One could get the sense he was proud of them all, and
2 law practice to which he was entirely dedicated was but
3 a platform for his real enterprise - his family. He
4 served us all well.

5 It is with fond regard for the memory of
6 Robert H. Holland that these proceedings shall be made
7 a part of the minutes of the Court, and upon
8 transcription, copies thereof shall be furnished to the
9 family of Robert H. Holland, our departed brother.

10 And when this Court adjourns today, it
11 shall do so in memory and honor of Robert H. Holland,
12 Attorney-at-Law and distinguished member of this Bar
13 and this Court.

14 Ladies and gentlemen, the Court is going
15 to stand in recess for a few minutes and ask those who
16 would convene with the Holland family in the jury
17 lounge for refreshments that have been arranged. We
18 will stand in recess.

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