

HERBERT F. LAUB

By David B. Skillman

It is doubtful that ever before so many members of the Northampton County Bar assembled to pay last respects to a departed member, as were present at the funeral of Hon. Herbert Franklin Laub who died May 24, 1959. It was held in the College Hill Presbyterian Church on May 27, 1959. The members of the Bar attended in a body and filled a large part of the auditorium. The sincerity of this tribute is the more impressive, because, although present in his office every day, Judge Laub had not been in active practice for over eight years, by reason of the loss of his eyesight. The courage which he manifested, and his never-failing affability to everyone in the face of this affliction, intensified by the loss of Mrs. Laub during the period when he needed her most, kept alive and increased the high regard in which his fellow practitioners had held him.

Herbert F. Laub was a native son of Northampton County. His ancestors were early settlers in the northwest section of it. He was born in Beersville, Moore Township on December 26, 1881, son of the late George W. and Annie M. Geiser Laub. He was graduated from Lafayette College in the class of 1903 and went on to the Dickinson Law School from which he received his law degree three years later and was admitted to this Bar on October 1, 1906.

Immediately after his admission he opened an office in the building known as the "Porter Block" in Centre Square, Easton; and like a number of other lawyers who had come from other towns in the County, he opened an office in Nazareth, where he spent a couple of days and at least two evenings every week. When President Theodore Roosevelt appointed the late Calvin F. Smith Consul to Zanzibar on November 1, 1907, his partner, the late J. Willard Paff asked young Mr. Laub to join him. One year later, when Mr. Smith returned to Easton, Paff & Laub became the celebrated firm of Smith, Paff & Laub. They were all young men, widely known in the County, able and industrious; each one had an office in an outlying town: Smith in Bath; Paff in Bangor. In a short time they accumulated one of the largest practices in the County, which included many of the important cases, as the

trial lists of that era will impressively show. The firm remained intact until 1923 when Mr. Laub opened his own law office.

In those days, the trial of cases, both civil and criminal, absorbed a far greater proportion of a lawyer's time than it does today. Because of his effectiveness with juries, Mr. Laub acquired a front-rank position among his contemporaries which was recognized more and more by the public generally. During the period of national prohibition Mr. Laub decried the reputation for laxity in law-enforcement and related corruption, which Northampton County was acquiring. And so, at the urging of many like-minded citizens, Mr. Laub, for the first time became a candidate for public office. He ran for District Attorney on the Republican ticket against the late Senator Harry D. Kutz in the fall of 1931 and won by a substantial majority. His complete integrity in the administration of that office was demonstrated by the disappearance of the non-resident characters who for years had flouted the law in this vicinity.

When Judge Russell C. Stewart, then 78 years old, decided not to run for a fourth term in 1937, Mr. Laub, on his record in "cleaning up" the County as District Attorney, was the logical candidate for the judgeship on the Republican ticket. He won over his Democratic opponent, Everitt Kent, and ascended the Bench on January 1, 1938. His associates were Judge McKeen and McCluskey. After the former died in July 1938 and was succeeded by Judge William G. Barthold, and Judge McCluskey was succeeded by Judge Frack, Judge Laub became President Judge in January 1944 and continued in that office until succeeded by Judge Carlton T. Woodring.

By the time his judicial career had ended Judge Laub's son, George C. Laub, had been admitted to the Bar and had completed his overseas service in the Army, and so, in January 1948, was formed the very congenial father and son partnership of Laub & Laub. It had only functioned a year or two when the retinas in both of Judge Laub's eyes successively began to deteriorate. Surgery was of no avail. By June 1951 his sight was gone.

Then began the greatest period of heroism for the Judge, and the greatest period of devotion for his son. No one ever heard a word of complaint or self-pity from the Judge. No, not even when Mrs. Laub, on whom he was almost totally dependent, was suddenly taken by death in November 1954. He continued to go to his office every day, confer with clients, discuss with George the endless questions of law presented in a rapidly-growing office. As he had for over thirty years, he continued to walk daily through Pine Street to the Pomfret Club to lunch with friends of long standing. For them all and for recent acquaintances alike, he had a cheery greeting and a bit of banter. Usually by his side was George guiding his footsteps and attending to his every need—obviously glad to be helpful, never irritated nor impatient.

Because this is written primarily to record his professional career, his activities in other areas are not included here but no matter how limited its scope, no obituary of Judge Laub could be closed to his liking without reference to nearly fifty years of membership in the College Hill Presbyterian Church of which he was an Elder at the time of his death.

Mrs. Laub was the former Hannah A. Cooley. They were married on October 20, 1909 and to them was born in addition to George, a daughter Marjorie, now Mrs. Richard W. Crannell, mother of two. A sister of Judge Laub, Miss Ella C. Laub, also survives.