

IN RE: MEMORIAL SERVICES FOR:

GEORGE WEITZMAN, ESQ.

JOSEPH F. LEESON, ESQ.

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Memorial Services held in Courtroom No. 1 in the Northampton County Government Center, Easton, Pennsylvania, on Monday, September 30, 1991.

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

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THE COURT: Good morning. The Court recognizes Barbara Hollenbach, President of the Northampton County Bar Association.

MS. HOLLENBACH: May it please the Court, members of the Bar of Northampton County, family and friends of George Weitzman and Joseph F. Leeson.

We gather together today to remember and to pay tribute to those of our colleagues who have passed away during the last year. This is perhaps the most solemn and in some ways the most difficult task that the President of the Northampton County Bar Association is called upon to perform each year. It is a time of mixed emotions for all of us, for we are saddened by the passing of our colleagues and our friends even as we remember with joy their lives that touched ours.

We are appreciative of the fact that the Court has set aside this time for us to honor the deceased members of our Bar and we welcome the family and friends of those members who have gathered with us here today.

Someone once said that, "The measure of a man's life is the well spending of it, and not the length." Truly, the lives of George Weitzman and Joe Leeson, whom we eulogize today were well spent. They have left their marks on our community and on our Bar Association. George Weitzman, who died on September 11, 1990, served as President of this Bar Association in 1969. Joe Leeson, who died on April 8, 1991, was President in 1986. We miss them and the continuing leadership that they provided over the years.

Today Attorney Joseph O'Keefe will offer the eulogy for Joseph Leeson; and the Honorable Richard D. Grifo, Senior Judge, will offer the eulogy for George Weitzman. I would ask the Court to recognize first Judge Grifo and then Mr. O'Keefe.

THE COURT: Thank you. Judge Grifo.

ATTORNEY O'KEEFE: May it please the Court, members of the family of George Weitzman and members of the family of Joseph F. Leeson, fellow members of the Bar, ladies and gentlemen.

I am pleased to have been requested to participate in this Memorial Service in honor of the memory of Joseph F. Leeson. He served his family, his country, and his profession exceedingly well and we who were fortunate to have known him are better off for the association we enjoyed with him.

Mr. Leeson was born on August 24, 1926, in Kingston, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, the son of Henry J. and Marie Leeson. He was raised in Scranton and graduated from Scranton Central High School in 1944.

Joe enlisted in the United States Navy in 1944 and served in the Pacific Theater in the Philippines, Okinawa, and the initial landings in Japan. After the war he worked as a bank teller, attended night school and received a B.S. degree in Business Administration from the University of Scranton in 1951. He worked in the insurance business in several capacities from 1951 through 1965 and attending school at night, received a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Lehigh University in 1959 and a Juris Doctor Degree from Temple University Law School in 1963. As those of you who attended a night school know, it is difficult working during the day and going to school at night. Joe was a very hard worker.

In 1965 Mr. Leeson was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar and entered the private practice of law in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

Mr. Leeson had an active law practice and the bulk of his work was devoted to litigation and trial work before State and Federal Courts. He was a formidable trial lawyer. While I never had the good fortune of working with Joe I was fortunate in not having him appear as counsel for a client opposing a client of mine.

In addition to his litigation activities, Mr. Leeson served as Solicitor for the Bethlehem Area School District from 1972 to 1976 and as Solicitor for the City of Bethlehem from 1978 to 1987. As Solicitor for the City of Bethlehem, as those of you from the area know, he received much publicity and his name appeared in the newspapers frequently. I often kidded him by saying he couldn't afford to purchase the free publicity he was getting. Joe actively participated in many community activities, served in many organizations, including the Northampton County Bar Association, and was a member of many other organizations. At the time of his death Joe served as Chairman of the Northampton County Trial Court Nominating Commission. When informed of Joe's passing, Governor Robert P. Casey stated that, "The Judges in Northampton County are of very high caliber and much of that is due to Joe Leeson."

In addition to all of those other activities Mr. Leeson had another profession. He was commissioned as an officer in the United States Naval Reserve in 1953 and rose to the rank of Captain. Those of you who have participated in reserve activities know, being a part-time or weekend warrior is very demanding. In addition to participating in the usual scheduled monthly and annual naval reserve activities, Joe attended several naval schools and was recalled to active duty on several occasions as an Intelligence Officer. I gained the impression that were it not for his family obligations, which he took very seriously, he may have extended his active duty time with the Navy, with the good possibility of attaining the rank of Admiral. Joe loved the Navy.

I first became acquainted with Mr. Leeson in the mid 1960's and our friendship grew. In early 1982, shortly after I retired from Bethlehem Steel Corporation, I entered into the private practice of law and was fortunate to rent an office in the same building as Joe's office. Almost every week I would wander over to Joe's office or he would wander over to my office to discuss a variety of topics. We'd exchange war stories, reviewed local and national problems. And on those few occasions when Joe did not have a solution for a world problem I always had one to suggest. We became great friends.

Joseph F. Leeson was a proud man. He was proud of his wife, Mary Louise Leeson. He was proud of his children, Attorney Joseph F. Leeson, Jr., Attorney William P. Leeson and Mary Elizabeth Leeson, and he was proud of his grandchildren. Joe was proud of his association with the United States Navy. Joe was proud of being a lawyer and his accomplishments as a lawyer. And Joe

was proud of his community service. I do believe I have listed them in the correct order. His family was first and foremost to him always.

Joe was intelligent and had a wonderful sense of humor. He once represented a client whose Saint Bernard dog had killed a small poodle. Joe attempted to settle the case but the poodle's owner insisted upon having her day in Court. After the plaintiff's attorney stated his case, Joe defended his client by claiming the poodle had committed suicide by attacking the Saint Bernard. The plaintiff prevailed, of course, but recovered no more than she could have recovered prior to trial.

Joe was a philosopher. On frequent occasions when I asked him what he might do about some of the comments about him or his clients in the newspaper, he said "it's very difficult to argue with people who buy paper by the ton and ink by the barrel."

Joe was prophetic. Joe and his son, William, made an extended visit to Russia in 1974. Frequently after the trip Joe said the Russians' Achilles heel was education. As more and more of their people, particularly the younger ones become educated and become aware of the outside world, particularly other forms of government and opportunities offered younger people in other countries it will be very difficult for the Communist party to maintain control. We know from recent history Joe was right.

Joe was a man of the highest integrity and enjoyed life to its fullest. He was devoted to God, loyal to his church and to its teachings.

In his death, his wife, his family, his many friends, the Bar and the community have lost a devoted and valuable friend and one that will be long remembered.

Thank you.

THE COURT: Thank you for your remarks. Judge Hogan will respond for the Court.

JUDGE HOGAN: Thank you, Judge Freedberg.

George Weitzman and Joseph F. Leeson, barely a generation apart in time, were lawyers who competed daily at the same Bar. This Court notes their successful efforts to surpass themselves—and by earnest advocacy, to best others who challenged the cause of their respective clients.

Mr. Weitzman was a special friend of the Court and the Bar. His deeply honed personality never disguised his fine sense of priorities—full commitment to his wife Fritz, to their son Ellis, and his family, to his religion and his profession.

The trauma one suffers naturally from scores of years at the Bar never interrupted Mr. Weitzman's gracious penchant for cradling young lawyers in the lean and learning years. His active calendar never barred time to help a colleague in trouble. His complete attention to the affairs at hand never dimmed his memory for thousands of incidents—large and small—that together comprise the color of this Court. He spoke as eloquently of the past and present composition of this community and this Bar. His sensitive assessment of his role as a human being is an example to us all.

Joseph Leeson adopted this Bar and matured in this County as a lawyer. His legal career was only one of many efforts. His earlier years in the insurance industry—and his lifelong mission in the United States Navy—blended well with his ultimate goal. He set out to capture the civil defense bar, and people it with his own sailors: his sons, Joseph, Jr., and William, and his daughter, Mary Elizabeth. With his wife, Mary Louise, he is the progenitor of those who people in the respected law firm that will serve his memory well.

Mr. Leeson also had a serenity that comes when accomplishment is accompanied by the good sense to know one who was succeeding. With Mr. Weitzman, the two were quick to allow that life and the practice had been good to them and they both stood up and were counted when it was time to share that good fortune with the community. Their expansive contributions to this Court and County stand with the best.

These two gentlemen of the Bar were successful because they understood change. Change in the times did not mean dilution of their values. They both served in turn during these changes, in service to this Country, as presidents of the County Bar Association; as consultants to our political communities; as dignified advocates before the Court; as municipal advisors; and as men of extraordinary accomplishment.

The Court joins Senior Judge Grifo and counsel in their eulogies to these respected and valued attorneys. They have brought honor to themselves, their families and the law.

The resolutions of the Bar Association are unanimously adopted. A transcript of these proceedings shall be filed and copies sent to the families of those whom we recall today. When the Court adjourns today it will do so in honor of George Weitzman and Joseph Leeson, and out of deep respect for these fine lawyers.

The Court will stand in recess to greet the families and friends of Mr. Weitzman and Mr. Leeson.