

HARRIS S. PASLINE

By George A. Heitzman

May it please the Court, it is my unhappy task to offer for the permanent record of this Court some remarks concerning the death of my best friend, Harris S. Pasline, a member of the Bar of this Court.

Harris came to the Bar a short time before I did and was one of the first lawyers that I got to know well.

Harris was a member of the staff of the Public Defender's Office of Northampton County at the time of his death on July 4, 1980. This position, along with the rest of his practice, necessitated his being at this Courthouse frequently. There is no Court officer or row office employee who did not know him, and who did not think well of him. Harris always had time for other people - giving congratulations to anyone attaining a new position, winning election, or having any favorable event occur in their lives.

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes said that one must participate in the action and passion of his time at the risk of being judged not to have lived. Such a judgment could never be entered against Harris. In addition to an active legal practice, Harris participated actively in Bar Association and community activities.

Harris was especially active on behalf of the Lawyer Referral Service of our Bar Association. He worked hard to help establish our recently instituted system which has shown that it will greatly benefit both the public and the Bar.

About a year prior to his death, he began an active interest in jogging and set up a race for our Bar's annual summer outing, one of the Bar functions that he most enjoyed.

Harris was very active outside the legal community. He was, at the time of his death, the President of the Temple Covenant of Peace in Easton. He was a director of the Pennsylvania Division of the American Cancer Society and had, in past years, twice served as Chairman of the annual fund-raising drive in Northampton County, an event to which both he and his wife, Susan, devoted much time and effort. His interest in health care led him to accept a position on the Health Systems Council.

One who undertakes trial work, particularly criminal defense work, faces a difficult task. A first problem is that one is never

really a trial lawyer, but rather as Theodore Burgess, President of the Association of American Trial Lawyers has said, "A trial lawyer is always in the process of becoming." Harris was particularly sensitive to that fact and participated in continuing legal education to improve his skills. As a member of the Public Defender's staff, he set up a program of videotape presentations dealing with criminal defense work, which were made available to all members of the Public Defender staff and also to all members of our Bar Association and that of Lehigh County.

A second problem is the general lack of understanding and appreciation of the role of the criminal defense lawyer. When one thinks about the defense of citizens accused of crime, it is always the sensational cases tried by nationally known lawyers that come to mind.

Although the general public's interest in the criminal justice system is limited to such celebrated cases, those of us who share Harris' chosen profession know that the day-to-day work that occurs in all of the criminal courts of our land, certainly including Northampton County, involves the same principles of law, the same problems of evidence, and the same need for a clear, factual presentation, as any celebrated case that has ever been tried.

Harris was a zealous and courageous advocate. Although his practice included the representation of substantial business and commercial interests, he also, in his capacity as a Public Defender, represented poor citizens of every race and creed who found themselves in the unfortunate position of being accused of criminal offenses. Harris did not shrink from cases involving accusations of crimes that are often viewed as particularly heinous by the general public, nor from those cases in which it was his duty to render the effective assistance of counsel in the total absence of any reasonably viable legal defense.

I remember, in particular, one case in which Harris was called upon to represent an individual accused of armed robbery. The individual was unfortunate enough to have been shot by a police officer alongside the get-away vehicle, which contained the stolen merchandise, after a chase from the scene of the crime by police vehicles. Harris' client insisted that he had nothing to do with the robbery, and, furthermore, insisted upon his right to a jury trial. Although the expected result obtained in that case, Harris ungrudgingly provided a vigorous defense.

The pride that our profession takes in insuring that no citizen goes undefended was highlighted during the bicentennial observation in which our Bar's participation included the restaging of the Boston Massacre Trial, a trial in which John Adams risked his personal reputation to provide a defense for British troops on our soil.

Although Harris' name was never associated with any such nationally prominent criminal cases, his day-to-day work as a lawyer in our criminal courts was in the highest tradition of our profession, and served to maintain the very same principles for which John Adams had fought:

Harris was a good man, a good friend, and a good lawyer. I can think of no higher praise to accord him. Those of us who knew and loved him are better people for having known him, and with his death we are diminished.

I pray that when this Honorable Court adjourns this day, it will do so in memory of, and out of respect for, Harris Stephen Pasline.

September 26, 1980

HARRIS S. PASLINE

By Joel H. Ziev

Today, in the tradition of our great Bar, we are here to reflect upon the passing of one of us, and the legacy he left. I am pleased to present these thoughts to you, since I knew Harris almost all my life.

As we know, Harris Stephen Pasline died suddenly, on July 4, 1980, at the age of 37. He was born on February 18, 1943, in Easton, Pennsylvania, the youngest of three children of Joseph and Belle Pasline. Harris had two older sisters, Elsa and Gloria. He was great friends with them, as well as their respective families.

We both went to Easton High School. Harris graduated in 1961. I even remember when he was a senior and I was a sophomore, we dated sisters. After that, Harris went on to attend Rider College, where he graduated in 1965, with a degree in Business Administration and he attended Suffolk University in Boston, where he graduated in 1968. I had the pleasure of being with him for one year in law school. He was in his last year, when I was in my first year.

After his admission to this Bar in June of 1970, and the Bar of the State of New Jersey, he established a private practice in the City of Bethlehem, which he maintained until the time of his death.

For those of you who knew Harris as I did, we were impressed with his high ideals and his quiet dignified character. Often, however, he camouflaged this inner strength in an outward appearance that vacillated from an ability to exercise extreme self-restraint, to periods of joyful, laugh-filled extravagance.

I remember when one could talk to Harris, ask a difficult question about some abstract topic and he would sit and ponder for what seemed an awfully long time, look up from where he was sitting, glare at you and say, "So". But there were other times you couldn't get him to stop talking. Harris enjoyed nothing more than a good conversation with his group of friends that would go on for hours. We would talk about deep personal relationships, or about world politics. We didn't solve any world problems, but we all felt better for having had the chance to talk, and especially for having had the chance to listen to Harris add his thoughts and counsel to the conversation.

Of course, everyone who knew him knew that he was dedicated to the practice of law, and more often than not, kept a serious facade, but occasionally he would drop it. I remember

one Christmas Day Harris suddenly appeared at my house. He didn't knock, he just walked in. Didn't say "Hello" to anyone, but he walked over to my record player, turned it on, took out a 45 rpm record from his jacket, placed it on the record player, carefully picked the needle up and put it on the record. He slouched down on my couch with his huge frame extended nearly the width of my little family room, and what did I begin to hear but the song, "Short People". I am sure you remember that record. He just sat there with the biggest smile on his face for the whole length of that song, thoroughly enjoying the ridicule and abuse that record seemed to impose on those of us of lesser physical stature. When it was over he couldn't resist just one more insult. He stood up, as usual, towering over me, took his right hand and made a sawing motion across his waist and said, "I've had it up to here with short people", then he left my house. I have been laughing about that since it happened and whenever he saw me, and finished talking with me, more often than not, he would have taken his hand and sawed it across his waist and I knew what he was talking about.

Of course, those of us who knew him knew that he had a side of great generosity. He never talked about his achievements, but I am sure you know he was President of the Temple Covenant of Peace for two years, during which times he served the needs of that congregation eloquently. He had the dedication and desire to finish any project he undertook, whether he was working conscientiously on the Lawyer Referral Service of our Bar, or serving in his capacity as President and leader of the local and state Cancer Society. Harris put in untold hours of volunteer work such as this, without ever asking anything in return, and if he had a fault, it was of the heart. He gave so much of himself for the good and welfare of others, but he never allowed others to truly touch him. He kept his most inner feelings to himself. Thus, if you didn't know him, he gave the impression of being aloof and remote and being more stoic than one could possibly be.

But, as I hope you have gathered from the course of this short remembrance, if you got underneath that, if you got to know him, you found a loving, caring, sensitive person. He felt that way about Susan and his love for her and devotion to her was a constant source of joy to him. He was blessed with a warm, close relationship with his Father whom he loved and respected. Few are the men who have that relationship, and Harris felt gifted for having it, along with that of his loving Mother.

I suppose the harsh reality everyone here is thinking, is that his death was so untimely, and so sudden and shocking, since he apparently did all the right things to take care of himself. There is no justification, no justice if you will, no answer, no reason. But I will always remember the elegance of the man, which seemed to go with him where ever he went, whether he was dressed to match the solemnity of this Courtroom or dressed down as it were in his jogging shorts and sneakers for his daily runs. We will always have the memories, and we will always have the good thoughts and recollections of Harris, and it is for that goodness that we will always remember him.

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