

JOSEPH C. PONGRACZ

by Augustine C. Concilio

May it please the Court:

The resolution committee of the Northampton County Bar Association wishes to record the deep sense of personal loss which the members of our Bar experienced in the passing of Joseph Charles Pongracz.

Just weeks before his 45th birthday, in the city in which he was born, Mr. Pongracz died.

He was born in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was educated in Bethlehem, lived most of his life in Bethlehem, and he passed from life here too, in Bethlehem.

Born the son of Ann (Donchez) Pongracz and Joseph Pongracz on August 28, 1929, he attended Holy Infancy School and Bethlehem Catholic High School. While at the latter he distinguished himself scholastically and although not overly tall he competed valiantly and skillfully on the basketball court also.

Remaining in his beloved city he attended and graduated from Lehigh University in 1951.

Two important events next occurred in Mr. Pongracz's life. The first, a happy one, was his marriage to Dolores DeLaurentis. The second was a not to be ignored call from the U.S. Army.

Fortunately for the young couple, the tour of duty in the service included not only army bases in the United States but an interesting and enjoyable tour of duty in Germany.

Even while in grade and high school Mr. Pongracz had a gift of assembling, organizing, and preparing arguments or defending theories. It seemed natural that after the Army the idea of law school would be a natural consequent. With the help and encouragement of his wife, a job during the day, and persistence, Mr. Pongracz graduated from Temple University School of Law in 1958.

Great persistence, sacrifice, devotion to an idea and an ideal rewarded Joseph and Del Pongracz with his degree, a Bachelor of Law.

Besides a diploma the Pongracz's also brought home from Philadelphia their finest prize, their first born child, Anne.

In this narrative of mingling Mr. Pongracz's personal and the start of his professional career, the next step is another move. After graduation from Temple the young family moved to Mechanicsburg where Attorney Pongracz worked for the Sales Tax Division of the Department of Finance and Revenue. Within a few years time he became a sales tax expert, handling numerous cases.

The gravitation toward his native city was still with him and in 1963 he came back to Bethlehem and opened an office as a private attorney. His work encompassed all types of cases but his predominate field was, of course, the one in sales tax.

Through the years his family and practice grew. In addition to Anne, the Pongracz's also had Ellen, Wendy (Helen), and Michael.

In 1966 Attorney Pongracz accepted the post of Assistant City Solicitor in the City of Bethlehem. He became deeply immersed in the problems and plans of the city of his boyhood and manhood. Hours of work, times of frustration, times of satisfaction, times of happiness, times of sadness, times of triumphs, and a few times of minor failure marked his years in the service of the City of Bethlehem. He died holding this position in which he had much pride.

Besides his work for the city, Mr. Pongracz is always to be remembered as a man with a capacity for giving of himself. He had the capacity of being able to feel, to make one realize the empathy toward his fellow man and those with whom he worked and associated.

He never felt himself "superior" to any man. His honesty and truthfulness was above reproach. Mr. Pongracz's God was a personal God and that is how he lived his days.

It was sad but in a way fitting that his last day was spent with his children. The great tragedy is that they are without the benefit of his wisdom and goodness and he not having the privilege of seeing them, as the Scripture says, "advance in wisdom, age and grace before God and man."

"BE IT RESOLVED that the Bench and Bar of Northampton County express and record a deep sense of loss at the untimely death of Joseph Charles Pongracz. He served his family, his city, and his country with pride and distinction.

We who knew Mr. Pongracz have a sense of personal deprivation. His capacity for living, laughing, thinking and friendship will always keep his memory alive to those who knew him well.

To his family we offer our heartfelt sympathy and our sense of bereavement at his passing.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be entered on the minutes of this Court: that the Prothonotary send to Mr. Pongracz's family a copy of this morning's proceedings, that when this Court adjourns, it does so out of respect to the memory of Joseph Charles Pongracz."

November 11, 1974