

IN RE: MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR:  
WALTER L. PETERS, ESQ.  
JACKSON M. SIGMON, ESQ.  
JOHN WATTS BARRETT, ESQ.

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Memorial Service held in Courtroom No. 1, Northampton County Government Center, Easton, Pennsylvania, on Tuesday, October 1, 1996, at 9:00 a.m.

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HONORABLE ROBERT A. FREEDBERG, PRESIDENT JUDGE  
HONORABLE JACK A. PANELLA, JUDGE  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1996

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MORNING SESSION

PRESIDENT JUDGE FREEDBERG: Good morning. The Court recognizes James Zulick, President of the Northampton County Bar Association.

MR. ZULICK: May it please the Court.

Your Honors, fellow members of the Bar, family, and friends, we gather together this morning to continue a time-honored tradition of the Bar Association to recognize and honor those members of the Bar who have passed away within the past year.

This ceremony affords the organized Bar an opportunity to reflect upon the lives of our fellow deceased members and review not only the contributions of these members to the legal community, but also to the community in general and to their families in particular.

Today represents an especially poignant day for me as president of the Bar Association as one of the members to be eulogized is my senior partner, Walter L. Peters.

Mr. Peters had a profound effect upon my practice of law and for this I am eternally grateful. My partner, Charles J. Peischl, will present the eulogy for Walter. Mark Sigmon will offer the eulogy for his father, Jackson M. Sigmon, and Ellen Kraft, the president-elect of our Association, will offer the eulogy for John Watts Barrett.

The Bar Association notes with sadness the passing of fellow member Conrad C. Shimer, who died on September 13, 1996. By agreement of Conrad's family and the Court, his eulogy will be delivered at next year's Memorial Service.

All parties present are invited as guests of the Bar Association to meet in a reception in the jury lounge immediately following the service. At this time I eulogy for Walter L. Peters and thereafter Mr. Sigmon and Ms. Kraft for the presentation of their respective eulogies.

PRESIDENT JUDGE FREEDBERG: Mr. Sigmon.

MR. SIGMON: May it please the Court.

Friends, members of the Bar, mom, I am sure my father is looking down at all of us at this time. He would not want to be remembered with sadness or with tears. I am sure that he would prefer to be remembered with humor and laughter.

My father died in his home on April 29, 1996, at the age of 79. Yes, it is true that his birth date is listed as 1918 in Martindale Hubbell and all other legal periodicals; however, he was actually born in 1917. My father was a civil trial lawyer, the very best. The Northampton County bench and every lawyer who practiced before the Bar in Northampton County will verify that no one ran a civil trial like Jackson M. Sigmon.

When my father entered the courtroom, he was like a bantam rooster. He was 5 foot 6 inches tall with brightly-colored suits or sport coats. He often wore saddle shoes and sometimes even wing-tipped saddle shoes. He would bark at the judges as well as fellow attorneys, but juries just loved him.

My father could take a civil case, dissect it, bisect it, eat it, regurgitate it, and the jury would buy it every single time.

No one knew evidence like my father. He may not have known the specific name of the case that he was citing, but he was absolutely 100 percent correct when it came to Pennsylvania evidence. The Judges knew it and his fellow lawyers knew it. Rarely did anyone even attempt to put one by Jackson M. Sigmon on a point of evidence.

One of my father's more unique habits was that of tapping his pencil during a trial. During one civil case before now Senior Judge Alfred T. Williams, Jr., my father became frustrated by the number of evidentiary rulings that were not going his way. During the trial, he would tap the pointed end of a pencil on the glass topped tables in Courtroom No. 2, as it was then known. During this one case, my father became so frustrated at Judge Williams' rulings that he began tapping with the eraser end of the pencil and unwittingly the pencil came out of my father's hand and bounced all the way into the lap of Judge Williams. The pencil flew 30 feet in the air and, to put it mildly, Judge Williams was not amused. Needless to say, Judge Williams called a brief recess and there was no more pencil tapping after that.

After earning his law degree, my father joined the Army and fought in both North Africa and in Germany during World War II. He used his law degree in Europe at the conclusion of the war to help establish both civil and criminal courts in Germany in 1946 and 1947.

My father was a great lawyer, but more importantly, he was a good husband to his wife Ruth, a great father to his six children and a devoted grandfather to his six grandchildren. Although he worked hard and he worked

many long hours, other than being a voracious reader of the sports sections of many newspapers, he was a family man first and foremost.

I especially recall that my dad was, among other things, a man of honor. Once he gave you his word, that was it. There was no necessity for confirming in writing anything that Jackson M. Sigmon told you. As my father always said, "a man's word is his bond and it is a person's most prized possession."

My father also took immeasurable pride in being an active participant in the development and creation of the Bethlehem City Center. He was involved in a great deal of litigation concerning same.

Finally, I recall a case where my father was defense counsel involving a fire. My father never liked to admit defeat in the courtroom; however, there were always times that one had to retreat, as my father told me.

He once had a jury out deliberating for about three or four hours. The jury then sent back a message to the Judge indicating that they needed a calculator. Needless to say, my father settled the case within the next ten minutes. The case settled for \$30,000.00 and if the matter had proceeded to a jury verdict, one of the jurors told my father that the verdict would have been nearly \$100,000.

In conclusion, I would like to read a letter that was recently faxed to me by a lifelong friend of my father, Attorney Ray Carlson. Ray is now retired and is living in Florida. I think that this letter from Ray Carlson to me summarizes everything that my father was about as a lawyer, a friend, a family man and as a fellow human being.

"Some 52 years ago, months prior to D-day, 1944, your father, Jack Sigmon, and I were billeted together in a private home in Manchester, England, preparing for the impending invasion of Nazi-dominated Europe.

"We became lifelong friends during these months together. I learned of Jack's legal training, his amazing intellect and his dedication to a career in the law, if we survived. My college career had been interrupted by the call to serve and, as it turned out, my days of discussion with and learning from Jack shaped my future.

"We survived, Jack as a field commissioned officer, and I as a survivor of Bastogne with the 101st Airborne Division and we stayed in touch, he as my friend and confidant through the years to his death. My path of survival, completion of college and law school, and 30 years of dedication to the law as a respected federal prosecutor in charge of major antitrust cases against IBM, ITT, RCA and many others, were in major measure attributable to the training in thinking, hard work and patriotism that Jack imparted to me in the early days of our companionship. It was inevitable that Jack would become a giant in the law and a giant-killer, a dedicated husband and father and a Bethlehem legend just as he inspired me in some small measure to achieve a similar career and family success. We will remember Jack always, miss him sorely and owe him a debt of gratitude for what he gave to us in a lifetime of service and friendship."

PRESIDENT JUDGE FREEDBERG: Thank you for your remarks. Judge Panella will respond for the Court.

JUDGE PANELLA: Thank you, Judge Freedberg.

The Court joins counsel in their eulogies to these respected and valued attorneys.

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 Walter Peters, Jackson Sigmon and John Watts Barrett and out of respect for these fine lawyers.

The Court will stand in recess to greet the families and friends of Mr. Peters, Mr. Sigmon and Mr. Barrett.