

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION UPON THE DEATH OF HON. JOSEPH P. WORK

The Honorable Joseph P. Work died on July 25, 2008. He was 76 years old and had lived a full and productive life.

I have never been to Spangler, PA, but I have a vivid and positive image of it in my mind. I suspect that it was, and probably still is, a little rough around the edges; the kind of place that may have seen better times, but remains invigorated by the character of its people. I know that it was a wonderful place for a kid to grow and learn. I know this because Judge Work spoke often---very often---of his hometown. I can't recall him ever saying a bad thing about the place.

Coming from a modest background, Judge Work considered himself a typical hardscrabble, western PA kid. He knew what it was to get his hands dirty and his nose bloody. He played high school football in an era when that region produced a disproportionate number of excellent players. Some of you may know the name Ted Marchibroda. Marchibroda was a quarterback in the NFL and eventually head coach of the Baltimore Colts. He was also a contemporary and friend of Joe Work.

The opportunity to go to college, while still not universal, is far more widespread today than it was when Judge Work came out of high school. It easily could have been disheartening for someone of his intellect, drive and ability to run into a roadblock and not be able to go to college. Instead, Judge Work joined the Navy and served on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific during the Korean era. I never tired of his stories about that carrier; how he used to watch as fighter planes were launched from the deck. He would describe for me the power of the steam catapults that literally fired the planes into the sky. He spoke of the beauty of the ocean as only someone who has lived on it can.

Upon discharge from the Navy, Judge Work returned home and set his sights on a new life. Through the G.I. bill he was able to attend Penn State. Believe it or not someone other than Joe Paterno was actually the head coach back then (It was Rip Engle for those of you trying to remember who it was.). I listened to story after story about Milt Plum, Lenny Moore and Jesse Arnette, the PSU football stars of the time.

Today we would call someone who had already served in the military, had travelled around the world on an aircraft carrier, and was going to school while starting a young family a “non-traditional student.” I doubt that Judge Work saw himself as anything special. He knew what he wanted and was intent on getting there.

Following graduation from Penn State, Judge Work found his way to Carlisle and found the means to that new way of life that he sought. He was a proud alumnus of Dickinson School of Law. Judge Work was not one of those guys who was born on 3rd base and thinks he hit a triple. He didn't get into law school because of his family name. He didn't have daddy's law firm to go to upon graduation. He succeeded in law school through hard work and unwavering focus.

Upon admission to the bar, Judge Work returned to Clearfield County. He was successful as the classic small town general practitioner. He had to do a little bit of everything and was good at it. Eventually, he sought a bigger stage and moved to Harrisburg. He served as chief counsel to the PA Horse Racing Commission, another rich vein of colorful stories. As a Deputy Attorney General, he argued before the United States Supreme Court. I don't know the statistics, but I am sure that just a small portion of 1% of our profession ever achieves such an honor. He was justifiably proud of that accomplishment. Obviously I did not witness that oral argument, but, oh, how I can picture it in my mind. He was a strong and skilled advocate, who represented his client zealously.

In the early 1970's Joe Work opened yet another chapter in his life as he assumed a new role as an administrative law judge within the Social

Security Administration. At that time there was no hearing office in Harrisburg. Instead, Judge Work was assigned to the Johnstown office. He travelled from Harrisburg to Johnstown each week through rain, snow, sleet or whatever Mother Nature tossed his way. It was during this time that he developed another of his passions...his unshakable belief that he could get through anything in his trusty Suburu.

Eventually, the Social Security Administration opened a hearing office in Harrisburg and Judge Work was named the chief ALJ for the Harrisburg office. It was shortly after this that my life changed. I still remember the day in January 1977 that I first met Judge Work. Physically, he was strong and imposing. Intellectually, he was quick and challenging. I knew that I wanted to work for him and it was my good fortune that he hired me.

For whatever reasons, we were immediately "simpatico." I could go on and on about all that I learned from him. He taught me most of what I know about disability law. He shared his wealth of medical knowledge and really ignited my interest in the confluence of law and medicine. Far more than that, he taught me to respect everyone who presented a claim. From my discussions with others in similar jobs throughout Social Security I learned just how good I had it. Judge Work treated me with respect. He was patient and encouraging...never---and I mean never---arrogant or condescending. He demonstrated these same attributes toward those appearing before him. He was always gracious and fair. More than once he reined me in and redirected me when I spoke disrespectfully of counsel or claimants. He never lost sight of the importance of every one of us within the larger judicial system.

In a society that too often mistakes celebrity for accomplishment Joe Work cannot be labeled a "great" man. He will never have a bridge, a highway, a sports arena or great marble temple of government named after him. But as someone who came out of that little town in western PA without the proverbial pot to pee in, he had one heck of a ride. He was a good man and a great friend.

Therefore, be it resolved, that in the passing of the Honorable Joseph P. Work, our community has lost a good and decent man, who performed his duties with dignity and honor.

And received further, that the members of the Dauphin County Bar Association, in meeting assembled mourn the death of our esteemed colleague, Joseph P. Work and tender our sincerest sympathy and regards to his loving family.

An resolved further, that copies of this Memorial Resolution be spread upon records of the Dauphin County Courts and Dauphin County Bar Association, that the original copy be filed in the Office of the Prothonotary, and that the copies be transmitted to his widow and family.

Respectfully,

Michael F. Brown