

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
UPON THE DEATH OF
JOHN W. PURCELL

John W. Purcell, of Harrisburg, died on February 5, 2009 at the age of 84 years, after a short illness. He would have been 85 on April 15, having been born in 1924. Not being a tax attorney, he always said that life played a cruel joke on him by bringing him into the world on Tax Day.

John, or Jack as he was known to close friends and family, was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pa, the son of his namesake and Ann Miller, of good, solid Irish/German stock from the "coal cracking" region of PA. He was raised, along with his younger brother Charles, who died four years ago, in and around the Wilkes-Barre/Nanticoke//Luzerne County area of North-Eastern PA. His father, a World War I veteran, was not around much and died when Jack was only 13, so he was raised primarily by his mother and her many sisters, who infused in him an admirable amount of empathy and solicitude towards women in his adult years.

He attended and graduated from Miners High School in Wilkes-Barre in 1942, playing football on the varsity team, after which World War II called him to The European Theater. He did not see any front line service, as the army decided his skills (typing, riding motorcycle) were better suited to the damp climes of England and, once the war was over, the rubble of then Berlin, but in the retelling of his war exploits, he didn't complain, considering himself blessed. Certainly his subsequent progeny agreed.

Upon his return from Europe in 1946, he attended and graduated from Scranton University on the GI Bill, and thereafter attended Boston College Law School from where he graduated in 1951. In the meantime, he met and married the former Eleanor V. Bambach, also of Wilkes-Barre, in 1949, to whom he remained married until her death in 1992. Upon graduation from law school, he took a job as an insurance adjuster with the Aetna Casualty Company in Boston. Somehow, he found himself transferred to

Harrisburg where, due to the fortuity of his employment, he ended up obtaining his law license and hanging out his shingle in September of 1953. Eleven months later his first child was born, John W. Purcell, Jr. and twenty five months after that his daughter, Christine M. Purcell came along.

His first office was on the 7th floor of the Blackstone Building, what we now know as the Veterans Memorial Building over there across Market Street from this Court House. He eventually worked his way down to the first floor, front corner office, in the law firm founded by Herbert Schaeffer of Middletown. The firm went through different titles over the years; *Schaeffer Purcell and Clouser*, *Schaeffer and Purcell*, *Schaeffer Purcell and Nissley*, and *Purcell and Nissley*, to name just a few. Many attorneys, some of them in this room, rented space or found room in the 1st floor suite of offices in the Blackstone Building between the mid 1950s and 1978 when the county took the building and renovated it into its present form and use.

Jack's law practice, initially with Herb Schaeffer, and later with other attorneys after Herb's untimely death in the early 60s, was one that took advantage of the post war housing boom. He represented a number of local builders and real estate developers over the years, and even partnered with one, Skip Smith, to build housing in the Hummelstown area during the 1960s. Another contractor he represented was Justin Ricci, whose son, Greg is a member of the Dauphin County bar.

He also was instrumental in the formation of a Title Insurance company, Dauphin Title, which handled many of the real estate settlements in the local area. Dauphin Title was eventually sold to and became Berks Title Insurance Company, which many of you might remember having its office on Market Square, before it was acquired by what is now American Title.

His legal practice naturally led him into real estate and business investments of his own. He was partner, at one time, in the Holiday Inn of Gettysburg, and also purchased what was then known as the Congress Inn on Eisenhower Boulevard, which

helped put the Chairman of this committee through college and law school. Jack eventually sold the motel and restaurant to its present owner under what he liked to call the "excitement plan", where he took back paper until it was paid in full. He was instrumental in shepherding through the transfer to TRW of the former Stanley Spring Works on Cameron Street. He thrived on the "deal", always looking for new and innovative ways of making a transaction practical and profitable, both for himself, and for the clients he represented.

Prior to 1978, he took on two attorneys who eventually formed the backbone of his last firm - Howard Krug and Leon Haller - who joined him with Joseph Nissley in the present day *Purcell Krug and Haller*. Upon the county's forced removal from the Blackstone Building, he moved the offices to their present location at 1719 N. Front Street, later expanded with the acquisition of a second building at 1718 N. 2nd Street.

Jack was an accomplished athlete, a golfer, and later a tennis player of local repute. In his 50s, he was proud to claim he was the tennis singles champion at the West Shore Country Club, overcoming players more than 30 years younger.

Upon the decease of his wife of 43 years, Eleanor, he remarried the former Anne Pavelic in 1994. Upon his death early this year, he was survived by his children John and Christine and John's wife, Janice, his grandchildren Erica, Briana and Colin Purcell, along with his wife, and her children Mary, Beth and Ted. He was very proud of his children, grand children and step children. He was also survived by his secretary *extraordinaire* of more than 50 years, Janet Wolfe, who he once described as both his right *and* his left arms. Miss Wolfe, as he always studiously referred to her, continues to work for the firm to this day.

Jack will be missed, not only by his family, but by the many friends he made in the course of his practice of law in Dauphin County and its environs. To those who knew him, he was loved, admired, and greatly respected.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that in the passing of John W. Purcell, his family and the community has lost a wonderful and caring person, and the bar has lost one of its most able practitioners.

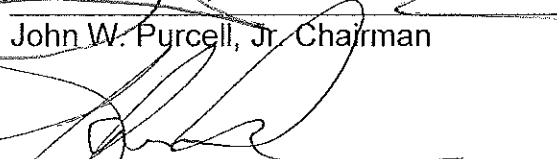
And Further Resolved, that the members of the Dauphin County Bar Association, in meeting assembled, mourn the death of our esteemed colleague, John W. Purcell, and tender our sympathy and condolences to his widow, children and grandchildren.

And Further Resolved, that copies of this Memorial Resolution be spread upon the 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 copies be transmitted to his widow and family.


Respectfully Submitted



John W. Purcell, Jr. Chairman



Howard B. Krug, Member



Leon P. Haller, Member

October 28, 2009