

Memorial Resolution Upon the Death of

W. H. CLAY KEEN

On May 12, 2012, W. H. Clay Keen died at Masonic Village in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. He was age 88 at the time of his death, having been born in Lykens, on September 16, 1923. His parents were LeRoy and Katherine Jones Keen.

"Clay," as he was known to those who didn't call him "Mr. Keen," graduated from Lykens High School, Dickinson College, and Dickinson Law School. He thereafter received a Masters Degree in Labor Law from George Washington University.

Clay Keen practiced law for 55 years in Dauphin County, maintaining offices in Lykens and in Harrisburg. He had a varied and interesting practice. By appointment of this Court he served as a Mental Health Review Officer for Dauphin County for a period of ten years. He served as Parliamentarian of the House of Representatives, under three different speakers, in 1973-74, and again from 1979 through 1982. (As a footnote, in the interval between 1974 and 1972, the late Thomas Balaban served as Parliamentarian of the House. We have it on good authority that Mr. Keen and Mr. Balaban had an accommodation that called for Mr. Keen to serve when the Republicans had control of the House, and Mr. Balaban to serve when the Democrats had control.)

Clay Keen's family has had an interesting history in Dauphin County. His grandfather, who bore the same name, W. H. Clay Keen, was born in 1860 in Wiconisco. His brief biography in Runk's Biographical Encyclopedia of Dauphin County, states that the first W. H. Clay Keen rose from humble beginnings as a coal

miner's son, to be elected to the House of Representatives in 1893. Clay, his grandson, then served as Parliamentarian in the House more than 80 years later.

Clay Keen was active in the Free and Accepted Masonic Ashlar Lodge No. 570, in Lykens, serving as a Grand Master of that Lodge; he was a member of Lykens United Methodist Church, the Williamstown VFW Post, and the Lykens American Legion Post.

Clay served his country in World War II, in the U.S. Navy, including a year and a half spent in the South Pacific.

Clay Keen was, by habit and inclination, an old-fashioned gentleman. If a lady entered the Courthouse elevator, he would promptly remove his hat, as he would always gesture for the lady to exit before him. Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, Clay always wore a light straw hat with a blue band, and in all other seasons he always wore a gray fedora. The straw hat would appear exactly on schedule each spring, together with a seersucker suit. At about the same time, he would open his family home in Lykens, and move back there from his Harrisburg apartment, to spend the summer. Clay was fastidious, and seemed to find comfort in the regularity of his life. He was a very private, quiet, and often very shy man. While he loved to have a cup of coffee and to chat with fellow attorneys at the Courthouse snackbar, he was not comfortable at a family dinner where he was a guest, and would barely talk at all unless repeatedly prompted.

As a Mental Health Review Officer, Clay was, as in all circumstances, unfailingly patient and polite. He was also attentive, careful, and thorough, conducting those hearings with both fidelity to the law and courtesy to the families and individuals involved. He possessed a warm dignity and easygoing manner. But he could also be firm when the occasion required. Once, hearing a case at Hershey

Medical Center, when the patient was a Common Pleas Judge from a distant county, Clay found it necessary, in the face of repeated interruptions, to quietly advise the judge that he was the subject of that particular hearing, and not the presiding officer.

Clay was proud of his service as Parliamentarian of the House of Representatives. When he told stories of his years in that position they nearly always concerned some arcane issue of parliamentary procedure, and very rarely concerned any of the political personalities he dealt with. The stories were not very exciting, but did illustrate his professional commitment, his fine mind and good character. Clay was a kind man, blessed with a simplicity of heart and a natural humility which those of us who knew him will long recall.

Now Therefore, Be It Resolved, that, in the passing of W. H. Clay Keen, our community and our bar have lost a good and decent man, who performed his duties with dignity and honor. And Be It Further Resolved that the members of the Dauphin County Bar Association, in meeting here assembled, mourn the death of our colleague, and request that copies of this Memorial Resolution be spread upon the records of the Dauphin County Courts and Dauphin County Bar Association, and that the original hereof be filed in the Office of the Prothonotary.

*Dec. 12, 2012*

Respectfully,



David Lehman

William H Nast, Jr.

William Fetterhoff

Leonard Tintner