

The Passing of a Great and Dedicated Judge

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Judge Jack Weinstein, Eastern District of New York, passed away at age 99.

I grew up at 69 Allenwood, and he lived at 69 Station Road. Often, we received his mail. My mother would dutifully wrap it up and send me over to his house with the mail. He always took it cordially, smiled, and did not say much. One day, he invited me into his home. He asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I said, "I want to be an astrophysicist." I am not sure I knew what that meant, but I loved all things science and I had a favorite uncle who was an aerospace engineer.

Jack spent some time telling me why I should be a lawyer. He said, "The most marvelous thing about the law is that you can incorporate the love of any other field or avocation." I think it was the first time I heard the word "avocation", and I looked it up in the dictionary just as soon as I got home. He gave me some old law pamphlets to read, which probably he otherwise would have thrown out. I took them and read what I could understand.

Many years later, it was Jack Weinstein who admitted me to the Eastern District Federal Court in New York. He remembered that we were his neighbors. He had an incredible memory. From the bench, he reminisced about when I used to come over to his house with his mail. He remembered talking to me about the law, and he was surprised to see that I was actually a lawyer! I told him that I never forgot his advice and had taken it seriously. In fact, at the time I was admitted, I was serving as financial comptroller to Metrolab, Inc., an engineering firm serving the aerospace industry. He smiled and was delighted to hear that I had realized my dream and followed his good advice.

The Judge invited me into his chambers, and we talked a little bit about the Agent Orange cases. Agent Orange was defoliant that the United States used in Vietnam, which caused serious problems for many of our returning veterans. The Judge worked day and night over many years to help set up a compensation system addressing the debilitating injuries that our dedicated servicemen and women came home with. It was a major achievement for Judge Weinstein to help out those who gave so much for our country.

When I went to work for Judge Muir in the Middle District of Pennsylvania, I learned that the Judges knew each other or had run into each other at one or more meetings. Judge Muir expressed respect for Judge Weinstein, "although he is a little bit liberal for my taste." Judge Weinstein also expressed respect for Judge Muir, stating, "He is a little bit conservative for my taste." What is important is that both federal Judges, who lived and worked well into their 90's showed respect for one another, notwithstanding their differences. Hopefully, that is not a lost art.

The world has lost a great Judge in Jack Weinstein, a fully dedicated, honorable and honest jurist. He was not the type of judge to hang a lawyer on a minor, unimportant point of law or procedural snafu. Rather, Judge Weinstein was dedicated to getting to the core of an issue in order to dispense justice in a timely and efficient manner.

Jack Weinstein, enjoy your conversations with other great judges in that heavenly court where I am sure you are currently stationed.

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