

Widener University Delaware Law School

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Justice Joseph T. Walsh: Teacher

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JUSTICE JOSEPH T. WALSH: TEACHER

Like many great figures in Delaware's legal community, Joseph T. Walsh wore many hats. A young lawyer when I first encountered him, I was impressed by his attentiveness and diligence as a member of the Court of Chancery and honored by the unsolicited praise from him for a brief I had written on some arcane matter of corporate law. How many judges would have gone out of their way to give a new lawyer positive feedback for no apparent personal motivation?

As our careers progressed, I observed him as Justice Walsh, presiding over appellate arguments on corporate and other matters great and small always with the same studiousness and patience. His humility may have denied him the principal spotlight in the great Delaware Supreme Court takeover opinions of the 1980s, but he authored at least three corporate law opinions on that Court that have stood the test of time and emerged as precedential beacons in the field.¹

Much later in our careers, we encountered each other wearing different hats—as opposing expert witnesses in litigation in another jurisdiction but involving Delaware corporate law. Unlike many experts, Justice Walsh's report exhibited the same dispassionate, modest, yet methodical quality that characterized his judicial work: derision and sarcasm were not his style, and he was all the more effective for that.

Where we most overlapped, however, was at the Widener University School of Law, where he taught as an adjunct professor for close to twenty years, both after but largely during his tenure on the bench. Regularly teaching seminars on appellate practice and procedure and advanced corporate law, he was astonishingly generous with his time and energy as a teacher. On top of that, he would come to the Law School almost every year to serve as a judge in the final round of oral arguments in the Law School's annual corporate moot court competition. Unfailingly gracious to the student advocates and diligently attentive to what was just a hypothetical case—unlike the real cases that awaited him back in chambers—Justice Walsh contributed importantly to the competition as an opportunity for students to learn not only corporate law but also the meaning of professionalism in advocacy. After his passing, when I marveled to members of his family about Justice Walsh's

¹See *Anadarko Petroleum Corp. v. Panhandle E. Corp.*, 545 A.2d 1171 (Del. 1988); *Barkan v. Amsted Indus., Inc.*, 567 A.2d 1279 (Del. 1989); *Cavalier Oil Corp. v. Harnett*, 564 A.2d 1137 (Del. 1989). There are surely others, in corporate law and other fields, of equal stature.

devotion to his work at the Law School, their response was always the same: it was no surprise, he simply loved doing it.

What unites these disparate elements of my encounters with Justice Walsh? One word: teacher. A good teacher patiently nurtures the learner, models desirable behavior, and rewards achievement—the way then-Vice Chancellor Walsh treated me as a young lawyer. A good teacher writes clearly, insightfully, and persuasively, just as Justice Walsh did in his opinions. A good teacher teaches with analytical care, not with haughtiness, just as Justice Walsh exhibited as an expert witness. A good teacher devotes untold hours preparing for sessions with students, with no great compensation except the joy of doing it—a joy that Justice Walsh must have felt since he devoted so much of his valuable time teaching our students at the Law School.

In short, Justice Walsh was an incomparable, irreplaceable resource for Widener Law School and for the students who were fortunate enough to have had the benefit of his teaching. May his memory serve as a blessing and inspiration to those of us who carry on his role as teacher.

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