

Remembering Joseph H. Foster

4.7.16

We are saddened to share the news of the loss of our longtime partner and good friend, Joseph H. Foster.

Mr. Foster was a nationally recognized trial attorney who began his career at White and Williams LLP in 1958, becoming a partner in 1963, and continued to practice law, coming into the office every day, until he was hospitalized before his passing. A true giant in the Pennsylvania legal community, Joe exemplified the best of the legal profession and was widely admired and respected among the bar and bench for his lasting and impactful contributions.

Mr. Foster served as the Chair of the Litigation Department and a member of the firm's Executive Committee. During his tenure at White and Williams, he grew to become one of the most respected trial lawyers in Pennsylvania. He promoted a culture of excellence in client services and was the proverbial lawyer's lawyer, treating his adversaries with courtesy and respect and always looking to find justice in the matters he handled. He was active in training at the firm, mentoring generations of trial lawyers and personally moving for the admission of hundreds of new attorneys at the firm, including an annual ceremony in Federal Court.

Tirelessly committed to the practice of law, he also knew how to have fun. He instituted "McGillin's meetings" – named after the meeting's principal location, McGillin's Olde Ale House – as a way to promote camaraderie and encourage professional development in both a social and educational setting for the firm's lawyers. District Attorneys, Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justices, Judges, State Representatives, the State Attorney General, and other dignitaries presented on various topics of legal interest at McGillin's meetings.

Mr. Foster strongly believed that lawyers should get involved in and serve the legal profession and the community. He not only advocated this philosophy, but also lived it, serving as Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association, President of the Pennsylvania Defense Institute, Vice-Chair of the Supreme Court Rules Committee, President of the Lawyers Club of Philadelphia, Fellow of both the American College of Trial Lawyers and the American Board of Trial Advocates, and as a Judge Pro Tem in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas. In 2015, Mr. Foster was honored with a Lifetime Achievement Award from The Legal Intelligencer as someone who has collectively moved forward the legal profession in the state, helped foster the legal education of younger attorneys and stood as an example of some of the best virtues of Pennsylvania attorneys.

"Mr. Foster was a role model and an inspiration both within and outside the firm. He motivated and inspired countless attorneys and personally gave me some of my most important life lessons. I am terribly saddened by his loss, and am grateful to have known and learned from him," said Patti Santelle, Managing Partner of White and Williams.

"Joe inspired generations of trial lawyers in Philadelphia teaching them how to passionately advocate in a civil yet direct manner. In every courtroom I have entered over the last 30 years, every Judge and many noteworthy colleagues wanted to talk about Joe. There are many examples, as recently as last year, when Joe walked into a courtroom proceeding and he was immediately recognized and lauded by the Judge. He was truly a lawyers' lawyer and I can only hope that a piece of Joe continues on in every Philadelphia lawyer," said Bob Devine, Chair of the Litigation Department of White and Williams.

One of his proudest accomplishments was laying the foundation for Philadelphia VIP, a nonprofit that promotes equal justice for the poor by providing civil legal services not otherwise available. Recognizing the need for pro bono legal services, and the importance of giving back to the community, Mr. Foster saw his major accomplishment come to fruition under his leadership as Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar. Today, Philadelphia VIP continues to promote equal justice for the poor, serving nearly 2,000 individuals and families annually.

"Joe Foster was the quintessential Philadelphia lawyer. His passion for the practice of law, his mentorship of generations of attorneys behind him, and his friendship to so many will be greatly missed," said former Pennsylvania Bar Association President and fellow partner, Andrew Susko.

His passing is a tremendous loss for the firm, the legal community, his extensive family, and numerous friends who considered him family, but his legacy will be remembered for generations to come.

Our thoughts are with his family during this difficult time.

Relatives and friends are invited to a traditional viewing on Monday, April 11 from 6 - 6:45 PM, with continuing visitation with family from 7 - 8:00 PM at the Joseph J. McGoldrick Funeral Home, 507 West Ave., Jenkintown, PA 19046. A Funeral Mass will be celebrated on Tuesday, April 12 at 10:30 AM, preceded by a family greeting from 9:30 - 10:15 AM and Words of Remembrance at 10:15 AM, at Immaculate Conception Church 602 West Ave, Jenkintown, PA 19046. Additional information is available [here](#).