

LEE, The Honorable Joe

United States Bankruptcy Judge, 89, husband of Carole Pace Lee, and pioneer for bankruptcy reform, died May 21, 2015, in Sarasota, FL. Born on June 24, 1925 in Pineville, Bell County, Kentucky, he was the son of the late Perry Rodolphus Lee and Mattie Martin Lee. He was a 1943 graduate of Bell County High School, where he was a quarterback for the football team. In 1943 Joe enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps, serving in the 8th Air Force in England during World War II. Upon his return from service, he enrolled at the University of Kentucky on the GI Bill, receiving a degree in Journalism in 1952 and also serving as Summer Editor of the *Kentucky Kernel*, the student newspaper. He received his law degree from the University of Kentucky in 1955.

After graduation from law school, he served as law clerk to Judge James B. Milliken, Chief Justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, and to U.S. District Judge Hiram Church Ford. He served as counsel to the Congressional Labor Subcommittee for the U.S. House of Representatives before being appointed a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge on September 1, 1961. He was one of the longest serving bankruptcy judges in the nation.

Judge Lee played a pivotal role in the enactment of the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1978, which established a functional, independent bankruptcy court. During the course of his career, he testified before Congress multiple times.

His many noted accomplishments include Editor-in-chief of *The American Bankruptcy Law Journal* from 1982-1990, and membership in the National Bankruptcy Conference, where he served as Chairman of the Committee on Individual Debtors from 1982-1997. He was a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation, and was a Fellow of the American College of Bankruptcy (Class 2, May 1991).

Judge Lee was the author of more than 40 publications, including the Bankruptcy Practice Manual, still being used in law schools today, and was a consultant to *Bankruptcy Service, Lawyers Edition*, a multi-volume treatise on bankruptcy law.

During his tenure as bankruptcy judge, he was an Adjunct Professor at the UK College of Law from 1972-1992. He was the Program Planning Chair in 1973 for the first seminar conducted by the University of Kentucky's Office of

Continuing Legal Education, a biennial seminar still held and renamed in his honor in 1997 as the Judge Joe Lee Biennial Bankruptcy Institute.

He was inducted into the University of Kentucky College of Law Hall of Fame in June of 1998.

Among his many awards, he was presented the Herbert M. Bierce Distinguished Judicial Service Award by the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges; the Henry T. Duncan Memorial Award for distinguished judicial service by the Fayette County Bar Association; the Kentucky Bar Association Outstanding Judge Award; the ALI-ABA Harrison Tweed Special Merit Award for long term efforts in continuing legal education presented by the American Bar Association; the American College of Bankruptcy's Distinguished Service Award; the Lawrence P. King Award for Excellence in the Field of Bankruptcy by the CLLA Bankruptcy Section; and was the inaugural recipient of the Judge William L. Norton, Jr. Judicial Excellence Award for outstanding service to the insolvency community; and the Excellence in Education Award given by the Endowment for Education of the National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges in recognition of exceptional contributions in the field of bankruptcy law education.

In 2009 he was awarded the Medallion for Intellectual Achievement presented by the University of Kentucky which was established by the UK Library Associates to honor intellectual achievement in Kentucky or by Kentuckians, and to encourage education and the free and creative use of the mind by citizens of the Commonwealth.

In addition to his wife, Judge Lee is survived by four daughters; Caroline Clay (Keith); Caitlin Decatur; Annabel Deramo (Andrew) and Janet Roccanova (Tony) as well as eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He is also survived by his twin sister, Jean Risner of Fairfield Glade, Tennessee, and predeceased by a brother, Perry R. Lee, Jr., who was a glider pilot during World War II and died in Operation Market Garden in 1944.

A memorial service will be held at a later date at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Lexington, Kentucky.

Judge Lee was particularly proud that the UK College of Law established a scholarship fund for its students in his name. Those wishing to contribute to the Judge Joe Lee Scholarship Fund may make donations by mailing checks to UK College of Law, c/o Tressa Neal, 237 Law Building, Lexington, KY 40506.