

Whereas:

Joe Lee.

A short name. And long resume.

The Honorable Joe Lee doubles the word count. He was one of our own. A longtime member of the National Bankruptcy Conference. He served as the chair of the Committee for Individual Debtors for a decade and a half in the 80s and 90s.

Judge Lee brought to our Conference a point of view about the so-called “little-man” that appeared daily in his court in the Eastern District of Kentucky. He served on that court from his appointment in 1961 to his passing earlier this year.

Joe knew the struggling people who appeared in his court. His compassion and empathy for humanity shaped his view of what the bankruptcy process should and could do. He believed in the essential honesty and pride of those debtors who streamed before him during his 45 plus years on the bench. He bravely spoke out against the barriers of entry imposed by the lobbyists for the banking and credit card industries.

When Judge Lee was “called out” by a professor in a 1999 article in a Federalist Society publication as a representative of the mindset that issuers of credit bear a large portion of the blame for escalating bankruptcy filing rates, he probably proudly wore that as a badge of honor. Joe certainly believed what he was seeing in his courtroom over the decades. He surely scoffed at the professor’s conclusion that the decline of shame and stigma and overly generous legal system were the causes of rising consumer cases.

There is no question where Joe’s big heart and head were when he testified a dozen or so times before Congress, wrote 40 plus article and taught bankruptcy at the University of Kentucky for 20 years.

Although his name is short – just 2 syllables – Joe’s list of accomplishments are long. He contributed much to the intellectual life of bankruptcy, serving as Editor-in-Chief for 8 years of the distinguished American Bankruptcy Law Journal.

Everyone that Joe came in contact with, it seems, honored him: The National Conference of Bankruptcy Judges which he served as its President, the Commercial Law League awarded him its Larry P. King Award-another one of our own whose memory we hold dear- , the very first recipient of the Norton Judicial Excellence Award, his beloved University of Kentucky, the State and local bars of Kentucky, ALI-ABI, and the Distinguished Service Award of the American College of Bankruptcy.

So it is more than fitting that the National Bankruptcy Conference at its annual meeting in Washington, D.C. this 29th day of October, 2015, remembers Joe Lee as a giant among men. We fondly recall his many valuable contributions to our Conference and in so doing express our

sincerest condolences to his widow, Carole Pace Lee and his 4 daughters, Caroline, Caitlin, Annabel, Janet and their families.