

Lighthouse Award Acceptance Speech

Hon. Paul W. Armstrong, J.S.C. (Ret.)

Salutem Sisters and Brothers of the Bench and Bar,

At the outset, please join me in extending congratulations to the New Jersey Commission on Professionalism in the Law on the occasion of its 25th Anniversary. For a quarter of a century its distinguished membership has, through their witness, endeavored to impart by signal example how the highest respect for the law coupled with fast adherence to the standards of professional responsibility remain the hallmark of New Jersey's exemplary system of justice. Moreover, the past and present members of the Commission have truly realized their mission of strengthening the law's traditional values and instilling a sense of profound duty and public purpose which informs and authenticates the practice of law as a noble and distinguished profession. We owe much to this remarkable cooperative venture of the New Jersey State Bar Association and extend every best wish for its future good works on behalf of every member of the Bar.

In the same spirit, let us join in honoring Joseph Hayden, a well-respected member of our legal community, upon his receiving of the prestigious Daniel J. O' Hern Award for his outstanding integrity, competence, high ethical standards, distinguished career achievements and exemplary service to the bar. We are sure Justice O'Hern would be greatly pleased in his receipt of this accolade. Kudos as well to Sabrina Comizzoli for her receipt of the esteemed Charles J. Hollenbeck Award in recognition of her emblematic diligence, competence and dedication

to the needs of our professional legal community. We are sure, as well, that Charles Hollenbeck would be equally pleased of her deserved reception of these especial laurels.

Now, on to the daunting part; the true expression of great gratitude for being placed in the extraordinary company of today's and the past's recipients of the Bar's gracious acknowledgements. Perhaps tis best to follow Dickens' path and begin in the beginning. To that end, a quick glance at my 1973 New Jersey State Bar Association card number: 894 as well as my New Jersey Law license of the same date signed by Chief Justice Joseph Weintraub reminded me that I have been about for a bit and have legions to thank for their shared wisdom and example. Being rightly limited to 750 words. please be lenient if you fail to appear in this expression of appreciation. At that distant swearing in ceremony the Chief strongly stressed that the practice of law is a hallowed privilege to be faithfully observed throughout one's call to the Bar.

Please allow me to share a few of those humbling privileges granted to me. Three years after leaving Notre Dame's Law School, found a young advocate standing before former Governor and Chief Justice Richard J. Hughes and the New Jersey Supreme Court arguing on behalf of Joseph and Julia Quinlan a case that bears the name of their daughter, Karen Ann Quinlan. The Court's unanimous landmark decision signaled the birth of American bioethics, recognized and vindicated individual autonomy and sovereignty in medical decision making, introduced institutional ethics committees fostered the Hospice Movement (The Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice celebrates its 42nd anniversary this year) and has been translated into 64 languages. Additional appearances before our state's nationally and internationally respected Supreme Court expanded its decisional canon anent the ethics of law and

medicine. Soon, the Legislature created the New Jersey Bioethics Commission and allowed me the privilege to assume its Chairmanship. This distinguished body authored the Advance Directive (Living Wills) and Brain Death Statutes in addition to a definitive study on surrogacy triggered by our Supreme Court's landmark Baby M decision. In the middle of the AIDS pandemic' Governor James Florio bravely created The Governor's Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS and allowed me the privilege of its Chairmanship. The courageous and diverse members of this prominent Council led our state through the myriad social and epidemiological challenges that plagued our state and became a model for our nation. Subsequently, The American Hospital Association and the Medical Society of New Jersey (the nation's oldest society of physicians, founded in 1766) afforded the privileged opportunities to place their voice, Amicus Curiae, before the United States Supreme Court in two separate healthcare landmark decisions (Cruzan and Vacco v Quill). The next chapter of participation in the legal enterprise is the profound privilege of judicial service as a Superior Court Judge for approximately eighteen infinitely rewarding years, sitting in the Civil, Criminal and Family divisions in the historic courthouses of Somerset, Hunterdon, Warren and Morris counties. Singular assignments include pioneering our state's Drug Court initiative as Chairman of the Committee of Drug Court Judges and presiding over the notorious case of Charles Cullen, the infamous serial killer nurse. Throughout this life in the law, Rutgers University has granted the opportunity to teach Law and Medicine at Rutgers Law School and its Medical School. Today finds me as a Senior Policy Fellow and "Judge in Residence" at the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy of Rutgers University where I teach Healthcare, Ethics and Law in its Graduate Programs. Lastly, and of a piece in these challenging times, is membership on the multidisciplinary COVID 19 Professional Advisory Council consisting of

our state's healthcare leaders convened by Governor Murphy and Health Commissioner Judith Persichilli to address the dire medical and ethical dilemmas confronting New Jersey by this deadly Pandemic.

With regard to the meaning and purpose of professionalism to those privileged to be called to the Bar, the answers are to be found in the myriad ways that New Jersey lawyers contribute to the civic well-being of their community, state and nation. These are attributes readily to be found in the exemplary good works of all the Members of the New Jersey Commission on Professionalism.

Lastly and again, thank you for placing me in the renowned company of the past recipients of the signal Lighthouse Award.

Most Sincerely,

Hon. Paul W. Armstrong, J.S.C.(Ret).