

In the  
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

# MEMORIAL PROCEEDINGS

for

## WILLIAM T. FELS

Crier, Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Room 456, City Hall  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
June 23, 1982

Before:

HON. HENRY X. O'BRIEN,  
Chief Justice.

HON. SAMUEL J. ROBERTS,  
Associate Justice.

HON. ROBERT N. C. NIX, JR.,  
Associate Justice.

HON. ROLF LARSEN,  
Associate Justice.

HON. JOHN P. FLAHERTY,  
Associate Justice.

HON. JAMES T. McDERMOTT,  
Associate Justice.

HON. WILLIAM D. HUTCHINSON,  
Associate Justice.

# IN MEMORIAM

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CHIEF JUSTICE O'BRIEN: Immediately following this argument, the Court will pay tribute to the memory of William T. Fells.

(Argument.)

CHIEF JUSTICE O'BRIEN: Mr. Justice Roberts will now speak on behalf of the Court in the matter of William T. Fells, in memoriam.

JUSTICE ROBERTS: As we close this session of Court, we take these moments to mourn the passing of our Court Crier, William T. Fells, and to honor his memory.

His death, at the age of sixty-eight, on January thirteenth of this year, brought to an untimely close a forty-three year love affair between Bill Fells and the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Beginning in 1939 in the service of Justice George Maxey and then Justice Thomas Chidsey, Bill was appointed Court Crier by Chief Justice Horace Stern on New Year's Day of 1954.

During his twenty-eight years as Court Crier he served under a total of twenty-seven Justices, including six Chief Justices. Each of us who had the privilege to work with him was moved by the countless instances of his thoughtfulness and generosity of spirit.

Greater even than his devotion to the Justices of this Court was his devotion to the Court itself. Anyone who heard him proudly bang his gavel and intone, "God save the Commonwealth and this Honorable Court," knew that to William Fells the place of justice was a hallowed place, with a noble and important purpose transcending the lives of mortal men.

He was imbued with the history, traditions, and procedures of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, and he approached his work—which to him was not a job, but a joy—with enthusiasm and complete professional dedication. His tireless, conscientious pursuit of excellence in the performance of his many duties was born of his faith in the adjudicatory process and nurtured by his awareness that the goal of justice requires and deserves nothing less than the utmost efforts of all who pursue it.

Bill Fells was a man of dignity, of warmth, of wit, and of overflowing human kindness. Both this Court and all of us who knew him were made better by his presence. To his wife Margaret, his son William, his daughter Ella, and his seven grandchildren, we extend our deepest sympathy. We share your loss.

## IN MEMORIAM

"Justice," said Daniel Webster, "is the greatest interest of man on earth. . . . Wherever her temple stands, and so long as it is duly honored, there is a foundation for social security, general happiness, and the improvement, and progress, of our race. And whoever labors on this edifice with usefulness and distinction, whoever clears its foundations, strengthens its pillars, adorns its entablatures, or contributes to raise its august dome still higher in the skies, connects himself in name, and fame, and character, with that which is and must be as durable as the frame of human society."

William Fells, who served this Court with dedication, devotion, and joy from his young manhood until his death, will always be a part of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in name, and fame, and sterling character.

We mourn the passing of our colleague and friend, and hereby order that these remarks be published in the Pennsylvania Reports to stand as a memorial to William Fells for as long as this temple of justice shall last.

CHIEF JUSTICE O'BRIEN: It is my privilege now to present to the family of William T. Fells on behalf of the Court the gavel which Bill used as our Court Crier.

Mrs. Fells, would you step up to the podium, please? Our present Court Crier, who was trained by your husband, will now give you this gavel that he used for so long and so well.

(Mrs. Fells is presented with gavel.)

MRS. FELS: Thank you all.

CHIEF JUSTICE O'BRIEN: The Court is now adjourned in memory of William T. Fells. Thank you all. Court adjourned.