

NEAL BATSON REMARKS FOR GILBERT DSA

3/18/2011

I am honored to present the Distinguished Service Award to my friend Leonard Gilbert. Leonard, it seems like only yesterday that we were inducted into the first class of the College in this Great Hall in 1990.

It is customary on these occasions to review the life and accomplishments of the recipient of this award. Leonard, as a former bankruptcy examiner, I felt compelled to “dig” up as much information about you as I could. So here we go.

Leonard was born in Hutchinson, Minnesota, a small town of 800 people. At the age of 10 he and his family moved to Lakeland, Florida, where he began his lifetime of distinguished service as a bag boy at the Publix grocery store.

At the age of 18 he made his way to Emory University in Atlanta where he rendered distinguished service as a doorman at Joe Cotton’s Supper Club, a local steakhouse.

Upon graduation, he headed to Harvard Law School. During the summer break he rendered distinguished service as a member of the construction crew building Interstate 4 in Florida.

After graduating from Harvard in 1961, he joined a Tampa, Florida firm, later known as Carlton, Fields, where he became a partner and president and chairman of the firm.

Leonard was able to fulfill his dream of practicing law with one of his children when, at the suggestion of his daughter Suzanne to the managing partner of her firm, he was invited to become a partner at Holland & Knight where he practices in the areas of banking, commercial finance, creditors' rights, insolvency and commercial litigation.

Leonard Gilbert's distinguished service has continued for more than half a century. He has served with distinction as a Fellow, Regent, Director and Chair of the Judicial Nominating Committee of our College and as a Director and Treasurer of the American College of Bankruptcy Foundation.

His volunteer activities have also included professional, charitable and cultural organizations on the local, state, national and international levels including

- President of the Florida Bar,
- President of the American College of Commercial Finance Lawyers,
- Chairman of the Tampa Bay Bankruptcy Bar Association,
- President of the Tampa Museum of Art,
- Chairman of the Arts Council of Tampa and Hillsborough County,
- President of the Harvard Law School Association of Florida,
- President of the Midtown Kiwanis Club,
- Chairman of the General Practice Section and a Member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association,

- Co-Chair of the International Bar Association Section on Insolvency Law,
- a member of the Judicial Legal Delegation to the People's Republic of
China –

and the list goes on and on.

In addition to his volunteer activities, Leonard enjoys traveling with his wife, Jean, and their family, deep sea fishing off the coast of Mexico, and hunting quail in South Georgia. According to Leonard, the quail have little to worry about when he is in the field!

In the midst of his many accomplishments, it is important not to lose sight of the qualities of Leonard Gilbert.

In my investigation I talked to members of his family and a number of his friends, colleagues and adversaries and the following qualities consistently emerged –

- hard working,
- disciplined,
- organized,
- efficient,
- meticulous,
- a man of great personal integrity,
- a true gentleman,

- a great mentor, boss and role model,
- a class act.

When Leonard was in the 8th Grade at Lakeland Jr. High School, he failed to turn in his homework and his teacher, Mrs. Bertie Mae Lipscomb, made him write on the blackboard 500 times, “Procrastination is the thief of time.” Thus began the discipline that has led to a lifetime of distinguished service.

Robert Woodruff, an Atlanta icon, Emory University benefactor and President of the Coca-Cola Company had a sign in his office that read: “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you don’t care who gets the credit.” This sums up the distinguished career and service of Leonard Gilbert.

Leonard, it is my honor and privilege to present to you the Distinguished Service Award of the American College of Bankruptcy.