

Remembering Joe Minsky

by Peggy McCormick

Our friend and colleague Joe Minsky died on April 24, 1992, six weeks after he was diagnosed with cancer. To his friends in AILA, the loss is far reaching. Joe made a lasting impact on the law since his 1950 graduation from the University of Chicago. In *Matter of Caron*, the AAU recognized prominence in business as a basis for H-1. Joe's work in the Seventh Circuit case *Carvajal-Munoz v. INS*, paved the way for the Supreme Court's Cardoza-Fonseca decision liberalizing the standard used in the definition of refugee. In *Garcia v. Illinois Department of Registration*, the Illinois Appellate Court granted a foreign trained dentist the right to take the Illinois Dental Examination.

When one of our clients was denied a visa at the U.S. Consulate in Honduras, Joe insisted that the firm take the case to court pro bono, resulting in *Garcia v. Baker*, a recent challenge to the doctrine of consular absolutism. Joe is credited with the original idea that led to the famous *Silva v. Levi* case. That case challenged the State Department's authority to allocate Western Hemisphere visa numbers to Cuban refugees during the 1970s. Joe conceived the theory that supported a series of individual cases brought by Minsky & Feiertag, culminating in the *Silva* class action brought by Legal Assistance Foundation and resulting in the recapture of 144,000 Western Hemisphere visa numbers.

Beyond his contributions to immigration law, Joe was a champion for civil rights throughout his career. In the 1960s, he played a key role in establishing the Illinois Fair Employment Practices Act and for many years was Hearing Officer for the Chicago Commission on Human Relations. He litigated *Caro v. Shultz*, a Seventh Circuit case establishing the right of federal employees to a trial de novo on employment discrimination complaints and adopted by the Supreme Court in a related case.

Joe was a leader in his profession. Past AILA Chapter chair, he also chaired several sections of the Chicago Bar and the Illinois State Bar Associations. He chaired the first annual ALI-ABA conference and was a regular contributing author to the Illinois Institute of Continuing Legal Education. Deeply committed to Jewish groups, he was President of the American Jewish Congress,

Chicago Council, and on its Steering Committee for many years receiving the 1991 Pro Bono Publico Award. A long-standing board member for the Bureau of Jewish Employment Problems of the Jewish Federation, he was active in the Decalogue

Society and the Chicago Jewish Historical Society. After his first wife died four years ago, Joe established the Doris Minsky Memorial Fund which published an historical booklet on Jewish culture in Chicago.

Joe's life was a legion of accomplishments. But most importantly, Joe was a person of profound integrity with a vast reservoir of empathy. He was resilient, optimistic, a person of keen intellect, yet efficient and pragmatic, with a sense of humor. He was

youthful and unthreatened by youth, a friend to many young lawyers. He loved people and appreciated their differences, which brought him into the civil rights movement and the immigration field. Joe was at once practical and visionary. He knew when to fight and when to compromise. He was an idea man yet an excellent listener, able to assimilate other ideas easily into his perspective. He had strong opinions but was never stubborn or domineering. He was, in short, a joy to work with.

But he was not consumed by work; he enjoyed the finest things in life. An avid reader and a music lover, he always seemed to have a symphony, play, opera or lecture to attend. He loved to travel and he traveled often. He treasured his family. Joe and Doris had two sons and two grandchildren. After Doris died, Joe met Claire Ross, whom he married a year and a half ago. He became father and grandfather to four more families, all of whom he frequently visited with Claire. Joe was so happy with Claire; they had many plans. I admire Claire for her courage and for the unflinching support she gave Joe through this terrible ordeal. Joe, accustomed to having people rely upon him throughout his life, was blessed with Claire to rely upon in his time of need. It was easy to rely on Joe and our firm certainly did. As each day passes we learn of still another thing we miss because he is not with us. It was a wonderful privilege to have worked so closely with Joe, one which I will never forget.

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