

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE ALLEN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

We are here today to remember Neil F. Sandler who died on February 8, 2016 in Charlotte, NC; and

Neil was the oldest of the three sons of Louis and Betty Sandler; and

Neil will always be remembered as an outstanding and faithful husband, father, lawyer, mentor, and friend.

Neil is survived by his loving spouse of 58 years, Carol Kalver Sandler; and their three children: Susan Goodman, Michael Sandler, and Benjamin Sandler; and six grandchildren.

Neil was born and raised in Northwest, Indiana where he was the middle brother to Richard Sandler, a retired pharmacist; and Howard Sandler, who on occasion practices law with Carson Boxberger in Fort Wayne while residing in Venice, FL.

Neil graduated from Indiana University School of Business with a degree in accounting, and he received his law degree from Wayne State University in Detroit, MI while working for the Internal Revenue Service. He was licensed to practice law in Michigan, Indiana, and North Carolina.

Neil moved to Fort Wayne in the early 1960's to work at the firm of Kennerk & Dumas. He later joined with attorney David Wright to form Wright & Sandler. In 1976, Neil and Howard started Sandler & Sandler in the old Utility Building on Wayne Street. Sandler & Sandler continued until January 1, 1984 when they merged with a group of lawyers to form Beckman Lawson Sandler Snyder & Federoff. This triple merger took months of negotiation between Fred Beckman, Jack Lawson, Steve Snyder, Neil and Howard, Jim Federoff, and John Brandt. The meetings started after work and went late into the evening. Throughout this process, Neil was always the voice of reason and encouraged discussion so that issues were quickly resolved. We didn't realize it at the time, but Neil was already honing his skills at mediating disputes. Throughout his career, Neil focused his practice on family law and civil litigation, and he became one of the go-to lawyers on domestic relations in Indiana.

Many of you will recall the opposition that mediation faced when it was reintroduced to our profession in the early 90's. While many lawyers resisted this change in our practice, Neil saw it as a healthy way to resolve family law disputes. He embraced the concept whole heartedly and took the first training class that was offered. His ability to express empathy, communicate with strangers, and find common ground between warring couples was legendary. Since his wife, Carol, was a licensed therapist, Neil immediately started imagining a mediation team providing therapeutic mediation services to clients, especially when children were involved.

When Neil retired from Beckman Lawson on December 31, 1995, he was at the peak of his career. He and Carol built a beautiful home on Lake Norman north of Charlotte, NC to relax and enjoy life. However, it didn't take Neil long to realize he missed practicing law and helping people solve problems. He started a mediation practice and did pro bono work for the Children's Law Center. He also provided litigation support to family law attorneys in the area and earned the respect and admiration of the local bar.

While the practice of law was his chosen profession, his real passion was his wife and children, and then his grandchildren. He was always proud of his children's accomplishments, which were many, and you can be sure no major decision was made in the Sandler household without having Carol's input. They were a wonderful team. Neil's hobbies included living near the water, boating on the water, and trying to keep his golf ball out of the water. He was quite successful with the first two.

Neil was also a licensed pilot and loved to fly his Cherokee 6 airplane. Some of us had the good fortune to fly with Captain Sandler, and we were happy all of his take-offs and landings were successful. However, I do recall a time when Neil and I flew to southern Indiana to conduct discovery on a case. On the return flight to Fort Wayne International Airport, he was banking the plane to make his approach when the passenger door suddenly popped open. Well, I was the passenger. Neil immediately noticed and calmly reached in front of me to slam the door shut. His only comment was, "Don't worry about that, it happens all the time." Since my heart had momentarily stopped, I was unable to respond.

Neil was also involved in firm management. Because of his skills at communication and his understanding of human nature, he was the natural choice to be in charge of personnel. I remember when we hired a woman to serve as our receptionist, and she did a wonderful job while we were a 15-lawyer firm. However, when we grew to 25 lawyers, she struggled with the increased volume of calls. The firm decided to let her go. And, of course, Neil was assigned the task of delivering that message. The meeting took place and she was let go. Several weeks later I ran into her, and she told me Neil had done the best job of firing her of any employer she had ever had. Neil was just that kind of guy.

Neil also loved the practice of law. I would sit in on his initial conferences with a new client and marvel at how he always said the right thing, asked the right questions, and accurately analyzed the client's case. One of the initial meetings I missed took place between Neil and a farmer who owned and managed a large farming operation. The farmer was in his late 80s, and he and his wife had been married for almost 60 years. Neil asked the farmer, "Why in the world would you divorce your wife after 60 years of marriage?" The farmer's response, "I never liked that bitch." The case went on for a couple of years, and somehow the parties survived long enough to finalize their divorce.

Neil was also active in his community. He was President of the Fort Wayne Jewish Federation, and President of his congregation at the Temple Achduth Vesholom. He taught on the faculty of the Alfred Adler Institute and served on their board. After moving to North Carolina, he became involved with the Piedmont Mediation Center where he served on their board and then became president of that organization.

A quote by George Bernard Shaw describes Neil's attitude toward life, "This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose, being a force of nature, instead of a feverish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me, it is a sort of splendid torch which I've got to hold up for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

I hope all of you commit to grabbing Neil's torch and continue his legacy.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Allen County Bar Association gives public expression of its sorrow upon this, the occasion to remember and pay respect to Neil F. Sandler; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be unanimously adopted by those present for this occasion; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be transmitted by the Allen County Bar Association, to the members of the Neil F. Sandler family; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be spread of record in the permanent records of the Federal and State Courts in Allen County to evidence the respect and admiration the members of the Bench and the Bar had for their departed friend, mentor, and colleague, Neil F. Sandler.

Dated this 19th day of August 2016 at Fort Wayne, Indiana.

The Allen County Bar Association


By: Bart Arnold, President


The Honorable Craig J. Bobay
Judge, Allen Superior Court



Resolution prepared and presented by John H. Brandt