

## In Memoriam: James T. Conlon, Jr.

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JANUARY 2012

My friend and mentor, Jim Conlon, passed away at his home in Missouri, on December 10, 2011. When I first began to practice law in 1978 at Bower & Gardner, I was assigned to assist, Jim, a former assistant district attorney in Westchester County, on virtually every "Conlon file" in the office during my four year tenure at the firm.

What I learned from Jim during those years was never imparted to me in law school or anywhere else. First, Jim was an incredibly hardworking lawyer and it was a matter of principle with Jim that any junior working for him should work just as hard. I truly believe that Jim deemed hard work good for one's soul. A part of his intensity lingers inside me 30 years later.

Second, Jim was one of the most ethical men I have ever known. Jim played very hard, but he always played fair, and he demanded that his adversaries be fair with him in return. When an adversary witness lied on the witness stand at a trial, Jim viewed the perjured testimony as a moral affront. His cross-examination was not merely a "gotcha" moment. Rather, his examination of such a witness seemed to suggest his or her moral depravity in some greater sense, and he was able to convey this conviction to the jury.

Finally, Jim had a remarkable sense of humor. After returning from court, Jim would regale his colleagues with stories about his day that had all of us holding our sides bursting with laughter. He had the rare gift of making one's foibles—his, an adversary's, a judge's or a colleague's—appear very very funny.

Unfortunately, I did not see Jim that much after 1982, when I left Bower & Gardner. Jim spent 25 years as a litigation partner with Sedgwick, Detert, Moran & Arnold of New York City, handling a wide variety of complex high-stakes trials, largely in the area of products liability. Jim's integrity and outstanding trial skills were widely recognized by his peers, earning him an AV Martindale rating and frequent inclusion in the Best Lawyers in America. He specialized in the subtle but deadly cross examination of many an opposing witness.

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According to his obituary, Jim is survived by a daughter, Heather, 22, who was born during his earlier marriage to Barbara Conlon. He is also survived by his wife and great love, Leanne DeShong, and

stepchildren Serena, 12; Zach, 11; and Zoe, 9. Jim and Leanne married in 2006 and created a warm and loving home in Kansas City. He established a law practice here, focusing on the representation of individuals who have been injured or those who could not otherwise afford to pay for legal services.

Despite his formidable accomplishments, Jim was always a gentle, humble man who was unfailingly kind and generous to everyone. He often observed that it was important to truly see another person, because most likely that person, like you, is trying their best and trying to do the right thing. We will all miss him. Suddenly, the world seems like an emptier place with Jim Conlon no longer among us.