



Leo Maurice Bearman

August 20, 1935 - September 21, 2020

Leo Maurice Bearman died on September 21, 2020, in Memphis, Tennessee. He was 85 years old. He is preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Joy Magdovitz Bearman. He is survived by his sister Kay Bearman; his children David and Judy Bearman, Edward and Terri Bearman, Amy and Richard Dorsey; his grandchildren Rachel Bearman, Anna Bearman, Leah and Matt Pinkston, Ethan Bearman, Emma Joy Bearman, Isaac Dorsey, Levi Dorsey; and his great granddaughter Dorothy Pinkston.

Leo was born in Memphis in 1935. He spent many summers of his youth at his beloved Camp Nebagamon in Wisconsin. He graduated from Central High School in Memphis and went on to graduate magna cum laude from Yale University and earn a law degree from Harvard University. After law school, Leo and Joy moved back to Memphis where he practiced law with his father and later merged into what is now the law firm of Baker Donelson Bearman Caldwell & Berkowitz. He continued to actively practice law until his death.

Leo had many passions. He enjoyed a love/frustration relationship with the game of golf. He loved wine and great food. He read and appreciated great literature: Shakespeare, Sherlock Holmes, and his favorite book, Moby Dick. Leo was an inspired teacher – serving as an adjunct professor at the University of Memphis Law School for more than 20 years, teaching Jewish short stories to a loyal group of followers at Temple Israel, and instilling the importance of reading and literature to high school and professional groups. Leo was also deeply devoted to his friends and colleagues – many of whom were considered to be family.

Throughout his life Leo was invested in the Memphis community. He served in leadership roles at Temple Israel, the Memphis and Shelby County Bar Association, the Memphis Orchestral Society, and the Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association, among others. He was a co-founder of the Leo Bearman Sr, American Inn of Court, named for his father, and was a founder and President of Goodwill Homes Community Services.

Leo's life's work was the law. He deeply believed it to be the noblest of professions. The awards, recognitions, and accolades bestowed on Leo by his colleagues – locally and nationally - are too numerous to mention. At his core, he remained a humble advocate for professionalism and civility in the law and life. He felt strongly that mentoring young lawyers was an essential part of being an attorney. Leo rose to the top of his profession and engaged in some of the most sophisticated litigation in Tennessee, yet he continued to represent anyone who would ask for his help, sometimes being rewarded by a homemade pie or fresh vegetables from a garden. Every client – no matter how big or small – was his most important client.

Leo was a sixth-generation member of Temple Israel, where he served as President from 1979-1982. His years of service to Temple included teaching countless confirmation students and adults. Everything he did – personally and professionally – was grounded in the values of Reform Judaism. His service to others is his legacy.

Leo Bearman's most profound love was his family. He was a fiercely devoted husband, brother, son, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He taught his children by word and deed. The person most people knew as the iconic and stalwart attorney will be remembered by his family as Dad, Daddy, and Popa Leo – attending ballet recitals and soccer games, dancing for hours, leading Passover seders, telling bad jokes, and asking his grandchildren what they were reading. He reserved his biggest smiles for his grandchildren and great-granddaughter.

The family is grateful beyond measure to Leo's friends and colleagues for their friendship, support, prayers, and love.

Messages of condolence may be sent to The Bearman Family at 1069 Humphreys Oak Circle, Memphis, TN, 38120, or emailed to LeoBearmanFamily@gmail.com.

In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that donations be made to Goodwill Homes Community Services at 4590 Goodwill Rd. Memphis TN, 38109 or to the Temple Israel General Fund 1376 E. Massey Rd, Memphis TN, 38120.

Cemetery

Temple Israel Cemetery

1708 Hernando Road

Memphis, TN, 38106

Comments



“ In 1980 when Leo Bearman was President of the Memphis Bar Association, I proposed to him at an annual meeting to create an MBA History Committee to preserve the history of the Memphis Bar. After the meeting, he asked me to set it up, and he would approve it. I asked Judge Robert Lanier to be the Historian and John McWhorter and I to be the Co-curators. At the time in 1980, my wife was the President of the Women's Auxiliary to the MBA, and she and the members raised the money to buy three display cabinets to place in the Court House and be filled with historical documents. Leo asked Judge Lanier to write a history of the Memphis Bar Association. That book is the most professional history ever written about the iconic Memphis lawyers of the past. In addition, several issues of the Bar Magazine were dedicated to honor the Lawyer Heroes of WWII. Without President Leo Bearman, that History Committee would never have ever created, and Judge Lanier's book might never have been written, and the heroes of WWII might never have been honored in the MBA magazines. Ironically, 2020 is the 75th anniversary of WWII and the 200th anniversary of the City of Memphis.

Thank you Leo Bearman for being the best MBA President ever, and for being my friend.

Sincerely,

George Whitworth

George Whitworth - September 23, 2020 at 01:41 PM



“ Mr.Leo Bearman Jr. you are a Memphis Legal giant in Memphis that is going to be missed very much. You represented my father five Years ago and I will miss you and your kindness and respect for Attorneys! My father passed away 3 weeks ago and I know that you and him are asking for the Judge for Peace and I was there when you represented

my father. You are one of the best friends my father ever had in the Legal profession and you are a Great Man!

Lewis Garrison Jr.

lewis garrison Jr. - September 22, 2020 at 11:59 PM



“ Love, Piglett, Miss BoBo and Sister Sharon purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of Leo Maurice Bearman.



Lucy A. Rice - September 22, 2020 at 04:56 PM