

Judge H. Lee Sarokin was born in Perth Amboy, New Jersey and died at age 94 of Pulmonary Fibrosis in La Jolla, CA. He was a graduate of Dartmouth College and Harvard Law School. He joined the Newark, N.J. law firm of Lasser & Lasser in 1953 and became a partner after 3 years, the firm name changing to Lasser Lasser Sarokin & Hochman. He was an experienced and respected trial lawyer for 25 years before being appointed to the Federal District Court in New Jersey. Simultaneously while a lawyer, he served as assistant Union County counsel, taught law at Rutgers University, served as March of Dimes chair and participated in numerous other civic activities including coaching little league teams. He was a founder of Temple Sharey Shalom in Springfield, N.J. During the Newark riots he joined a group of attorneys who volunteered to defend African Americans arrested during the riots. He represented the teachers' union in the first strike in the nation by teachers.

He was selected by a bipartisan committee along with 3 others to be recommended for a judicial appointment. He had served as finance chairman for Sen. Bill Bradley in his first run for the U.S. Senate, and Senator Bradley was a strong supporter of his nomination. He was formally nominated by President Carter, approved by the Senate and commenced his judicial career in 1979.

He became nationally known for the unique writing style of his opinions. "In the last 6 years Judge Sarokin has won a reputation for the length, thoroughness, elegance, and in particular, pungency of his opinions, which belies his generally courteous courtroom manner." (N.Y. Times 11/8/1985)

"In scores of opinions over the last 13 years, Judge H. Lee Sarokin gathered the evidence and spoke his mind, with a force and clarity that lawyers and judges say rivals or surpasses the best writing in any Federal judicial district. The first few paragraphs of each decision are fully formed essays or editorials in simple but elegant language that pull no punches and can lure even the layman who may be shy of wading into the usually murky waters of legal syntax and expression." (N.Y. Times, 9/18/1992)

He was "quote of the day" 5 times in the New York Times.

He described his writing style as one that should be understandable to the public in matters of public interest and not only to lawyers and judges. When nominated

to the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit by President Clinton, the Republican Senators requested all of his written opinions and received approximately 2500 in addition to his many speeches and law review articles.

Judge Sarokin was selected 4 times by his peers to chair the national conference of federal judges held in Washington, D.C., every 4 years. He was the only judge to ever be appointed twice as chair of a circuit judicial conference. He received numerous appointments from Chief Justice Rehnquist to serve on a variety of committees. He chaired the often cited major task force study of attorney fee awards. He was the recipient of numerous awards during his judicial tenure.

While on the District Court he granted a writ of *habeas corpus* freeing Rubin "Hurricane" Carter after he had served 19 years in prison. The case was portrayed in the movie "The Hurricane" starring Denzel Washington. He presided over the first major cigarette cases in the country and ordered the tobacco companies to reveal secret documents which they had concealed for decades under the shield of attorney/client privilege. In doing so he used very harsh language against the industry for which he was removed from the cases by the Court of Appeals. His decision, however, is credited with launching liability against the tobacco industry and the huge settlements which followed with the states and other litigants. He issued an opinion finding that the Continental Can Company had intentionally and systemically prevented pension vesting by its employees, which resulted in a settlement of \$430 million---the largest ERISA settlement.

Among his 2500 opinions, he was the first in the country to order Kiwanis and similar organizations to admit women. He ruled that reporters and the media could not be held liable for punitive damages unless the plaintiffs could prove actual damage; that a pending libel action should survive the death of the plaintiff; that the HHS agency in repeatedly denying benefits to disabled veterans was "a heartless and indifferent bureaucratic monster destroying lives"; that New Jersey legislation restricting abortions was unconstitutional; ; that (as early as 1982) women were entitled to equal pay for equal work; that a homeless man could not be barred from a library at the sole discretion of the librarian; that disabled children were entitled to receive a meaningful education; that offensive speech was entitled to constitutional protection; that the testing for fire and police in all of the major cities in New Jersey discriminated against minorities; that teachers could not be retaliated against for criticizing the school district in which

they worked; that college students' privacy was violated by posting their social security numbers with their grades; and many more.

After serving 15 years on the District Court, he was elevated to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals by President Clinton. He retired after serving approximately 2 years and moved to California. Once there, he served as a lecturer, mediator, arbitrator and was frequently called upon as an expert witness. He was appointed Distinguished Jurist in Residence at the University of San Diego Law School where he served for 5 years. He authored over 200 articles for the Huffington Post and wrote 11 plays, the first of which was performed in Toronto, Canada and the others at the North Coast Repertory Theater. He tried unsuccessfully to obtain clemency for a Colorado group known as the IRP6. He was a frequent guest on PBS' The Open Mind. He tutored at Casa de Amistad where he started a music program for Latino students. He also lectured at the Braille Institute for the Blind. He continued to play jazz drums with local groups. He was a supporter and great admirer of the San Diego Youth Symphony. He was a lifetime member of the American Law Institute.

In 2007 he launched under the auspices of the ACLU San Diego and Imperial Counties an ambitious civic education project to teach local school children about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights. Attorneys, judges, elected officials and others visited schools during September each year. As of 2019, 100,000 students have benefitted from the program and it served as a model for ACLU affiliates nationwide.

He is survived by his wife Margie, children Jim, Jeff, Abby, Ted and Kathy and 11 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild.