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# Leon Lazer (1921-2018)

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## LEON LAZER (1921-2018)

*Jeffrey B. Morris*\*

Some years ago, in this journal I joined my colleagues in contributing some words acknowledging our respect and fondness for Leon Lazer as he celebrated his ninetieth birthday.<sup>1</sup> We were fortunate to have another half decade with Leon -- years during most of which he continued to teach. His intellect continued to be extraordinary while his physical health somewhat declined. That he had such a long and constructive life provides some solace to those of friends he left behind, but only some.

We miss terribly those lunches where he regaled us with relish with his views on the problems of the nation, the Democratic Party and the law school. While Leon had a matchless memory for the past, far more often he was engaged with life in the present. Though without peer as a pessimist, such pessimism was belied by his sage counsel for improving the present. Leon continued his work almost to the end as Chair of the Pattern Jury Instruction Committee -- when he stepped down, he remained a member. His colleagues marveled at the ability he had during his tenth decade to explain with extraordinary lucidity and precision recent New York cases of importance.

What a terrible loss it is that Leon continually resisted blandishments to undertake an oral history for the stories he had to tell were fascinating -- of crossing France after D-Day, of the political world of the Town of Huntington and Suffolk County, of his work on the Appellate Division, Second Department and much else.

For a number of years, Leon and I served together on the executive committee of the faculty. He plunged into this work with the vigor and interest of a junior assistant professor seeking tenure. He understood the peculiarities of the academic world well and his advice was always practical and usually followed.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey B. Morris, *On the Occasion of Leon Lazer's 90th Birthday*, 28 TOURO L. REV. 551 (2012).

If I had to choose one of Leon's passions that I most miss, it was his passion for opera. Although our subscriptions to the Met took place on different days during the opera season (which pretty much paralleled the academic year) we compared notes on the quality of the singers, the productions and of the opera itself. We did, however, also attend with Rene and Dona (our wives) and with our friend Nicola Lee, many performances of the Opera Orchestra of New York led by Eve Queler. We both loved her revivals of Bel Canto operas and admired greatly her marked ability to discover in Europe and great young talents, whom she brought to New York for their American debuts. Neither of us was afraid to relate to the other those times when extraordinary music and extraordinary singing brought us to tears.

Leon Lazer used his 96 years well. He was a great figure in the law of New York State, a superb teacher and valued citizen at Touro and a great colleague and companion. He is and will be continued to be missed very greatly.