

Sol Lindenbaum

1915-1994



Sol Lindenbaum was born in 1915 to Louis S. and Hilda Lindenbaum of El Dorado, Kansas. He grew up with sister, Sylvia, and brother, Robert, living at 109 S. Atchison.

Those who knew him said of Sol, "What a mind he had!", "The most intelligent man I ever knew", and "smartest fellow who ever lived in El Dorado".

Sol's parents were devout in their Judaism. Out of respect for them, he did not send Christmas cards when he lived at home. But he responded to any sent to him with a cordial letter. Learning of this, a friend once told all of his friends to send him Christmas cards; as a result, it took him from Christmas to Easter to respond to the mountain of cards received.

After attending the University of Kansas on a Summerfield Scholarship, he went on to graduate from Harvard Law School.

While a student at Harvard, Lindenbaum happened to be in New York, so he went to see his benefactor to thank him for his support while Sol was at the University of Kansas. Solon Summerfield later confided to his friends that of all the young people who had been Summerfield Scholars, Lindenbaum was the only one to have ever thanked him.

Returning to El Dorado after college, Lindenbaum practiced law. He and his wife, Dorothy, lived at 431 N. Taylor. Two children were born to them, Joan and David.

Sol's friend and fellow El Dorado lawyer Charles Heilmann remembered that he had a frank, open countenance – he looked you squarely in the eye during conversation with a look that told

you he was interested in you and what you had to say. Lindenbaum was a man of honor and integrity, unpretentious, with a quiet confidence and dignity.

Lindenbaum served in active military service with the United States Army during World War II. Following this, he served in the US Army Reserve for twenty years, retiring with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

He died on October 25, 1994 in Atlanta, Georgia, where he lived following retirement. He was honored with burial in Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

CONNECTION TO BUTLER COUNTY

Sol Lindenbaum attended local schools in El Dorado. During his time at El Dorado High School, he served as senior class president. He was also editor of the Wildcat News, the school's newspaper, during the second semester.

In the Kansas state scholastic contests held in Emporia, Kansas during Sol's years in high school, he earned an honorable mention in Algebra I and in English IX. He placed third, earning a bronze medal, in English XI.

A member of the National Honor Society club at El Dorado High School, Lindenbaum seemed to live the club's purpose out in his life, namely: "to create an enthusiasm for scholarship, to stimulate a desire to render service, to promote worthy leadership, and to encourage the development of character in pupils of the El Dorado High School".

Following graduation from the University of Kansas and Harvard Law School, Lindenbaum returned to El Dorado to practice law for a short time. His law offices were in the Haines building downtown.

Sol enjoyed playing the violin; sometimes he met Charlie Heilmann in one of their offices in the evenings to play violin duets. They often met in front of the Haines building during the workday, then repairing to Harry Pappas' New York Restaurant for coffee and conversation.

Lindenbaum's father worked in the oil well supply business, with El Dorado Iron & Supply Company located at 401 E. Central in El Dorado.

LEAVING THE AREA

Sol Lindenbaum was born El Dorado area. After attending college, he returned to practice law. But his work in El Dorado was interrupted with America's entering World War II. Sol left town to enlist in the army in 1940.

Even though he never again called El Dorado home, he often returned to visit family and friends, even after his mother moved to Wichita to live. He maintained a correspondence with his close friends, Charles Heilmann, Deb and Frances Wallingford, and Archie Leben.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Lindenbaum graduated from El Dorado High School in 1932, one of only thirteen boys statewide to be awarded the Summerfield Scholarship to attend the University of Kansas. Solon Summerfield, a New York manufacturer, wealthy philanthropist, and alumnus of the university established this prestigious award in 1929. The scholarship was renewable, depending on the scholar maintaining a high record of work.

Nearly 400 outstanding seniors were nominated in 1932; of these, a group was selected from examinations held in six Kansas towns. An additional examination and interview was held with the scholastic committee at the college for those scoring high on the previous exam.

Following the conclusion of World War II, Lindenbaum served in the United States Department of Justice for 30 years. He was a member of the small team who drafted the Civil Rights Legislation in the 1960s.

He spent twelve years as the Executive Assistant of the Attorney General of the United States, serving six different Attorney Generals. The office of Attorney General, as head of the Department of Justice and chief law officer of the Federal Government, represents the United States in legal matters in general, and gives advice and opinions to the President and to heads of executive departments when so requested. The Executive Assistant to the Attorney General and the Director of Public Relations are both positions attached to the Office of the Attorney General and report directly to him.

Following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, there was an investigation concerning some missing autopsy materials, including Kennedy's tissue samples and brain matter. In the course of its investigation, the committee contacted numerous people in an unsuccessful attempt to locate the missing materials, including Lindenbaum, as a former Justice Department official. (It was later determined that Robert Kennedy most likely removed the items from the National Archives.)

Repeatedly during his 1968 presidential campaign, Richard M. Nixon said that a new Attorney General was needed. When John Mitchell moved into the job following the election, he immediately set out to make good on Nixon's implied promise that the country's top legal officer would know how to use wiretaps to fight organized crime.

In 1974, the Supreme Court ruled that a sizable chunk of Mitchell's taps had been improper and illegal, wiping out nearly two years of dogged work by federal investigators and imperiling cases involving no fewer than 626 accused gamblers, narcotics dealers and other racketeers.

The 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Sage Streets Act gave federal investigators vastly expanded authority to use taps – as long as the Attorney General or a specially designated assistant personally approved them. But dozens of authorizations were simply initialed “JNM” by Lindenbaum or sometimes by Lindenbaum’s secretary.

Lindenbaum bluntly blamed the foul-up in protocol on Mitchell’s overwhelming preoccupation with political concerns, particularly promoting the Administration’s law-and-order image. He stated that Mitchell never bothered to authorize any one of his eight Assistant Attorneys General as the designated signer; he apparently wanted to sign them himself. So at first, Lindenbaum would prepare the necessary papers, which Mitchell would sign. After a while, Lindenbaum was forced to sign Mitchell’s initials when Mitchell was out of town, after usually discussing the request with his boss by telephone. Although the intent was there, the procedure was sloppy and patently improper.

Lindenbaum was the number-two man in the Department of Justice under different administrations. He served in that capacity before, during and after the Watergate investigation. Probably no one knew more about Watergate than him.

When Lindenbaum’s impending retirement was published in the news, an Assistant Secretary of the State Dept. commented, “We honestly don’t know what we’re going to do over at the State Department when Sol Lindenbaum retires. He’s literally been holding up that building of ours the last few years single-handedly.”

Following retirement from the Department of Justice, he was a consultant to the United States Office of Government Ethics. He was one of many interviewed for the final report of the Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans report in 1976. He also accepted a recruiting assignment from Harvard University.

BIBLIOGRAPHY / FURTHER READING

Local obits, Clymer Research Library, BCHS, El Dorado, Kansas; pp 38, 39

1930 yearbook, El Dorado High School; El Dorado, Kansas

1932 yearbook, El Dorado High School; El Dorado, Kansas

Polk’s El Dorado City Directory – 1931; R. L. Polk & Co., Kansas City, MO; pp 87

Polk’s El Dorado City Directory – 1941; R. L. Polk & Co., Kansas City, MO; pp 84

The El Dorado Times, Oct. 27, 1994; Times Publishing, El Dorado, KS; pp 3

The El Dorado Times, Oct. 28, 1994; Times Publishing, El Dorado, KS; pp 3

The El Dorado Times, May 16, 1932; Times Publishing, El Dorado, KS; pp 1

The El Dorado Times, May 21, 1932; Times Publishing, El Dorado, KS; pp 1

The El Dorado Times, Oct. 31, 1994; Times Publishing, El Dorado, KS; pp 4

The El Dorado Times, May 15, 1995; Times Publishing, El Dorado, KS; pp 4

www.ibiblio.org

www.jfklancer.com

www.jurisearch.com

www.TIME.com (strweb1-12.websys.aol.com)

www.ipsn.org

www.icdc.com