

1 IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LYCOMING COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

2

3 IN RE: :

4 LLA BAR HISTORY MEMORIAL : NO. CV-4-2021

5 RESOLUTION OF :

6 JAMES F. CENDOMA, ESQUIRE :

7

8

9

10

11 MEMORIAL SERVICE OF JAMES F. CENDOMA, ESQUIRE

12 held via Zoom on July 6th, 2021, with the Honorable Nancy L.

13 Butts, President Judge, Presiding, commencing at 4:05 p.m. and

14 concluding at 4:35 p.m.

15

16 **COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

17

18

19 Hon. Marc F. Lovecchio, Chairman

20 Hon. William S. Kieser

21 Charles F. Greevy, Esquire

22 Peter T. Campana, Esquire

23

24

25

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

1  
2           **P. J. NANCY BUTTS:** Well, good afternoon everyone  
3 and thank you very much for joining us today for this Special  
4 Session of Court honoring James Cendoma, a member of the Lycoming  
5 Law Association. I know from speaking with the Chair of the  
6 Resolution Committee that no members of his family were here, but  
7 I'm just grateful for everyone who is here participating and also  
8 for those that are taking the time to view this video on the  
9 Lycoming Law Association web site.

10                               So back in April the Court appointed a  
11 committee to prepare a report and resolution recognizing the life  
12 and accomplishments of Jim Cendoma. Judge Lovecchio, Retired  
13 Judge William Kieser, Pete Campana, and Skip Greevy were all  
14 appointed to be a part of that Committee. So at this time now,  
15 Judge Lovecchio, I'm going to recognize you to present the  
16 Committee Report and Resolution.

17           **JUDGE LOVECCHIO:** Thank you, Your Honor, and the  
18 other Judges. To the Honorable Judges of said Court, on or about  
19 April 6th of 2021, the Honorable Nancy L. Butts, President Judge  
20 of the 29th Judicial District of the Commonwealth of  
21 Pennsylvania, appointed the undersigned Committee to prepare a  
22 report and resolutions memorializing the life and legal  
23 accomplishments of James F. Cendoma for submission to the Court  
24 when completed. Accordingly, your Committee respectfully submits  
25 the following report and resolutions:

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 James F. Cendoma was born in Williamsport,  
2 Pennsylvania on January 28th, 1927, the son of his proud  
3 Italian-American parents, Michael and Antoinette (Miele) Cendoma.

4 He grew up in the Williamsport area and  
5 attended the Williamsport High School in the early 1940's.

6 He joined the U.S. Navy at the age of 15  
7 after forging his birth certificate and served in the South  
8 Pacific aboard the USS Catalpa during World War II. The Catalpa  
9 carried out varied duties in the Solomon Islands during Jim's  
10 tenure, including tending to nets, laying mooring buoys, offering  
11 towing and salvage service, and providing divers for essential  
12 maintenance services for other ships and fleets.

13 In the fall of 1944 Jim was part of the  
14 staging for the invasion of the Palau Islands, a vital  
15 preparation for the return to the Philippines. On September 15,  
16 1944, Jim and his mates stood sentry as troops invaded Peleliu  
17 and then sailed to mine-infested waters to prepare for major  
18 fleet anchorage. According to Jim, he saw plenty of beachheads  
19 getting as close to the beaches as possible riding in a mortar  
20 boat and firing mortars.

21 Jim never hesitated to tell war stories and  
22 he certainly had plenty. He was very proud of his service to his  
23 country. He recalled major battles at Okinawa and Iwo Jima. On  
24 more than one occasion, his ship was attacked by kamikaze pilots  
25 and he fondly recalled shooting down Japanese planes. The

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 Catalpa received two battle stars for World War II service. He  
2 did breathe a sigh of relief when he found that he would not be a  
3 part of a planned invasion of Japan.

4           Upon his release from military service, he  
5 returned to Williamsport and began working on the dike. He  
6 described it as his first real job. It was hard work lifting  
7 stones and using a hammer. He then took a job at Avco as a  
8 machine operator and obtained his high school diploma. He  
9 attended then Dickinson Seminary, now Lycoming College. He  
10 graduated and then attended The Washington School of Law at  
11 American University in Washington, D.C. He graduated with honors  
12 in 1953.

13           He joined the Lycoming Bar Association in  
14 1957 and for many years represented thousands of clients on  
15 varied legal matters. He was the consummate general  
16 practitioner.

17           Among his many accomplishments, he served as  
18 counsel to Pennsylvania Horse Racing Commission under then  
19 Governor Schapp. Among his more notable cases were Valley Forge  
20 Racing Association v. State Horse Racing Commission where he was  
21 successful in defending an action against the Commission to  
22 reverse a licensing decision. In Stokes v. Lecce, he defended  
23 the Chairman of the Commission in a civil suit, and although  
24 losing a verdict, the damages were limited to only \$10,000 and no  
25 attorney's fees. In fact, the case is sometimes cited for the

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 principle that "Fairness of procedure is due process in the  
2 primary sense. It is ingrained in our national traditions and is  
3 designed to maintain them." Citing Justice Frankfurter in Joint  
4 Anti-Fascist Committee v. McGrath.

5 Jim was a man and attorney of character,  
6 class and fairness. He was always willing to help, but more  
7 importantly, he was always willing to ask for help from other  
8 attorneys in order to best serve his clients. As the general  
9 practice of law became more difficult, Jim stayed the course and  
10 fought the great fight. His kind of lawyer is a dying breed.  
11 His loss is a huge loss to the community at large and the legal  
12 community.

13 Jim is remembered for his affable manner, his  
14 sincere interest in humanity, his service to his church and his  
15 commitment to his family. He was predeceased by his wife. He is  
16 survived by numerous siblings, children, grandchildren,  
17 step-grandchildren and even eight great grandchildren and nine  
18 step-great grandchildren.

19 Seneca, a philosopher and writer, once  
20 commented that "As is a tale, so is a life, not how long it is;  
21 but how good it is is what matters." Jim was fortunate on both  
22 accounts living a long and good life.

23 Now, therefore be it resolved, that we, the  
24 undersigned Committee approved by this Court, joined in by the  
25 Lycoming County Bar Association and Lycoming County bar members,

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 do hereby recognize the passing of James F. Cendoma, Esquire and  
2 in his death we remember his many contributions to his country,  
3 the citizens of this county and others, his family and this Bar.

4 Resolved further, that these Resolutions be  
5 spread at length, upon the minutes of Your Honorable Court and be  
6 published in the Lycoming Reporter.

7 Finally resolved, that this Court and  
8 Committee and the Lycoming County Bar extend to his family our  
9 deep and heartfelt expressions of sympathy. Respectfully  
10 submitted, Marc F. Lovecchio, Chairman; the Honorable William S.  
11 Kieser, Senior Judge; Charles F. Greevy, III; and Peter T.  
12 Campana.

13 At this time, Judge, I would ask -- we're  
14 going to do something different. We're going to play -- thank  
15 you, Judge, for your ability to do this. We're going to play an  
16 interview that the Sun-Gazette had with Jim not too long before  
17 his death.

18 (Whereupon, the video was played.)

19 **JUDGE LOVECCHIO:** Thank you, Judge Butts. I just  
20 want to add a couple things. I met Jim early on when I moved to  
21 the area and he was friends with my father-in-law and my  
22 brother-in-law, Pete. There was this Italian connection. Little  
23 did he know that I'm only half Italian, but I played the part  
24 anyway. He -- I talked to him many, many, different times. We  
25 called -- he called me sometimes about some criminal issues or

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 he'd call me about some other issue, I might call him; but I can  
2 honestly tell you our conversations quickly went from the law to  
3 just life. I'm not sure we ever got into any depth about the law  
4 or the cases or anything else. He ended up talking about --  
5 asking me about my family, talking about his family, talking  
6 about the war, talking about different things, talking about  
7 whether I was going to join the Italian-American Club, where my  
8 kids were going to school, what they were doing. You name it we  
9 talked about it and he was just the kindest, gentlest individual  
10 I think I've ever met in terms of being sincerely and honestly  
11 interested in me and my life and what was going on and I loved  
12 hearing his stories, too. It was -- it was really a pleasure  
13 having him around and having him be able to express, you know,  
14 the humanity. You know, many times we lawyers that's all we do  
15 we talk about the law; but it was nice to see him and not talk  
16 about it. Judge Kieser, anything you want to add?

17 **JUDGE KIESER:** Okay. Jim, as the Resolutions  
18 pointed out, was affable; but he was also laughable. Jim was one  
19 of the first persons of the Bar that when I became a member back  
20 in '68 that I spent sometime talking with and some coffee and  
21 things of that nature and quickly found out that one thing Jim  
22 and I had in common is that my dad, who was then deceased, had  
23 worked for Jim's father-in-law and that was kind of unique and  
24 interesting. My dad and Jim weren't really acquainted, but that  
25 was just one connection. But Jim, you know, I never had an

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 encounter with Jim where you didn't come away smiling and I mean  
2 there was never a bad word, a harsh word, never a raised voice.  
3 He was -- one of the contacts I had with him a lot was in the  
4 divorce masterships that were around the masters would hear  
5 divorce or divorce grounds and facts and issue orders for  
6 approval by the court and the grounds for divorce at that point  
7 really were indignities and many attorneys had some real  
8 imagination as to what constituted indignities and would present  
9 them to the master and make you scratch your head and look for a  
10 case. Jim would be among the best of them with the indignities  
11 that didn't really seem to amount to much to me maybe, but then  
12 surprising he'd pull a case out and say you might think this is  
13 unusual, Judge, here I found this case and that was always just  
14 an interesting aspect of him. But as Judge Lovecchio said, he  
15 always, you know, wanted to know about the family, wanted to know  
16 about life in general, how things were going for you and would  
17 always have something, you know, really great to share. He stuck  
18 it out very well as a sole practitioner. I had tried at one  
19 point to go back into doing that type of work and found that I  
20 couldn't hack it, but Jim hung with it and he served his clients  
21 well and, you know, I think it was a blessing. I hadn't seen Jim  
22 probably now, well, at least six years that I can think of; but  
23 it was so good to see that video, Judge Butts, thank you for  
24 putting us on to that because he had his mind, he had many of his  
25 manners and expressions and everything and it's just great to be

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 able to see that he was rewarded, you know, with that long life  
2 and it was a good one.

3 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** Okay. Thank you. Skip, any  
4 words?

5 **MR. GREEVY:** I would join in both Judge Lovecchio  
6 and Judge Kieser and thank you for that video because I can  
7 personally state that Jim was a real observer of the second World  
8 War. He was very proud of his relation to it and being able to  
9 serve in it and certainly it was often a part of a conversation  
10 that I would have with him. I had the opportunity, I don't know  
11 how many there might have been; but there were several divorces  
12 that I had handled in my younger days and Jim helped to guide me  
13 through some of those as some of the older members of the Bar had  
14 done at that point, too, and he certainly in every opportunity,  
15 Jim was interested in knowing how my family was doing.  
16 Obviously, he knew my parents very well and enjoyed the  
17 associations that he had had with them. In later years and  
18 obviously after he had retired, I did have a very good  
19 opportunity to see Jim at a couple -- a couple times. He was in  
20 a particular assisted living home here out in the township that  
21 had been a very good restaurant, the Hillside, and then turned  
22 into a nursing home. I saw Jim out there a couple times when I  
23 was out there visiting a client or two and he always would say,  
24 Skip, sit down and let's chat for a couple minutes. He was  
25 interested in what was going on in the community. Certainly if I

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 would know anything about any of the attorneys in the vicinity  
2 and he was always a good one to interrelate with stories that he  
3 knew of others and was interested in certainly what I was doing.  
4 I had more of an opportunity when he was up at what was known as  
5 Roseview Court. He lived in there for a few years and I also had  
6 some relatives in there and every opportunity that I would see  
7 Jim he would say sit down, let's chat a few minutes and certainly  
8 I enjoyed the opportunity to do that; but even at that point his  
9 recollections and his perception and prospective on the war and  
10 how he had helped to serve was a big part of his life and I  
11 appreciated the opportunity to know him and I really appreciate  
12 the opportunity that our local bar association does take the  
13 opportunity to perhaps introduce some of these attorneys that  
14 certainly the younger people of our Bar don't know of; but even  
15 with someone who had been retired as long as Jim was I  
16 appreciated the opportunity that it gave us to join together,  
17 share a few thoughts on it. Certainly I did not know his family  
18 very much, although, would see him particularly at the Roseview  
19 once in a while and would have the opportunity to share some  
20 thoughts with him. Even at that point he was very interested in  
21 what my family, my children were doing and sharing thoughts that  
22 he had and other people that he would run into so that I really  
23 appreciated the opportunity to know Jim, to get to know him. As  
24 I say, that video that Judge Butts and Judge Lovecchio were able  
25 to find and put a part was an excellent and an unusual part of

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 one of these memorial services and I really appreciate the  
2 opportunity to have these few remarks also. Thank you, Judge.

3 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** You're welcome. Judge  
4 Lovecchio, Mr. Campana, the other member -- well, here he comes.  
5 He dropped out, but now he's back.

6 **JUDGE LOVECCHIO:** Okay. I missed him, too. There  
7 he is.

8 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** There you are, Mr. Campana.  
9 It's your turn if you have any words of remembrance you would  
10 like to share.

11 **MR. CAMPANA:** I do, Your Honor. Unfortunately our  
12 internet is going in and out over here.

13 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** Go right ahead.

14 **MR. CAMPANA:** All right. Now wait a minute.  
15 Yeah, okay. Jimmy Cendoma he was really good friends with --

16 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** Uh-oh.

17 **JUDGE LOVECCHIO:** It was such a great start, too.

18 **MR. CAMPANA:** -- go to the office after work and  
19 John and Ambrose and me and him and there were two against two,  
20 you know, the two veterans, my Uncle John he was a veteran of  
21 World War, II and Jim, of course they were all -- they were hawks  
22 and my father and I were doves. So we would have some heated  
23 arguments about whether we should continue going on with the war  
24 and Jimmy was a -- he was a patriot as was my Uncle John; so was  
25 I and so was my dad; but we had different viewpoints on that

1 particular issue. But it was so enjoyable to hear their, you  
2 know, hear their arguments and I'll never forget that. When I --  
3 I did some social security law long ago and whenever I had a  
4 question it was Jim Cendoma that I would call to ask about social  
5 security law. He was probably the most knowledgeable in that  
6 area that I knew of anyway and I haven't seen him for -- I hadn't  
7 seen him for a long time before he passed. I'm definitely going  
8 to miss him as I do -- I miss all the old guys. He was a great  
9 man.

10 **P. J. NANCY BUTTS:** Thank you. The Court approves  
11 the Resolution and Report of the Committee and enters the  
12 following order: And now, this 6th day of July 2021, in  
13 consideration of the Resolutions presented by the Committee  
14 appointed to draft Resolutions in the death of James F. Cendoma,  
15 the said Resolutions are adopted and it is ORDERED AND DIRECTED  
16 that the Resolutions herewith submitted and attached be adopted  
17 as an official expression of the Lycoming County Law Association  
18 and this Court and that the same be spread upon the records of  
19 the court and copies of this Resolution be delivered to the  
20 family of James Cendoma and it is further ORDERED AND DIRECTED  
21 that said Resolution be entered at large upon the record of the  
22 Court and that it be printed in the Lycoming Reporter.

23 I offer time now for my colleagues if they  
24 would like to say a few words. Judge McCoy or Judge Linhardt?

25 **JUDGE MCCOY:** Thank you, Judge Butts. I did not

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 know Jim so I don't really have anything specific to say though  
2 I, as I've echoed before, I'm getting tired of doing these, I  
3 wish we were weren't doing so many of these; but it is nice to  
4 hear everything and I really liked the video, that was a nice  
5 touch whoever tracked that down.

6 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** That was Judge Lovecchio. He  
7 provided the link to me. I'm just the technical support, but  
8 thank you. Judge Linhardt.

9 **JUDGE LINHARDT:** Thank you, Judge Butts. I'm  
10 always grateful -- it's sad that we do these and it's sad,  
11 obviously, that we've had so many of them recently; but I'm so  
12 grateful for the opportunity to do these services. Thank you,  
13 Judge Butts and Michelle for organizing this again for us. I did  
14 not have -- I knew of Jim Cendoma, but I never really knew Jim so  
15 for me to just listen to the stories of those who knew him has  
16 been really enjoyable for me. I'm grateful that we do these not  
17 only because I think they're nice for those who knew the person  
18 to be able to share their stories, but for those of us who never  
19 had the opportunity to know them to get to hear those stories.  
20 So thank you all for sharing those stories with us, obviously,  
21 for those that knew him he will be missed. Thank you, Judge  
22 Butts.

23 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** Thank you. I would just say my  
24 experience with him was when I was in the District Attorney's  
25 Office he would do a random criminal case or when I worked for

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 Judge Smith he would come in and what a pleasant man to see him  
2 in the Prothonotary's Office or somewhere in the building and he  
3 was just, hey, how are ya? How are things going? That  
4 collegiality is one of the things that always struck me about our  
5 Bar and the Bench and how everybody just seemed to be looking out  
6 for everybody and to echo the Judges who have spoken already to  
7 say that this opportunity to share our thoughts and memories is  
8 really nice because then we get to learn a little bit more about  
9 the person from other people that knew them better. I remember  
10 when I first moved here when John and Ambrose Campana were both  
11 still alive and I can remember when they came into court and that  
12 level of expertise that was in the building and to think that  
13 Pete shared the opportunities for all of them to get together and  
14 what was it like to grow up with all of that. It just makes you  
15 wonder what life was like back then. But anyway, thank you all  
16 very much for sharing your thoughts. Now I open it up to the  
17 rest of the members of the Law Association who are here if they  
18 wanted to share a few words about their experiences, their  
19 knowledge of Mr. Cendoma. Joe Musto.

20 **JOE MUSTO:** Thank you, Your Honor. I always  
21 enjoyed Jim when I dealt with him in practice. He was part of  
22 the older generation of Americans with Italian descent, too, that  
23 I gravitated towards in my family and at home. He grew up tough.  
24 He was a fighter, but he was honorable, always honest with me,  
25 always congenial. I enjoyed him very much. What's interesting

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 to me, Judge Lovecchio mentioned Jim had to change his birth  
2 certificate. I had papers, my dad's baptismal certificate, which  
3 he swiped from his mother's dresser and forged in order to get in  
4 when he was 15; but they caught him so apparently Jim was a  
5 little bit better than that than my dad was. But what really  
6 struck me with Jim, I didn't get to know him as well as I would  
7 like with practice; but afterwards my mom had to leave  
8 independent living in an apartment and it turned out we couldn't  
9 keep her in the house, it just wasn't working, my brother and I,  
10 so she went to the Hillside and we took her there and she was  
11 nervous, scared and there was Jim and it was impressive to me.  
12 He saw me, walked over to me and stuck a finger in my face and  
13 said, Musto, I remember I did not hate you and I thought well,  
14 that's quite a compliment, you know, I joked very nicely. He  
15 says, don't worry about your mother we'll watch after her and  
16 that's when I saw Jim do things which really impressed me. One  
17 of the things that I saw he organized things all the time at the  
18 Hillside, made people comfortable; but the first time I was there  
19 for dinner he had a little group there, I think five people at my  
20 mom's table, Jim was at the table and he would gather their  
21 little order slips because some had a vision impairment, some had  
22 different problems and he would read what was on the menu to each  
23 of them and he would write down for them. He would check with  
24 them with a pencil what their orders were and sometimes, of  
25 course, that was difficult; but it just impressed me that he

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA

1 found a way to be of service to others at that stage of his life.  
2 I remember my mother when Jim was taken away from the Hillside  
3 she was very upset and she knew him as Pete, I don't know why,  
4 mom was having some issues at that point; but she really missed  
5 him and loved him. That's all I have to say. Thank you, Your  
6 Honor.

7 **P.J. NANCY BUTTS:** Thank you for sharing that.  
8 Anyone else like to share a few words about their experiences  
9 with Mr. Cendoma? Okay. All right. Well, thank you all very  
10 much for coming. I really appreciate it and oh, by the way,  
11 Judge Tira, I believe is on vacation this week, that's why he  
12 wasn't able to join us here today or I'm sure he would have been  
13 here as well. Thank you all very much for participating in this  
14 special session of court. So this will now conclude the Memorial  
15 Service for James F. Cendoma. Once again, I'd like to thank you  
16 all for attending and sharing your special memories and thoughts  
17 about him. This hearing is adjourned. Thank you.

18 (Whereupon, the hearing was concluded at 4:35 p.m.)  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

C E R T I F I C A T E

I hereby certify that the proceedings and the evidence are transcribed fully and accurately from the notes taken by me on the hearing of the above cause to the best of my ability and that this copy is a correct transcript of the same.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Roni Lynn Kreisher  
Official Reporter  
Lycoming County, PA

The foregoing record of the proceedings upon the hearing of the above cause is hereby approved and directed to be filed.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
JUDGE

RONI LYNN KREISHER  
OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER  
LYCOMING COUNTY, PA