

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF LYCOMING COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

IN RE: MEMORIAL RESOLUTIONS : NO. CV-23-00004

CHRISTIAN J. KALAUS, ESQUIRE :

:

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

BEFORE: THE HONORABLE COURT OF LYCOMING COUNTY

DATE: Friday, June 23, 2023; 4:03 p.m.

PLACE: Lycoming County Courthouse
Courtroom No. 1
48 West Third Street
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Thomas Waffenschmidt, Esquire - Chairperson

The Honorable Judge William Kieser

The Honorable Judge Marc Lovecchio

Nicole Spring, Esquire

Linda S. Wettlaufer, RMR
Official Court Reporter
Lycoming County

P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 THE COURT: Thank you all for coming this afternoon.
3 This afternoon we have the privilege of holding a memorial
4 service for a former member of our law association, Christian J.
5 Kalaus. We recognize and appreciate Melissa's attendance here
6 today, and thank you all very much for joining us this afternoon
7 for the memorial service.

8 In April, I appointed a committee to prepare a report
9 and resolution recognizing the life and accomplishments of
10 Chris; and in that order I appointed Tom Waffenschmidt to be the
11 chairperson, Judge Kieser, former Judge Lovecchio, and Nicole
12 Spring to be members of the committee.

13 I now recognize Mr. Waffenschmidt to present the
14 committee report and resolution.

15 MR. WAFFENSCHMIDT: Thank you, Your Honor. Good
16 afternoon. The undersigned committee submits the following
17 resolutions for this Honorable Court's consideration:

18 Christian John Kalaus, Esquire, a member of the Bar of
19 this Court since 2002 died unexpectedly on March 10, 2023.

20 Chris was the husband of Melissa Kalaus, who is an
21 attorney and was a member of this Bar.

22 Chris was born on September 30, 1977, in Scranton,
23 Pennsylvania, and was the son of the late Dorothy Kalaus.

24 Chris graduated from the University of Scranton in May
25 of 1999, Summa Cum Laude. He was on the Dean's lists for all

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Official Court Reporter
Lycoming County

1 four years while at the University of Scranton, a member of the
2 Criminal Justice Honor Society, and the recipient of the
3 Professor Frank Brown Award for Excellence in history.

4 Chris graduated from Syracuse University, College of
5 Law, with a Juris Doctorate degree in 2002. While at Syracuse,
6 Chris was the editor for the Law Review and graduated in the top
7 10 percent of his class.

8 After graduating from law school, he applied and was
9 selected to join the United States Marine Corps, OSC for
10 training and evaluation as a Marine Corps combat officer with
11 the intention of ultimately working for the United States Marine
12 Corps Judge Advocate General.

13 Unfortunately for Chris, he suffered shin splints and
14 was, therefore, physically not qualified to join the Marine
15 Corps. Their loss was Judge Kieser's gain, and he became his
16 law clerk in the summer of 2002 where he remained until he
17 joined the Public Defender's Office on October 8, 2007.

18 He continued to work at the Public Defender's Office
19 until August 16, 2008, when he joined the law firm of Rieders,
20 Travis, Humphrey, Harris, Waters and Waffenschmidt.

21 As a law clerk, Chris was especially astute in
22 ascertaining the legal issues and principles of law which would
23 determine the outcome of an argument or case. He quickly won
24 not only the appreciation and respect of Judge Kieser but also
25 that of the other judges, law clerks, and many attorneys for his

1 legal analysis, research, and writing skills.

2 Chris was the best researcher that Tom Waffenschmidt
3 had ever seen; and, as such, when Tom decided to leave Rieders
4 Travis in 2014, he asked Chris to join him and was lucky enough
5 that Chris agreed.

6 Chris worked at The Waffenschmidt Law Firm for Tom
7 during the past nine years doing all the research and writing,
8 including pleadings, motions in limine, summary judgment
9 motions, any and all Federal Court filings, PO's, briefs in
10 support and briefs in opposition to any motions as well as all
11 mediation and arbitration submissions.

12 Chris also handled all the firm's Social Security
13 disability claims. Chris was a perfectionist, and it would be
14 an extremely rare occurrence where anyone he worked for would
15 make a change to anything that he had drafted.

16 Chris was an avid sports fan and die-hard fan of the
17 Chicago Black Hawks and the Chicago Bears. Chris and his wife,
18 Melissa, enjoyed exercising, biking, and staying fit. They also
19 cared for their two rescue dogs and their cat.

20 Chris was very close to his brother, who lives in
21 Philadelphia, as well as his nephew. Chris is survived by his
22 wife, Melissa, with whom he had been married for 15 years. In
23 fact, Judge Kieser was honored to have performed the wedding
24 ceremony on December 23, 2008.

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED,** that we, the

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Lycoming County

1 undersigned, joined by the Bar of Lycoming County, do recognize
2 the passing of Christian John Kalas, Esquire, and recommend
3 adopting the following resolutions:

4 **BE IT RESOLVED**, that in the passing of Christian John
5 Kalas, Esquire, there has been a loss to the Bar of Lycoming
6 County of an outstanding member who represented the best
7 principles of the legal profession; a loss to the community of
8 an active and unselfish citizen; a loss to his family of a
9 loving husband; and a loss to his friends of a talented and
10 always interesting companion.

11 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a copy of these
12 resolutions be spread upon the records of this Court and that
13 copies of the same be sent to his widow.

14 **BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that this Court and this Bar
15 hereby extend to his widow a deep and heartfelt expression of
16 sympathy.

17 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you. Did you wish to say a few
18 words about Chris?

19 MR. WAFFENSCHMIDT: Yes, Your Honor. Judge Lovecchio
20 was also on this committee. Unfortunately, Marc contacted me
21 this morning saying he was sick and, therefore, could not be
22 here. But he did want me to share a few things about him.
23 Before we do that, I also wanted to say a few things about Chris
24 and having known Chris.

25 First of all, I still can't believe that I'm standing

1 here and that we're having this memorial service for Chris. I
2 first knew him when he was clerking for Judge Kieser. He would
3 sit in on the arguments and listen tentatively to the attorneys
4 present their case to the Judge. And when you got his opinions
5 back, sometimes we lost; and sometimes we won.

6 But even on those occasions where we lost, it was
7 always a well-crafted, intelligent, and sensible opinion that I
8 could understand. I may not agree with the conclusions and the
9 opinions, but I could understand where he was coming from. It
10 was extremely well written.

11 His writing skills, as we've said so many times,
12 research and writing skills, were truly exceptional and second
13 to none. So when Judge Kieser retired it was really a
14 no-brainer for us to try to get him to come to Rieders Travis.
15 He did a brief stint at the Public Defender's Office and then
16 joined us in the summer of 2008.

17 He did some work for most of the partners over there
18 but primarily worked for Gary Harris and myself. There is one
19 case that stands out particularly in my memory where I had the
20 pleasure of working with Chris.

21 It was a breach of contract claim against a big oil
22 and gas company here, and we felt very good about the case. I
23 had done all the discovery and did all the depositions in the
24 case. And on the eve of trial, the big Philadelphia defense
25 firm filed a Motion for Summary Judgment. And Chris, of course,

1 does the briefing on it. He felt good. I felt good. We both
2 felt that clearly we should win and prevail on the Motion for
3 Summary Judgment.

4 Unfortunately, the judge who is not here today, and it
5 doesn't matter who the judge was that disagreed with us, but
6 let's just say it was the tallest judge ever in the county that
7 disagreed with us, granted the Motion for Summary Judgment; and
8 the case got thrown out.

9 Chris, of course, appealed the decision to the
10 Superior Court. And as most of the attorneys here probably
11 know, it's very, very difficult to get a reversal by the
12 Superior Court. Statistically, 80 percent of the cases, you
13 know, are just confirmed.

14 But we were lucky. And Chris did an excellent job.
15 And he got the tallest judge in the county reversed, and we won
16 the case. And shortly afterwards the case settled for
17 \$450,000.00. And it was clear to me that there was no way that
18 I could have won this case without Chris's exceptional work.

19 So when I decided to leave Rieders Travis nine years
20 ago, I knew I needed somebody with Chris's research and writing
21 skills in my corner. I knew that no matter how much time I
22 would spend on research and writing, I could never, never, write
23 as well as he could. Just there's no way.

24 So we were lucky that Chris joined us back nine years
25 ago. And Cindy is here and Eileen is here. The four of us have

1 been practicing together ever since. And we had a tremendous
2 team. Chris had a tremendous work ethic. He went above and
3 beyond whatever it took to get the job done, and he made us a
4 perfect team.

5 I still miss going to his office. I still go up there
6 every once in a while. I miss talking to him, talking about
7 cases and arguments and opinions. You know, you bounce ideas
8 off of each other. I miss that.

9 He was a sports fan, like we said. The Black Hawks
10 and the Bears. And, of course, as a Syracuse orange grad he
11 followed the orange. And I was a Georgetown grad, so when they
12 played against each other, they had a great rivalry. He was not
13 a betting man, so I was -- we were sort of trash talking. I was
14 doing the trash talking. That was not Chris's style. His style
15 was more reserved, intellectual.

16 He loved his wife and, of course, the dogs and the
17 cat. Mondays he would tell us funny stories when he'd come to
18 work about the crazy things the dogs were doing over the
19 weekend. He enjoyed exercising and working out. He was never
20 sick. I don't think he ever missed a day at work. I cannot
21 remember him ever missing a day at work. He was healthy as a
22 horse, which is why this is still so shocking to all of us.

23 Here is an e-mail that I would like to read from Judge
24 Lovecchio. He wanted that to be part of the record.

25 Melissa, I cannot tell you how sorry I am. Your

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Lycoming County

1 relationship with Chris was absolutely amazing, and I can only
2 imagine how difficult this is for you. I will keep you in my
3 prayers and thoughts.

4 Often times after one passes we talk about their
5 education, activities, and accomplishments. Chris, of course,
6 had many. For me though, the measure of one's life is how that
7 person improved the personal life of others.

8 Chris was always a great listener. Unlike me, he
9 thought before he spoke and only after attentive listening to
10 and considering the relative positions. I always envied that
11 about him. I wanted to be like that.

12 Chris was smart as a whip and humble to a fault. What
13 great attributes. He had great ideas and theories but never
14 pushed them on anyone. I loved talking to him about sports.
15 I'm actually not sure we ever talked about the law.

16 Finally, Chris was devoted to Melissa. Without a
17 concern in the world, he would unabashedly walk hand in hand
18 with her during lunches. It was a sight to see. He never spoke
19 an ill word about her or anyone else for that matter. Chris was
20 someone who made me better. For that I am grateful. I will
21 miss him.

22 Cliff Rieders also sent me a letter and wanted the
23 following read:

24 When he worked in the firm here, he was, of course,
25 completely professional, thoughtful, and quiet. It is an

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1 understatement to say that he was diligent. However, I do have
2 one particular recollection of Chris which I still think about
3 from time to time.

4 He had been given two cases by a partner where
5 complaints had been filed in Federal Court with respect to
6 long-term and short-term disability. Neither the partner who
7 gave Chris the assignment, nor Chris, had ever had any
8 experience in this particular area of the law.

9 When I was called in, like a fireman who knows about
10 the fire only when he sees the flames, there was already an
11 adverse ruling from the Court on one of the disability claims.
12 Chris was extremely receptive to having me work with him, review
13 the facts, and make suggestions about what additional
14 information we may be able to get from the doctors.

15 Through what was primarily Chris's work, we did get
16 better reports from the doctors, obtained reconsideration, and
17 achieved a more favorable opinion. This led to an overall
18 settlement of both claims. Without question, this never could
19 have been accomplished without Chris diving in, learning the
20 subject early, and making a marvelous presentation.

21 From then on, I had a profound respect not only for
22 Chris's willingness to work as a team player but also his
23 incredible ability to catch up fast and learn about new areas of
24 the law unfamiliar to him.

25 We joked about how he pulled the partner's coals out

1 of the fire for some years after that. But he was never
2 mean-spirited or apparently annoyed about it.

3 I also remember seeing a terrific opinion which you
4 obtained from Judge Brann concerning the law with respect to the
5 Financial Responsibility Act. You told me at that point that
6 Chris deserved all the credit. You achieved a terrific result
7 with obviously excellent legal craftsmanship from Chris. My best
8 wishes for peace and comfort to the family and Chris's
9 survivors. Thank you.

10 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you.

11 MR. WAFFENSCHMIDT: Thank you.

12 JUDGE BUTTS: Members of the committee, anyone wanting
13 to say a few things?

14 MS. SPRING: Judge Kieser told me I had to go next.

15 JUDGE BUTTS: Okay. Ms. Spring.

16 MS. SPRING: Yep. Chris was adept at research and
17 writing, but he came to the Public Defender's Office in 2007.
18 And as you might know, when you knew Chris, he was very quiet.
19 He was very reserved. He was very introverted.

20 And we gave him the most tremendous child sex abuse
21 case that I have seen in the office in 37 years. And we took it
22 in his office and dropped it down in about three copy paper
23 boxes full of stuff. And so he quietly got to work on that.
24 But he went to court just as competently and just as zealously
25 outside of his comfort zone completely.

1 But my best Chris story is actually personal. Melissa
2 was in the DA's office. And, although we were on opposite sides
3 of the aisle, she and I were friends. And one afternoon I was
4 in my office when she called, hey, is Chris Kalas dating
5 anybody.

6 Chris was so quiet, who would know. I said, Melissa,
7 I can't imagine he's dating somebody. Well, I said e-mail him.
8 She said okay. So she waited until the very end of the day, and
9 she e-mailed him.

10 MELISSA KALAS: It took me that long to come up with
11 something.

12 MS. SPRING: She was a little afraid of rejection and
13 a little shy as outgoing as she is. So the next morning, she
14 waited until midmorning, she called me and said he has not
15 responded, what do you think that means. Give me a minute.
16 I'll take care of it.

17 So I out of my office -- and Chris was right across
18 the hall. And I stomped into his office, and I closed the door.
19 And his eyes got this big. And he's looking at me. And I said
20 you have not responded to Melissa, and you need to do it.
21 Turned around, walked out, left the door open.

22 Well, obviously, he followed my command. But Melissa
23 told me later he thought you were firing him. Who in their
24 right mind would fire Chris Kalas? Because he was competent,
25 and he was so amazing that nobody would.

1 But Chris and Melissa and I had a little secret for
2 awhile. And then we got caught on our secret because Judge
3 Butts found them walking down the street holding hands one day.
4 And so the cat was out of the bag.

5 And shortly after that Chris left us. And when he
6 left, after he left, Melissa and I were in court. We were in
7 this courtroom. And she was sitting there, and I was kind of
8 walking around the courtroom.

9 And she said to me, you know, they called me a
10 cougar -- because Melissa is a little older than Chris
11 was -- and she said I really resent being called a cougar. If
12 they're gonna call me something, I think snow leopard would be
13 the most appropriate. And so I have always adopted that. There
14 is nothing such as a cougar any longer.

15 But I think that's why Chris's passing has hit us all
16 just -- we were shocked. He was so healthy, and he was so --
17 lived healthy. I had the opportunity to go to their wedding. I
18 was really blessed. I think there were about four of us there
19 outside of family.

20 And I just was blessed to get to have a little bit a
21 part. I'm not a yenta, but I feel like I had a little bit of a
22 part in giving them 15 years of filling holes that they both had
23 that together they were unbeatable.

24 And so, Melissa, I am so sorry. And this -- it's
25 heart wrenching when we lose somebody that young; and it is such

1 a loss to the bar of the county. Thank you.

2 JUDGE BUTTS: Thanks. Judge Kieser.

3 JUDGE KIESER: May it please the Court, Melissa,
4 members of the Bar and friends and community members that are
5 here, Chris was a different kind of guy, okay. He was a law
6 clerk that got fewer red marks back to him on their drafts that
7 were submitted to me than anybody that I can imagine.

8 As a matter of fact, on the first draft he ever gave
9 me I could only find two places to put red marks; and I think I
10 spent a whole night looking for more. In fact, he reversed the
11 tables on me because every now and then I'd write some of my own
12 stuff and I'd give it to him to look at; and he would give it
13 back to me for corrections.

14 The attorneys that were mostly before Chris and I when
15 we were together -- we were on the civil litigation end of
16 things. And I tell you, folks, that those of you -- most of you
17 I don't even think were practicing back then as I look around
18 the room. But those of you who were, Chris read every word of
19 every brief and also probably looked up at least 90 percent of
20 the cases that you cited.

21 And I said, you know, Chris, you know, if the legal
22 principle is okay with you, you know, you don't really have to
23 take all the time to look up every case. No, no, I gotta look
24 it up, you know. We got -- I mean, that was his thoroughness.

25 And he would not really talk with me much about a case

1 before the argument. He didn't want to bias me in any way. So
2 we had the argument or the matter before us and the attorneys
3 would get up and leave and look at each other and have their
4 discussion and try and figure out which direction we were going.

5 And he'd say I think they missed something. And I'd
6 ask him what it was that they missed, and he had it. He had a
7 knack that he could identify the legal issue that was gonna
8 control the outcome of a case or issues.

9 Usually, you know, most of the type of arguments we
10 were having there was one issue that needed to get resolved in a
11 certain way. And however that was gonna go, that was the way
12 the facts were gonna let the case develop. And he always nailed
13 it. He had great perception in doing that.

14 He was so good that he made me second-think my policy
15 that I approached all our law clerks with; and that is, I want
16 you for two years. You give me a two-year commitment, and I
17 will do my best and I think we will succeed in having you have a
18 place to come to work here in Lycoming County as an attorney.
19 I'm not interested in you becoming a professional law clerk. I
20 want you to get out and to be an attorney.

21 Chris's two years rolled by; and Chris was, until
22 Melissa came along, you know, just kind of reserved. I got him
23 to go one year to the bar picnic I think, if my recollection is
24 right. I'm old. I don't remember all those things. But the
25 next bar picnic that came along while he was with me, and those

1 after that second one, he, you know, didn't -- he found a reason
2 not to go.

3 But that was Chris. And he was private. He played
4 his cards close to the vest. I would not have wanted to play
5 poker with him. That type of guy. But I'm thinking, you know,
6 two years is up. And I said -- he came to me. He said -- we
7 had to do those counter reviews then which came at about the
8 time of his two years with me.

9 And he said, well, you know, you said that you wanted
10 me for two years. He said I'll leave if -- and this will be our
11 last review. And I said, well, you know, I don't if there's
12 anything -- about the two years, I said, where are you gonna go
13 or who have you talked to.

14 I haven't talked to anybody, no firms. Well, what
15 are -- well, I got this letter here from the JAG office from the
16 Marines. And I'd like you to look at it; and if you would,
17 would you fill out the recommendation and send a letter of
18 recommendation for me.

19 And his plan was -- even though he had got bounced out
20 of the Marines which was, I know, a big disappointment, his plan
21 was he was gonna get in the Marines and get into JAG. And this
22 time he went -- instead of going into the Marines first he went
23 to a JAG office first because of his age.

24 And after a year and a half of processing, and he was
25 still clerking for me, JAG accepted. You know, he came in

1 elated, you know, great big smile. He had gotten accepted by
2 JAG, and all he had to do is go and pass a physical.

3 And he had been training for this physical for that
4 entire year and a half that that JAG thing was pending. And for
5 some reason in that physical they did not take him at the JAG.
6 And that, again, was my gain and Lycoming County's gain because
7 thereafter he was able to go to the Public Defender's Office,
8 which Nicki said he was kind of out of his element, okay.

9 Except I did have a chance to observe him in the
10 courtroom, and if he would have just wanted and had a desire,
11 when he was in the courtroom he had it all together because he
12 knew what he had to ask, he knew where he had to go, and he
13 could do anything at all in the way of making a convincing
14 argument. He could do it really from his feet just as well as
15 he did it sitting at a desk.

16 Melissa, at the time I couldn't believe it, that I was
17 actually being asked to have a wedding ceremony for Chris
18 Kalaus. It was a joy. And when I heard that he was seen
19 walking hand and hand with a young lady around town, I couldn't
20 believe it.

21 Just ask -- Darlene's here. I mean, it was a buzz in
22 the office. I mean, you know, it was -- it -- you were a buzz.
23 You really were. And what a great change in Chris. I mean, I
24 said he was poker faced. Not after that. At that point he was
25 smily. I mean, he could have been the little smily-face guy

1 that you have on your e-moids today. He had a smile on his
2 face. It was a completely different outlook.

3 So I'm more shocked about speaking at his memorial. I
4 really am. One of my favorite scriptures is in Psalm 103. You
5 praise the Lord and you thank Him for all of his benefits.
6 Chris Kalaus was a great benefit to me and great benefit to all
7 those who knew him and great benefit to the unknown number of
8 litigants who he helped to receive the just cause from this
9 Court. We miss him.

10 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you. And thank you to the
11 committee very much. So the Court will approve this report and
12 resolution and enter the following order:

13 **AND NOW**, this 23rd day of June, 2023, in consideration
14 of the resolutions presented by the committee appointed to draft
15 resolutions in the death of Christian J. Kalaus, the said
16 resolutions are adopted; and it is ORDERED AND DIRECTED that the
17 resolutions herewith submitted and attached be adopted as an
18 official expression of the Lycoming County Law Association and
19 the Court and that the same be spread upon the records of the
20 Court and the copies of this resolution be delivered to the
21 family of Christian Kalaus; and it is further ORDERED AND
22 DIRECTED that said resolution be entered at large upon the
23 record of the Court and that it be printed in the Lycoming
24 Reporter.

25 We usually start off a ceremony like this with asking

Linda S. Wettlaufer, RMR
Official Court Reporter
Lycoming County

1 the judges to say a few words about Chris. So I will turn to
2 Judge Linhardt.

3 JUDGE LINHARDT: Thank you. A few things. As
4 difficult as these memorial services are, I continue to be so
5 grateful that the Bar continues to take the time to do them.
6 It's ultimately sweet and nice and comforting to listen to the
7 stories that people have to share with members of the Bar that
8 we've all come to know.

9 And that's what makes these memorial services so
10 important and special and why it continues to be important that
11 we remember and recognize and honor the lawyers that we have
12 served with because it's comforting not only to us who know him
13 professionally but to all of his friends and family who join us
14 here today.

15 Just as a very small aside, I was unaware that Nicki
16 had a small part in their relationship. Obviously, Nicki, you
17 are aware that you had a little more than a small part in
18 getting my wife, Elizabeth, and I together. So I guess you've
19 played Cupid on more than one occasion.

20 MS. SPRING: I'm doing pretty good if anybody needs
21 some help.

22 JUDGE LINHARDT: That might be a nice profession for
23 you after you retire. In any case, it's nice to see you,
24 Melissa. Obviously, sorry under these circumstances and very
25 sorry for your loss. Chris will be missed.

1 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you.

2 MR. LINHARDT: Thank you.

3 THE COURT: Judge Tira.

4 JUDGE TIRA: I didn't know Chris all that well. And
5 it's become quite obvious that is my loss that I didn't get that
6 chance to know him better. My main interaction with him is when
7 he was Judge Kieser's law clerk and always had this high-level
8 professionalism and integrity.

9 And what Tom mentioned earlier about his decisions, it
10 was great when you won; but you knew it was horrible if you lost
11 because you pretty much knew you weren't going any further with
12 it. You knew it was going to be well reasoned, and you were
13 gonna be stuck with it. So you really hoped when Chris was
14 writing an opinion for Judge Kieser that it was gonna come out
15 on your side.

16 And that's my recollection and interaction with him,
17 always the consummate professional in every way. He will be
18 missed. And I extend my condolences to the family and very
19 sorry for your untimely loss.

20 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you. Judge Carlucci.

21 JUDGE CARLUCCI: Thank you. Melissa, I married a girl
22 three years older than me; and Nicki had nothing to do with it.
23 Chris was from Scranton and so am I. My family came here when I
24 was in second grade. My father, my brother, and I were all born
25 in Scranton. My mother was born in Taylor Borough which is a

1 little borough adjacent to North Scranton.

2 I have attended a lot of funerals here in Lycoming
3 County; and I have attended a lot of funerals in Scranton,
4 usually my family. And what I have noticed is that at funerals
5 in Lycoming County there tends to be a lot of conversation about
6 what the deceased did in their professional life, farmers, we
7 talk about how hard people work. That's really what it's about.

8 In my experience, it's not like that in Lackawanna
9 County. In Lackawanna County the conversation is a little
10 different. I didn't have a lot of cases with Chris. He and I
11 worked in different areas of the law. But I came across him in
12 a social context occasionally at a bar function, things like
13 that. Therefore, I knew him socially; although, not very much
14 professionally.

15 And in Lycoming County it's all about how hard you
16 work. In Lackawanna County there are two things that everybody
17 talks about when they lose somebody. If it's somebody they
18 liked and respected, they say two things. They say he was a
19 gentleman, and he was good to his family. Because that's what
20 matters in Lackawanna County. Chris was a gentleman, and he
21 loved you with all his heart. And in Lackawanna County that's
22 high praise.

23 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you. Just first generally in
24 following up on what Judge Linhardt said, I remember at one
25 bench/bar meeting or I forget what event it was that Ed Mitchell

1 spoke about the importance of these gatherings, that often times
2 in the olden days that the attorneys would come from the funeral
3 and come together and sit around and have a conversation about
4 the individual that they just recognized and mourned and spent
5 time commiserating about what that person had meant to them
6 collectively.

7 And so I thought, just as Judge Linhardt said, that
8 continuing to have these ceremonies is a very valuable thing for
9 collegiality of the bar and the bench. But also, it's a really
10 powerful way for us to get to share positive memories. And
11 especially when in this circumstance we don't often know family
12 members of the deceased. But we do know you Melissa, and we've
13 spent an awful lot of time with you and other -- and in this
14 situation --

15 MELISSA KALAUS: This is his brother.

16 JUDGE BUTTS: Family member. But he's not from here,
17 right? But we know you, and we get the chance to express our
18 genuine sadness and support and encouragement to you for what
19 must continue to be a very difficult time of your life.

20 So I'm grateful that we are all here today to be able
21 to be there for you and to know that I'm sure his memory has
22 been and will continue to be a blessing to you.

23 And then everybody is sharing stories. And I don't
24 have any exciting stories like being a matchmaker. I just
25 remember Chris being very quiet. And when I heard him talking

1 about the JAG Corps, I, at one point in my life when I was in
2 law school, had thought about going to work for the JAG Corps
3 and, in fact, was an intern at the JAG Corps but in the Army.
4 And I spent a summer in Charlottesville, Virginia, with, of all
5 things, the criminal law division.

6 And I loved it, but I realized after that experience
7 that that wasn't somewhere that I felt that was gonna be a right
8 fit for me. But he was devastated when he couldn't do it, and
9 my heart just went out to him.

10 But he was always so quiet, always in the background.
11 And I was going through my desk the other day. And I found a
12 picture from when my son -- in December when I finalized his
13 adoption. And who's in the back but Chris because he was always
14 in the back, very quietly coming around. He would quietly come
15 up after everybody was gone, say congratulations and this is
16 very exciting. And just what a quality person through and
17 through.

18 And as corny as it sounds, yes, maybe I see people
19 holding hands and I ask is there something going on here. But
20 just -- it develops a different perspective of Chris, too, where
21 you just think he's so quiet and he's like a one-track person.
22 And now it encourages you to scratch a little bit more, you
23 know, beyond the surface to get to know him. And that's one of
24 the blessings of working in this county is to be able to get to
25 know people so well.

1 So, I mean, I've heard it said multiple times; but
2 people are not supposed to go that young. People aren't
3 supposed to -- they're supposed to live a long and happy life
4 and create lots and lots of memories. It's not supposed to be
5 15 years; it's supposed to be 50 years.

6 But sometimes the universe, the big guy upstairs, our
7 higher power, has another plan; and we have to accept that. But
8 it doesn't mean we have to mourn forever. We can just reflect
9 on how grateful we are that we got to know him and the
10 difference that he made in all of our lives.

11 So, you know, this is my -- I will be finishing up my
12 28th year doing this job; and there are a lot of people that I
13 have seen over the years, judges, law clerks, assistant district
14 attorneys, public defenders. But he's a person that you will
15 always remember because he just made such a difference. And I
16 am so very sorry for both yours and his brother's loss.

17 So now I would like to open things up, if anyone here
18 would like to say a few words, make comments, or just generally
19 reminisce about what Chris has meant to you or your experience
20 with him.

21 All I ask you to do is stand up and identify yourself
22 because we are creating a record here so that when this ceremony
23 is over we can have the record provided to Melissa and Chris's
24 brother. Go ahead.

25 BARBARA MCCABE: My name is Barbara McCabe. I

1 remember Chris because my son had a very serious motorcycle
2 accident. And Chris stepped in. Tom asked him to step in and
3 help us as a family. He was amazing. He was so kind and
4 gentle; and he helped us through a very, very difficult time.
5 And he will be very missed. Thank you.

6 JUDGE BUTTS: Thank you. Would anyone else like to
7 say a few words? Melissa.

8 MELISSA KALAUS: First of all, thank you everybody for
9 coming. I greatly appreciate it, for your support and just
10 everything that everyone has done for me over the past few
11 months.

12 I never thought I would be standing here doing this.
13 I never thought I'd be without my soulmate. Chris was my other
14 half. Before I would finish my sentence, he would finish it for
15 me. We just were on that yin and yang level. And it's hard now
16 because I -- I'm walking around the house talking to myself; and
17 I look at the dogs and it's just not the same thing. They can't
18 quite, you know, do that.

19 But not to be extremely morbid; but it's kind
20 of -- I'll look back on this some day and laugh because his last
21 words to me were, I'm not having a heart attack. Really? I
22 walked upstairs, and that was it.

23 But some day when I see him again we'll laugh about
24 that. I will be like really, you were wrong. For the first
25 time in your life, you were wrong; and I caught you in it. So I

1 would like to think I get a little bit of (indicating).

2 But I was blessed to have met him and known him for as
3 long as I did and the people I met through him. Tom. And,
4 Nicole, you will never live down the story of us getting
5 together. But I was truly blessed; and I'm -- God has given me
6 strength to get through every day. And I know Chris is standing
7 right beside me. And he's encouraging me, and he's getting me
8 through it.

9 And I'd like to think that God called him home because
10 God had a question about something and couldn't figure it out.
11 So I just -- I pray, honey, I know you are smart but so is God.
12 Just let him think he has the answers, okay. Do your research
13 and writing but you know. So thank you to everybody who came
14 and for all your support. I appreciate it.

15 JUDGE BUTTS: Anyone else? Well, ladies and
16 gentlemen, this now concludes the memorial service for Chris
17 Kalaus. I'd like to thank, again, his brother for being able to
18 be here, Melissa, and members of the law association and general
19 public for coming here and sharing your words for his family.
20 So this special session of court is adjourned.

21 **(WHEREUPON, the proceedings concluded at 4:45 p.m.)**

C E R T I F I C A T E

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

Linda S. Wettlaufer, Official Court Reporter

The foregoing record on the proceedings of the above cause is hereby approved and **ORDERED AND DIRECTED** to be filed.

Date

Hon. Nancy L. Butts, P.J.

Linda S. Wettlaufer, RMR
Official Court Reporter
Lycoming County