



**A RESOLUTION OF THE  
FRANKLIN COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION  
IN MEMORY OF JOHN MCDOWELL SHARPE, IV**

**WHEREAS**, the members of the Franklin County Bar Association will meet in a Special Meeting at a date in the future to celebrate the life and honor the memory of our colleague and fellow member, **JOHN MCDOWELL SHARPE, IV** who was called home by his Almighty God November 3, 2020 and

**WHEREAS**, although saddened by his death, it is our desire, and the tradition of the Franklin County Bar Association, to share our recollections of Jay and honor him with a Memorial Resolution at this Special Meeting; and

**WHEREAS**, before offering this Resolution, the members of the Franklin County Bar Association desire to offer a brief record of his life and career.

John was born February 18, 1930 in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, the son of the late John McD. Sharpe, III and Elizabeth Reisner Sharpe. He is survived by his son, John (Jack) McDowell Sharpe, V, Esquire, Peter Sharpe, and daughter Betsy McMahan and grandchildren and a special nephew, Peter Malkemes. He was preceded in death by his wife, Marilyn (Lynn) Sharpe, his parents and sister, Rachel Mackling.

John graduated from Philips Exeter Academy in Massachusetts class of 1946.

Following high school, with the draft still in effect, John Served in the United States Army Medical Corp from 1946 to 1948.

Following his discharge from the Army, John enrolled at Princeton, graduating in 1952. He attended The University of Pennsylvania Law School receiving his J.D. degree in 1955.

He was admitted to the Franklin County Bar in March 1956 and joined his father and grandfather in the practice of law that same year. John remained active in the practice of law until 2015. He was the fourth generations of Sharpes in the practice which dated back to 1851.

John was active in the community, serving as Mayor of Chambersburg. He was instrumental in the formation of the Franklin County Industrial Development Corporation in 1955, retiring as its Solicitor in 2015. He also served as Solicitor for the Chambersburg Area Development Corporation and the Franklin County Area Development Corporation. John was involved in other civic activities of Chambersburg too numerous to mention.

John was a loyal, and active member of the Presbyterian Church of the Falling Spring, serving as a Trustee and Elder as well as its Sunday School Superintendent and teacher for decades.

John's practice was concentrated in real estate transactions, estates, and estate planning, but most importantly to John was his advocacy for the orderly growth of Franklin County.

In his spare time John loved to play tennis, ski, and travel with Lynn.

**The following are memories and observations submitted by his fellow members of the Franklin County Bar Association:**

Mr. Sharpe was always courteous to me and took the time to discuss the issues we were trying to resolve between our clients. I loved hearing his stories of his interaction with the representatives of Chambersburg's sister city in Japan. As with so many in his generation, he comported himself with dignity, especially when arguing a case before the bar. President Judge Shawn D. Meyers

"Mr. Sharpe", as he was known to me, was my first boss upon my graduation from law school. He commanded so much respect in my eyes that I hesitated to call him John even after I had worked with him on the many cases he appeared before me. He was one of my strongest mentors providing me with a solid foundation to practice law and later serve on the bench.

Our communities in the 39th Judicial District have been blessed with a long line of exemplary leaders from the bar. During John's long career of service, he became one of the tallest of the tall cedars in the legal community. He brought the finest qualities of the profession, which are in such demand today, into his service to local government, various civic charities and causes, the church and the general welfare of the community.

We must now recognize our duty to ensure his legacy will continue to strengthen the rule of law and stand as example of public service.

We will miss his warm and infectious smile. Senior Judge Douglas Herman

It is with great sadness that I read of the passing of Mr. Sharpe. I have many fond memories of this man who leaves behind a great legacy for his family and the legal community. My first time meeting him sealed my affection for him right away. I recall interviewing with Mr. Sharpe and Jack as a fairly new attorney and when the interview was finished, Jack said they'd be in touch, to which Mr. Sharpe replied "oh come on Jack, let's show her where her office will be." It was over the holidays and I recall being asked at a family function whether I got the job, to which I responded, "I'm not sure, but I think so."

Mr. Sharpe was old school, and I mean that in the most respectful and appreciative way. He believed in working hard for his clients. Treating them fairly. Returning calls timely. Speaking with candor to opposing counsel. He retained many clients for decades, which is a great testament to the way he treated and represented them. He loved his Wall Street Journal, pulling documents from the printer before other attorneys in the firm did so he

could offer unsolicited advice on the work product, and commenting if our desks or offices became a bit unkempt. He never turned me away when I asked a question, and I am thankful for the times we conversed in his office over many topics. He was incredibly proud of Jack and while he may not have always shared such sentiments with his son directly, there was fatherly pride that filled the entire room when he discussed one of Jack's cases or shared stories with me about him. I extend my deepest sympathy to the entire Sharpe family.

Judge Mary Beth Shank

As a new attorney in Chambersburg in 1973, and the only female member of the bar back then, I still recall that John was one of the few male colleagues who made me feel welcome. As our offices were next door to each other, he was usually eager for some conversation as we were leaving or entering our offices. He was always encouraging me to get involved in local organizations. I think we shared a unique bond because his wife was a Wilson alum as was I.

I Treasured his friendly personality as well as his evident love of his family, his church, and the law.

When I think back 45 years to my beginnings in Chambersburg as an attorney, the example of him as a quintessential community lawyer is that he was among the best. Martha B. Walker, Esquire

My deepest sympathies go to the Sharpe family. Mr. Sharpe will be missed by many, and his passing is a tremendous loss to the community that he so selflessly served. When I was first admitted to the FCBA, Mr. Sharpe was already close to retirement, and I never had much of an opportunity to work with him on a professional level. However, shortly after my Bar admission, Denis DiLoreto invited me to join the Chambersburg Rotary Club, and there, I was able to get to know Mr. Sharpe very well. I have many fond memories of our Rotary meetings at the Lighthouse Restaurant and then Orchards when he would graciously share his wisdom and humor with the club. I will always remember how whenever he spoke, people smiled! Rotary's motto is "service above self", and Mr. Sharpe's life and legacy are wonderful examples of this. Anthony J. Cosentino, Esquire

Greetings to Jack and Renee, the members of the Sharpe family, members of the Franklin County Bar and citizens of Chambersburg and Franklin County.

I met John Sharpe in 1990 when I was applying for a position with his firm "Sharpe, Wenger & Sharpe."

From my first interview with John I was most struck by a smile and a twinkle in his eye that exuded energy and enthusiasm.

I worked for John and his firm for 3 years from 1990-1993.

My memories of John are the countless conversations we had about everything BUT the law.

About family, about friends, about vacations in so many fascinating places, about his church and about his faith. Not much about the law though.

I last saw John about 4-5 years ago in one of those recorded CLE classes in the Franklin County Bar library. It was just he and me. I don't think we had spoken for about 20 years. That didn't matter; we talked almost the entire 3 hours. Not about the law though.

I spoke about what I had been doing with my career, what my wife Carrie was doing with her career, and where our children went to school and what they were doing.

John talked with incredible pride about what he was still doing part-time at the firm, with the County redevelopment team, what Jack and Renee were doing and what each of his grandchildren were doing.

He spoke as a man who knew he had been blessed with the most amazing life and family. A content man who still had energy left in the tank!

As I drove home from the class, I remember being struck by our conversation. How happy this man was. How optimistic he was. How that smile and that twinkle in his eye was still there. I thought that this is who I want to be in the twilight of my life. Living your best life with energy and passion because you know that you have been gifted this time on this planet from a generous God.

My sincerest sympathies go to the Sharpe Family and all of John's loved ones. John will be missed. But his enthusiasm and his energy for his life and family survive him. John's smile and twinkle will always bring a smile to those of us who had the fortune to know him. David R. Breschi, Esquire

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that** the members of the Franklin County Bar Association assembled at a Special Meeting to be held at a future express our sympathy on the occasion of the loss of J MCDOWELL SHARPE, IV, husband, father, grandfather and friend and colleague of the members of the Franklin County Bar Association. We will strive to keep his memory alive, for the strength, dedication, and wisdom of those who have gone before us represent the foundation of the future generations of our profession.

**Respectfully Submitted,  
Memorial Resolution Committee  
Franklin County Bar Association**

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Shawn D. Meyers, President Judge  
39<sup>th</sup> Judicial District of Pennsylvania

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Forest N. Myers, Esquire, Chair

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Andrew J. Benchoff, Esquire  
President, Franklin County Bar Association

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George S. Glen, Esquire, Member