

It is our special privilege today to honor Judge Leo Glasser, with the Council's Emory Buckner Award for Outstanding Public Service.

Judge Glasser — like Emory Buckner — was born into a family of very modest means, but one steeped in the values and virtues of our Nation.

Judge Glasser was born on a kitchen table in a tenement house on the lower east side, in 1924.

- His mother could not read or write.
 - But she was smart as a whip, according to family members.
- His family spoke Yiddish, not English.
 - His father operated a Chicken store in their neighborhood.
- Hanging prominently in Judge Glasser's Chambers — directly behind his desk — is the immigration certificate of his grandfather, Israel Glasser, who was sworn-in as a citizen in the very same court in which his grandson serves.
- Judge Glasser was a stellar student in the NYC public school system.
 - But his parents couldn't afford to keep him in City College.
 - So at age 16, he went to work and continued college at night.
- One of those jobs was as a copy boy for the *New York Journal American*, a daily newspaper owned by William Randolph Hearst and prior to that by Albert Pulitzer.
 - An editor of the *Journal American* wrote a letter of recommendation for Leo Glasser at that time, which read in part:

“This young man is older, in learning and judgment, than his years. [His] reasoning facility ... has been sharpened by excellent academic training.

But, more important, ... has been his natural common sense, quickness of decision, willingness to follow instructions to the letter, and resourcefulness in emergencies.

The standard of courtesy and adaptability that he has set in this shop remains a standard for others to shoot at.”

How prescient was that letter-writer?

“Learn[ed] ... judgment ... excellent academic training ... common sense ... quickness of decision willingness to follow instructions ... resourceful[ness] in emergencies ... courtesy ... adaptability.”

It sounds like a letter of support for a judicial nominee. But it was written about Leo Glasser when he was a *teenager*.

- By the early 1940s, Leo Glasser knew he would soon be sent to war.
- He wanted to start law school, believing that — if he started — he would make every effort to come home to finish what he'd begun.
- After one semester at Brooklyn Law School — again attending classes at night and working during the day — he was drafted into World War II.
- He was a member of General Patton's Army, assigned to the 796th Anti-Aircraft Automatic Weapons Battalion.
- His group operated something known as half-tracks:
 - ... Half-tracks were motorcarriages that were half-tank, half-truck, on top of which sat 4 huge rotaries of 50-caliber machine guns that all fired rapidly and simultaneously on the pull of a single trigger.
 - Each half-track was nearly 8 feet tall, 22 feet long and more than 7 feet wide.
- It was a weapon of devastating fury: alone, it could mow down a stand of mature trees and even buildings.
- The wear of loading and firing rounds of 50-caliber ammunition left many from the Battalion incapacitated at times after the War.
 - Yet, Judge Glasser was known for never missing a single day of class or of any job since.
- He landed in St. Mere Eglise in Normandy, and advanced through France and into Germany.
- Because he was fluent in Yiddish — and because of its similarities to German — young Leo Glasser was assigned to conduct advance reconnaissance.
 - His job was to go into German villages, before the rest of his troop, to determine the location of the Nazis, and to secure operating posts.
 - A young Jewish boy, literally walking into the Den of the Devil.
- He was awarded the Bronze Star for extraordinary service.
- Following his discharge from the service, he returned to Brooklyn Law School, thanks to the GI Bill.
- He quickly distinguished himself academically.

- Then-Dean, Jerome Prince, asked Leo Glasser to restart the Brooklyn Law Review from scratch.
 - As editor-in-chief, he assembled a formidable staff.
 - It included several who would go on to become luminaries of public service themselves, including Judge Arthur Spatt and Leonard Garment, who went on to become White House Counsel and was Judge Glasser’s lifelong friend.
- His academic achievements were such that he was invited to join the *faculty* of the law school *before graduation day*.
 - Indeed, the yearbook from his graduation is highly unusual: His photo is included both among the students ... and among the faculty members.
- He taught an array of subjects – Torts, Trusts & Wills, Property, Conflicts of Law, even Tax. He was widely regarded as an extraordinary teacher.
- He presented the PLI bar exam prep lectures on multiple subjects for tens of thousands aspiring lawyers over the years.
- In fact, even while a judge, Judge Glasser has continued to view himself primarily as a teacher.
 - He may have been the first to employ the technique — when charging a jury — of standing directly in front of the jurors in the well of a courtroom, at a podium, just as a teacher might, to ensure they are understanding the charge.
- He was appointed and served as a state court judge for several years.
- He then was invited to become Dean of Brooklyn Law School.
 - Where he served until he was nominated by President Carter — and then again by President Regan — and was confirmed in 1981.
- Over 44 years and counting, Judge Glasser has authored more than 2,000 published opinions, each exquisitely researched and crafted.
 - In the words of one lawyer “when my research leads me to a Judge Glasser opinion that’s on-point, ... I know my work is finished.”
- His jury charges — more than 250 of them — are in the process of being digitized as models for continued use.
- Judge Glasser has presided over an array of notable proceedings, including the trials of the United Freedom Front (a domestic terrorist organization that committed 10 bank robberies and 20 bombings of public buildings and corporate headquarters), the trial of John Gotti and the related sentencing of Sammy “The Bull” Gravano, the trials of Vincent “The Chin” Gigante, Joseph Amato of the Colombo Crime Family, and others.

- His sentencing of Mr. Gravano was ultimately recognized as a watershed-moment of courageous wisdom that eviscerated the code of omerta and fundamentally changed the landscape of organized crime prosecutions.

Considering all that he has accomplished in life, it is remarkable that Judge Glasser's most defining, and widely-recognized, attribute may be his modesty.

That modesty seems to spring from at least three things.

First, a deep, unquenchable intellectual curiosity, about all things and all people. To borrow from Ted Lasso – he embodies the code of being “curious, not judgmental.” There may be nothing more central to civil society and civic virtue.

Second, those who know him well say Judge Glasser has a deep, abiding love for lawyers. And who here doesn't appreciate judges who love lawyers?

His love of lawyers in general is surpassed only by his special love for trial lawyers.

That affection springs from his belief in the enduring importance of lawyers to society, to the operation of government, to ensuring our Constitutional Freedoms.

And third, Judge Glasser's modesty seems to spring from a deep affection for the institutions of which he has been a part.

As I look around this room today, I see so many of those institutions and people represented.

I see people who have been associated with Brooklyn Law School. And, I want to ask, if you are among the many graduates of Brooklyn Law School here today — or have served as a member of the Faculty there — please stand up for me.

And remain standing.

I see trial lawyers, many of whom tried cases before Judge Glasser.

If you were a prosecutor, defense lawyer or civil litigator who tried a case before Judge Glasser — or if your case didn't go to trial, but you had a memorable matter before Judge Glasser from which you remember something to this day — could you also please stand up.

I see judges, who served with Judge Glasser on the Eastern District — many of whom tell of how they received his sage advice on a vexing question, or used his jury instructions that have become a model for the Court — or perhaps are on the Circuit Court and reviewed one of his wise opinions, or are among the legion of judges and lawyers who received one of his famously thoughtful and kind, *handwritten* notes at some point in your career.

If you are among that number, could you please stand up.

And I see law clerks and interns to Judge Glasser (and to his many judicial friends), and practicing lawyers who were inspired by something Judge Leo Glasser wrote, or said, or did.

If you count yourself among that number, please join us to stand up.

And I see grateful people, to whom it occurs that we are all here today because we had ancestors who likely survived World War II thanks to someone like a brave Jewish kid, from the Lower East Side who used his Yiddish fluency to enter into the bowels of Nazi Germany to gather intelligence ... a courageousness that shakes my bones.

If you are in that grateful number, please stand up with us.

And Judge Glasser, my last request is to you.

... That you look around this room, see a fraction of the many lawyers and judges on whose lives you have left indelible marks ... see the impact you have had on the bar, the bench, on education, on the law and on the Administration of Justice ... and allow me to come down, and present to you, on behalf of *all* members of the Federal Bar Council, our Emory Buckner Award for Outstanding Public Service.

Thank *you*, Judge Glasser.