

PUBLICATION

Commitment to Community

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Leo Bearman Jr. devoted countless hours of his time and expertise to his synagogue, to community non-profit organizations and to legal organizations such as the Leo Bearman Sr. American Inns of Court in Memphis. Although his natural leadership skills and reputation usually led to leadership positions in these organizations, Leo's approach to these kinds of community and professional activities was very personal. He was not interested in just serving on boards or high-level work. He expected to get into the weeds; to "serve."

He was not just an officer. For years, he taught classes to teenagers and adults at Temple Israel. He did not just serve on the board of Goodwill Homes in Memphis, which focuses on the needs of disadvantaged, primarily African-American children who were often victimized by the criminal justice system. He helped form the organization and get it up and running, even in the face of threats from the Ku Klux Klan to burn a cross in his yard. He did not just donate money to the Susan G. Komen Foundation. Leo helped organize and for years was one of the "celebrity" servers at a popular and highly successful annual "Barrister's Breakfast" that focused attention on the issue and raised money for it. He did not just serve on bar association committees; he regularly represented lawyers who got into ethical and legal difficulties, never charging a fee for his services.

And he served as a mentor and lodestar for generations of lawyers at his firm, and in Memphis. That may be his most enduring legacy. He taught lawyers what it means to be a lawyer. He was proud of the profession and took his responsibilities to it seriously. This firm, and the legal profession, lost a giant with his passing.