



## Spencer Dell Hirshberg

July 8, 1941 - May 25, 2022

Today we lost one of the greats. Spencer Dell Hirshberg, Esq., passed in his sleep on May 25, 2022 at the age of 80. Born July 8, 1941, Spencer was the eldest son of Pitt football hero and Carnegie Tech coach Edward J. Hirshberg of McKeesport, and businesswoman Dorothy Dell of Duquesne. A graduate of Shady Side Academy, Spence captained the 1959 varsity golf team and lettered in football and (allegedly) squash. Ever the cut-up, Spence was inordinately proud of manufacturing a fictitious Shady Side student, “Casper Schnootz,” who achieved passing grades in English and Science until faculty learned that Schnootz didn’t exist – Spencer and friends had been ghost-writing his reports and papers. At Shady Side, Spencer met Christiana McMahan Hoffman, eldest daughter of renowned ophthalmologist Dr. Franklin D. Hoffman and Mrs. Frances Cordes Hoffman. Set up on a blind date, Spence and Christy spent the rest of their lives together and had a remarkable marriage of nearly 60 years. His father’s athletic reputation clinched Spencer’s admission to Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. However, upon arrival at Dartmouth, the head football coach immediately recognized that Spencer was 5 foot 6 rather than 6 foot 5; likely a purposeful transposition by the senior Hirshberg to pad Spencer’s application. Spencer graduated with honors from Dartmouth, a member of the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity and golf team, but not a football star. Shortly after graduation, Spencer enlisted in the Navy during the Vietnam war. His father, a Marine veteran of the Pacific theater of WWII, advised him that “you’ll be drafted, so join the Navy and

they'll put you on a boat. The Viet Cong doesn't have much of a fleet." Spence married Christy in 1965. The young couple welcomed their first daughter, Lindsay, shortly before Spencer shipped off to the Gulf of Tonkin aboard the U.S.S. Arlington. LTJG Hirshberg completed his service in the Navy and returned home. He then began selling advertising space at WEDO, the McKeesport Radio station owned by his father. After welcoming son, David, and daughter, Amy, Spencer enrolled in the Duquesne University School of Law evening program. Graduating among the top of his class, Spencer began his practice in 1975 with the Pittsburgh law firm Meyer, Darragh, Buckler, Bebenek and Eck. Surprise son Edward arrived in 1980 . In 1986, Spencer became a founding partner at Pietragallo, Bosick and Gordon, hosting many a firm picnic at the Hirshberg generational home in North Huntingdon, a sprawling civil war-era colonial set in the middle of Lincoln Hills Country Club. At PB&G, Spencer managed the firm's real estate law practice. He was instrumental in conceiving and founding Barristers Land Abstract Co., a title insurance company affiliated with Howard Hanna Financial Services and Howard Hanna Real Estate Services. Combining title, mortgage and sales under one umbrella was a revolutionary concept at the time, and one that became standard in the industry. In 1996, Spencer formed his own firm, Hirshberg, Gustine, Straka & Orié, and founded several other businesses, including a successful private real estate investment firm. By rough estimate, Spencer closed or oversaw more than 100,000 real estate transactions. He was known far and wide as the "Velvet Hammer" for his ability to close a deal. An avid life-long golfer, Spencer played many of the finest courses in the country and played them well. He also owned most every golf gimmick and gadget in the industry, including a six-foot driver that a foursome of Japanese businessmen dubbed "Godzilla." A principled man, he saw blue jeans as the decline of civilization and once chained himself to a tree to stop a developer's bulldozer. His beloved wife, Christiana, recalls many years of Hilton Head gatherings, "Monster Sin at Sea Island," weeks of annual Christmas festivities, cocktail parties, tennis, birdie putts and friendships. A treasured member of

the Allegheny County Bar and Lincoln Hills Country Club, Spencer was renowned for his work ethic, unparalleled quick wit, kindness and charm. Preceded in death by his parents and young brother Kent Hirshberg, whose memory ripples through generations, Spencer leaves his wife and four children, Lindsay Hirshberg (Mark), David Hirshberg (Beth), Amy Kegg (Vince), and Edward Hirshberg (Samantha). Known as "Dukie," his legacy carries on with seven grandchildren, Amy (fiancé Andrew), Spencer, Annie, Matt, Juliette, Helena, and Esme. "Uncle Sumps" to his nieces and nephews, he was a wonderful brother to Cindy Hirshberg (Clark, deceased) and Rev. Craig Hirshberg (Dominick), and an example to all. A private memorial will be held in Fox Chapel, just a mile or so from that first blind date with the love of his life. All inquiries can be made to Edward Hirshberg at [edward.hirshberg@ryanlawyers.com](mailto:edward.hirshberg@ryanlawyers.com)

# Tribute Wall



“ I remember caddying for Spencer at Lincoln Hills several times. He was very nice to me.

Donald Dubyak - July 13, 2025 at 07:20 AM



“ Spencer Dell Hirshberg

October 07, 2023 at 10:37 AM



“ Spencer Dell Hirshberg

August 23, 2022 at 04:00 PM



“ I am Karen Dell Hutchison, New Castle, PA. I am the daughter of Henry and Dolores Dell, niece of Dorothy Dell Hirshberg, and cousin of Spencer. He was 2 months older than me. It has been years since I have seen him. And at my age, much of my past is no longer remembered. However, I do remember our friendship, and I do know how close we were. As kids we were blessed to spend lot of time with each other. Not living close, it would be a week or more during the summers. Wow!! Lots of fun!! He was a wonderful pal, and obviously an amazing man. And the picture of him is the person I remember!! Love and hugs and prayers to you all.

Karen Dell Hutchison - June 06, 2022 at 03:10 PM

SR

“ I was a young lawyer that joined Meyer Darragh in 1985 and after the the Pietragallo firm in 1987. Spence was always kind and encouraging to me as fledging attorney and never ever condescending. He treated you as a colleague. I always liked his droll sense of humor and enjoyed firm picnics at his home. My sincerest condolences to his lovely wife and family. He will be missed.

Scott Redman

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Scott Redman - June 03, 2022 at 12:54 PM

BW

Even though I only worked with Spence for a short while almost 40 years ago, I still remember his warm smile and quick wit. He hired me as Barrister's first closer and had the foresight to grow that company what it is today. I just wanted to add my one humble memory to the thousands of dear memories that his family and friends will hold close. With my deepest sympathy...Bill Weinheimer

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Bill Weinheimer - June 06, 2022 at 01:59 PM

JC

I will never forget Spence. He hired me at Barristers and was there to enhance my title underwriting expertise which I learned from him. He was quick on his toes and truly made a hectic work environment a fun experience. He was always there to answer questions and accommodate employees, real estate agents and clients alike. his calming demeanor got the job done. My deepest sympathy to Spencer's family on your loss. Joan Callery

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Joan Callery - June 09, 2022 at 09:50 AM

JT

I am Jeff Tindall. I worked with Spence at Meyer Darragh beginning in 1983. Spence was a good role model for us young lawyers. I am sorry hear of his death.

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Jeff Tindall - June 13, 2022 at 10:56 AM

EW

*Spencer was a highlight in my career. I sent many a commercial client to him because I knew that he would somehow work out the deal. No matter the adversity, Spence would get the parties together, often with some humor.*

*He was always available for legal questions and discussions. Being a non-lawyer, Spence would engage me on various legal points of real estate law. His intellect was admirable. I still think of him when certain things come up in agreements--"it's not a contingency, it's a condition".*

*I will greatly miss Spence.*

*My sympathy to his family.*

*Erik Wagner*

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**erik wagner** - July 25, 2022 at 03:09 PM