



Arthur R.G. Solmssen

September 29, 1928 - April 23, 2018

Arthur Robert George Solmssen, 1928 - 2018

Arthur R. G. Solmssen, the Philadelphia lawyer and novelist whose books captured life on the Philadelphia Main Line and in 20th century German society, died at his home in Bryn Mawr on April 23, 2018. He was 89.

Born in New York City, Solmssen spent his early childhood in Berlin and came to the Philadelphia area at age eight, speaking only German. He flourished at the Miquon School and later graduated from Harvard College and the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania. At 17 he enlisted in the United States Army and served in the post-war occupation forces in Germany. Directly after graduating from law school he joined Saul, Ewing, Remick & Saul, one of Philadelphia's pre-eminent law firms.

Solmssen's first novel, *Rittenhouse Square*, was published in 1968. The protagonist's story straddles the Main Line and The Public Defender's office and illuminates both. *Rittenhouse Square* and Solmssen's later novels, *The Comfort Letter*, *Alexander's Feast*, *Takeover Time*, and *A Princess in Berlin* were all published by Little Brown & Co. *The Comfort Letter* has been quoted in several legal textbooks, including *Painter and Noonan, Personal and Professional Responsibilities of the Lawyer*, as a realistic depiction of the ethical dilemmas that corporate lawyers face in their practices. *A Princess in Berlin*, which won the Atheneum Literary Award in 1980 and was described by a reviewer as "the Threepenny Opera of the aristocracy" has been translated into many languages and is used as a reference in European history courses. Translated and published separately in East and West Germany as *Berliner Reigen* the novel remains very popular in Germany, and was recently re-issued as an e-book by S. Fischer Verlag. His last novels, *The Wife of Shore* and *The Pilot and the Playwright* were published privately.

Solmssen practiced securities and municipal finance law at Saul Ewing for many years. He is credited with suggesting the terms "tipper" and "tippee" for insider trading offenders. After he retired in 1988, he enjoyed working as an arbitrator in federal securities litigation,

recording books for the blind, and maintaining the tradition of wearing felt hats in the winter and straw hats in the summer. When asked how he could combine writing novels with the practice of law in a big firm he replied, "I don't play golf." Solmssen was a director of the Defender Association of Philadelphia and a member of the Franklin Inn and the Philadelphia Clubs.

Solmssen is survived by his wife Marsha Moffat York Solmssen of Tacoma, Washington and Bryn Mawr, three sons, eight grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. Memorial services were private.

Comments



“ RG: I read every book your father wrote. "Rittenhouse Square" was a favorite. I threatened Hastings Griffin that one day I was going to write a companion novel titled "Centre Square West. I may still get around to it.

You may or may not remember me, but I worked at Dechert for a decade before Chris Branda "whisked me off" to be his wife over 40 years ago...I also remember you well...you and my son Jon Wagner (now almost 52) could have been twin brothers.

I send you my deepest condolences (and fond memories). Although I never knew your father personally, if fathers take after their sons, he must have been more than the special and highly regarded gentleman and author whose reputation he has bequeathed.

Leslie Branda

Leslie L. Branda - April 30, 2018 at 09:11 PM