

In Memoriam Joseph Moukawsher 1920 - 2006

Joseph E. Moukawsher, Groton's last prosecutor from the days of municipal courts, New London County's last coroner, the last of the founders of the City of Groton and the longest practicing lawyer in New London County died peacefully, Saturday, Dec. 16, 2006, at his home of 45 years at Eastern Point in Groton. His wife and family attended his bedside.

Moukawsher was 86 years old. He was born in New London in 1920 where he graduated with highest honors from Bulkeley High School in the Class of 1937. He went on to attend Wesleyan University and graduate Phi Beta Kappa with a degree in English in 1942. After Wesleyan, Moukawsher attended the Harvard Business School where his studies were interrupted by World War II. During the war, he served in a mortar platoon with the 88th Division "Blue Devils" in Italy, ending the war as a statistician in the Philippines. Moukawsher attended Harvard Law School, graduating in 1948. He practiced law in Connecticut for 57 years and was one of the state's longest serving practitioners.



Moukawsher served for many years as a prosecutor and a municipal attorney. As attorney for the former Borough of Groton in the early '60s, Moukawsher was one of the architects of the Borough's conversion to a city; he helped design the government and he drafted the charter that governs the City of Groton today. As New London County's last coroner, Moukawsher presided over legal investigations of suspicious deaths, including the controversial death of Kevin Showalter in 1973 in which Moukawsher's inquest concluded that there was insufficient evidence to declare any suspects despite suggestions that former New London mayor Harvey Mallove struck Showalter with his car on Christmas Eve and then fled the scene. In 1996, at age 76, Moukawsher, his son Tom and Attorney Mike Walsh founded the law firm Moukawsher & Walsh, LLC, today a nine-attorney firm with a main office in Hartford and a satellite office in Groton.

Four state representatives sprang from Moukawsher's law practice and benefited from his tutelage. Moukawsher's son, Ted, who practiced for many years with his father, is one of Groton's current state representatives. He was preceded in that job by his brother, Tom. State Representative-Elect Elissa T. Wright (D) of Noank worked at Moukawsher's firm for years as did State Representative Ryan P. Barry (D) of Manchester. Moukawsher's daughter-in-law Betsy Moukawsher is Groton's Democratic Party Chair. Moukawsher's son Tom has served as Counsel to the State Democratic Party and serves as a member of the Party's State Central Committee and counsel to Congressman John Larson.

Moukawsher and his wife, the former Patricia O'Connell, who survives him, were married for 57 years and had six children they raised at Eastern Point in Groton. He was predeceased by one son, the late Commander E. James Moukawsher of the U.S. Coast Guard who left his wife Lisa and daughters Melissa and Meredyth of Palm Harbour, Fla. He is survived by a daughter, Mary K. Morse, her husband Charles, and their children Erika and Geoffrey of Barrington, R.I., son Rep. Edward E. "Ted" Moukawsher of Groton, a son Paul J. Moukawsher and his wife Deborah of Gurnee, Ill., a son Patrick J. Moukawsher, owner of Import Auto in Stonington, his wife Joanne and their son Nicholas of Stonington, and a son Thomas G. Moukawsher, along with his wife Elizabeth and their sons Edward and Alexander of Mystic, daughter Jacqueline Boudro of Ledyard and daughter Katherine Kamradt of Boston.

Moukawsher was active for many years in the Thames Club of New London, the Shennecossett Yacht Club and the Shennecossett Beach Club in Groton. He had a life-long love of boating and summer life at Watch Hill.