

A Tribute to Joseph M. Giden, Esq.

It is with great sadness that the law firm of Gibbs Giden Locher Turner Senet & Wittbrodt LLP mourns the death of Joseph M. Giden, a founding partner of the firm and renowned litigator, counselor and mediator in the surety, title insurance and construction industry. He passed away after a brief illness on September 17, 2014, at the age of 80.

“Joe Giden was my partner and colleague for more than 25 years, but more importantly he was my friend for more than 55 years,” said Ken Gibbs, co-founder of the firm. “He was a ‘lawyer’s lawyer’ and the greatest professional compliment I can give him is that his proper title was ‘counselor at law’ not merely ‘attorney at law.’ While he zealously represented his clients’ interests, he did so with wisdom and grace and he was the greatest problem solver I’ve ever seen. He was universally respected for his intelligence and integrity. His word was his bond.”



Joseph M. Giden
(October 26, 1933 -
September 17, 2014)

Richard Wittbrodt, managing partner of the firm, reflected that “Joe practiced law for over 50 years, one of the few attorneys to do so, and he did it the right way: with intelligence, wisdom, and integrity. He counseled young attorneys of the firm to keep the client’s interest of paramount importance. He also believed that it takes years for an attorney to gain respect and create a positive reputation among his or her peers, and that it can take a very short period of time to diminish or destroy that same reputation based on unprofessional conduct.”

Born in New York, New York, where he attended the Bronx High School of Science, Joseph Giden graduated from Dartmouth College (A.B. *cum laude*, *Phi Beta Kappa*) in 1955 and from Harvard University Law School (LL.B., *cum laude*) in 1958. After coming to Southern California for a visit, Joe decided this was the place where he wanted to live. He was admitted to practice law in California in 1959. Joe was drafted and served in the U.S. Army at Fort Ord from 1959 to 1961. While Joe just may have been the most educated private first class ever, the Army, in its wisdom, assigned him to kitchen patrol. His true talents were soon uncovered, however, and he was quickly moved away from peeling potatoes and called upon to provide legal advice and prepare tax returns for his commanding officers.

Joe married Ruth in 1960 and they had two children, Michael, born in 1962, and Deborah, born in 1964.

Joe began his private practice legal career with the small Los Angeles firm of Jones & Bednar, where he developed his practice which emphasized the representation of sureties, title insurance companies and entities in the construction industry. In the late 1970’s, Joe became a partner in the firm of Mazirow, Forer, Lawrence, Cunningham & Giden. In 1982 he joined as a partner in the firm that would eventually become Gibbs Giden Locher Turner Senet & Wittbrodt.

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“Joe was probably the best all-around lawyer I’ve ever known and a wonderful guy,” said Timothy Reardon, Vice President and Senior Claims Counsel for Old Republic Title Insurance Company. Tim and Joe worked together on title insurance cases for over 35 years.

Joe balanced work with other life interests, including leading a group of title insurance attorneys on a 50-mile bicycle ride from Rosarito Beach to Ensenada followed by multiple rounds of margaritas. Joe and Ruth enjoyed world travel for leisure, but also devoted several summers to working with Sar-El, a project for volunteers in Israel.

“Joe Giden was one of those rare individuals blessed with an abundance of wisdom, ethics and patience,” said Glenn Turner, senior litigation partner at the firm. “I am grateful to have benefited from Joe’s use of these gifts and I will miss him immensely.”

“He set an example for us all,” said another of Joe’s partners, Ted Senet. “Even opposing attorneys respected Joe’s professional skills, integrity and demeanor. We were blessed to have Joe as a partner and a mentor.”

“Joe was the most influential person in my career,” said Anya Stanley, senior partner with the firm. “I knew Joe first as a client, and then as his law partner and friend. One of Joe’s strengths was his ability to solve what seemed to be unsolvable problems. He could take the most chaotic situation and bring it under control. He was my go-to person for over 30 years. I will greatly miss him.”

In 2010, Joe was inducted into the Los Angeles County Bar Association 50-year club, and he practiced law until his retirement in 2014.

“He was a true scholar of the law, provided terrific guidance to the firm’s clients, and was the perfect law partner,” said Bill Locher. “His passing signifies the passing of a generation of lawyers that will never be matched.”

The firm expresses its deepest condolences to his wife of 54 years, Ruth, his children, Michael and Deborah, and his extended family, friends, clients and colleagues everywhere.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to support “American Friends of the Magen David Adom,” the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross, at afmda.org or to the Sierra Club at sierraclub.org.

Funeral services will be held at [Eden Memorial Park Cemetery](#) located at 11500 Sepulveda Boulevard, Mission Hills, California 91345 at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, September 22, 2014.