

Leslie Weinberg (1923–2010)

Well-known Pietermaritzburg lawyer Leslie Weinberg died in late August at the age of 87 after a long illness. Weinberg grew up in Stanger and went to Durban High School. He enlisted in the army during World War II and served in North Africa. Wounded by shrapnel in an air bombardment, he was invalided back to South Africa.

After his discharge at the end of the war Weinberg studied law at the University of Natal and did his articles at Cecil Nathan and Co. He subsequently went into partnership with Nathan and then, in the early sixties, started his own practice. Weinberg remained active as a lawyer until two years ago.

‘Leslie was a highly respected lawyer,’ says attorney Julian von Klemperer. ‘In general practice he concentrated on estates and conveyancing and he was an early human rights lawyer.’ A friend, Pat McKenzie, recalls: ‘If people had problems with their banning orders, or were arrested or detained, Leslie was one of the first people they went to.’

After the war Weinberg became a member of the Springbok Legion, an ex-serviceman’s organisation open to all races. This later grew into the Torch Commando, founded in 1951 to protest the National Party’s plan to remove



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coloureds from the voters’ roll in the Cape. Weinberg was an active member of the Liberal Party and a close friend of its leader, Peter Brown. ‘He was a completely dedicated lawyer,’ recalls Phoebe Brown, widow of Peter Brown. ‘He always gave of his time if there was a problem with us or if a person of colour needed a lawyer.’

Weinberg was also a founder member of Kupugani, an organisation founded in 1962 to combat malnutrition in rural

areas, remaining closely involved until it wound up its affairs in 2004.

A member of the Five Freedoms Forum and Lawyers for Human Rights, Weinberg was also a board member and legal adviser for several organisations and institutions embodying the values he cherished. These included King's School at Nottingham Road and the Tembalethu Trust.

Apart from his community and political interests, Weinberg was

also a keen gardener and avid sports supporter.

Weinberg was survived by his wife, Pessa, and three children, Janeen, Jonathan and Paul, and five grandchildren. He was buried at Redhill Cemetery, Durban, and a memorial service was subsequently held at the Tembalethu Trust Centre in Pietermaritzburg.

*(With acknowledgement to
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