GAYNOR, Lawrence

PJ-B 9-28-1995

OBITUARIES

Lawrence Gaynor dies; headed U.S. attorney's anti-drug unit

PROVIDENCE — Lawrence D. Gaynor, 40, chief of the organized crime drug enforcement task force in the U.S. attorney's office in Rhode Island, died yesterday at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. He was the husband of Brenda (Kaufman) Gaynor and lived on President Avenue.

Mr. Gaynor had been a federal prosecutor since 1989. From 1987 to 1989, he served in the Rhode Island attorney general's office as an assistant attorney general and deputy chief of the criminal division.

Born in Port Chester, N.Y., a son of Caroline E. Gaynor of Miami, Fla., and Albert J. Gaynor of San Diego, Calif., he lived in Providence since 1986.

Mr. Gaynor attended the Rye Country Day School and Phillips Andover Academy. He graduated from Harvard University and from the George Washington University Law School in 1981.

He was an assistant district attorney in the Manhattan District Attorney's office from 1981 to 1984, and was a lawyer with Sherman & Sterling in New York from 1984 to 1986.

Before his appointment to the Rhode Island attorney general's office, Mr. Gaynor was a lawyer with Tillinghast, Collins & Graham in Providence.

He served on the board of Temple Emanu-El and on the board of the United Brothers Synagogue in Bristol. He was a member of the Rhode Island and New York Bar Associations, and was a fund-raiser for Phillips Andover Academy.

In a statement, U.S. Attorney Sheldon Whitehouse said, "Larry loved America and its institutions, and lived out our highest principles of justice. He brought a gentleness and care to an often harsh profession that made him especially admired by all who knew him."

Besides his wife and parents he leaves a son, Adam Michael Gaynor; a daughter, Amanda Lee Gaynor, both at home; a sister, Robin A. Gaynor of Wellesley, Mass., and a brother, Alan E. Gaynor of Riverside, Conn.

The funeral will be held tomorrow at 11 a.m. at Temple Emanu-El, Morris Avenue. Burial will be in Sharon Memorial Park in Sharon, Mass.

GAYNOR, Lawrence D.

September 27, 1995. Beloved husband of Brenda (Kaufman) Gaynor. Resident of Providence. Dear son of Caroline Gaynor, Miami, FL and Albert J. Gaynor, San Diego, CA. Dear father of Amanda Lee Gaynor and Adam Michael Gaynor; dear brother of Robin A. Gaynor, Wellesley, MA and Alan E. Gaynor, Riverside, CT. Assistant US Attorney at US Attorney's Office in Providence. Funeral Service 11 a.m. Friday at TEMPLE EMANU-EL Morris Ave. at Sessions St. Relatives and friends are invited.

In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to The Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, MA. Memorial Observance at his late residence Sunday and Monday 2-4; 7-9 p.m. Arrangements by MOUNT SINAI MEMORIAL CHAPEL.

PST - 10-1-1995

MARK PATINKIN

He died too soon, but Larry Gaynor left us a legacy

I never got to know him more than casually, it was mostly brief chats at parent functions, our children having shared the same classroom for several years. Once, though, I talked to Larry Gaynor at length and remember being surprised to learn what work he did. Looking back, I should have known, but didn't, so I asked.

A lawyer, he said. Just that — no elaboration. So I followed up: What kind of practice?

A prosecutor. U.S. Attorney's office. He didn't even mention that he was chief of the organized crime strike force, spending a good amount of his time putting away drug dealers.

It's the kind of dramatic-sounding job you expect someone to be vocal about. Obviously, he didn't feel a need. There are those who talk about it, and those who just do it.

There was a reason I was surprised to learn he was a federal prosecutor. You picture Elliot Ness. Larry Gaynor didn't fit that. He was a modest, even gentle soul. It's the way most people described him at his funeral the other day. Cancer. It went very quickly.

He was only 40 when he left us — "us" being appropriate because he worked for the people, under the U.S. flag. The flag reference is appropriate, too. At the funeral, a friend spoke of how Gaynor felt such fondness for it that he was known to stop in stores that sold flags to admire the American colors.

He was at an age and stage when many prosecutors go into private practice to make money. No shame in that. But it's notable when someone like Gaynor remains on his watch. In part, it's why there were so many hundreds in the synagogue to say goodby.

I've chosen to write mostly of what he did, but those who knew him spoke even more of his personal side. He was remembered as a devoted father to — and kite-flier for — his two young children, a devoted husband, a devoted friend. Four or five people spoke whom he had met in his youth and with whom he had remained steady friends ever since, despite distance. It's one of my own regrets that I don't nurture old friendships better; it says a lot about someone who makes sure to do so despite the press of parenthood and career.

GAYNOR, Lawrence

People kept saying he didn't have enemies — hard to picture in a man whose job it was to put people in prison. Then someone told of a phone call from a rough-voiced man to Gaynor's home toward the end, when he was sleeping. The rough voice left a message. He wanted to wish Gaynor well in his fight; Gaynor had always been kind and fair. When Gaynor woke and heard the name, he smiled. It was an embezzler he'd prosecuted. And this was the day of the man's sentencing. Even as the guy was being sent away, he wanted to express his concern to the prosecutor who had sent him.

Gaynor's father was the last to speak, and mentioned something else about his son I hadn't known. Larry was the third generation in a line of U.S. attorneys. Then the father said this: "He thought there was never a better client than the United States of America."

On my way out, I noticed many police officers in full dress and was reminded of the phrase, "Thin blue line" — a metaphor for those in law enforcement who form a wall against crime.

Then something occurred to me. There's another line that's not talked about as much but is just as important. Call it what you will — the gray-suit line, the pinstriped line: the line of prosecutors who are as essential as those in blue in protecting the rest of us. Today, that line has a small hole in it.

It's just too young, 40, to see taken so decent a man. Most of us feel we're only getting started at that age. But few at any age can say what can be said about Larry Gaynor: He played a long and true part in making his country more just, and more safe. That's a legacy.