

The Dark Side

Known only to a few, Ed Weintraut had crossed over to the “Dark Side” of Philadelphia’s corrupt government.*

“Nah, just looking”, the listless man muttered.

That man was a short Italian American with a raspy pointed voice evocative of Don Corleone’s henchmen in the movie “The Godfather”.

We provided this answer to one of Ed Weintraut’s sons, Neil, in Ed Weintraut’s eponymous business Weintraut Jewelers.

His answer and behaviour were weird - people don’t just come to a small business at 735 Walnut Street to meander around.

Then, when Ed Weintraut happened to come out to the showroom area a minute or so later, this man suddenly spoke up - “Say, are you Ed Weintraut”? Ed Weintraut of course, acknowledged that he was, and asked the man what he was looking for (as in what type of jewellery or product he wanted).

But instead of saying he wanted a particular product or deal, the man then volunteered that he worked for Judge Sartuchi.

Ed Weintraut politely responded to this seemingly irrelevant small talk and again asked how he could help this man buy something.

The man instead volunteered that Judge Sartuchi was the judge who was hearing the lawsuit filed against Ed Weintraut and Weintraut Jewelers.

A pause for a little background.

Located at 735 Walnut Street and just blocks from Independence Hall, the building at 735 Walnut Street was built in 1790. More recently, this entire area was undergoing a revitalization - the store right next to Ed Weintraut’s, namely Perloff’s at 733 Walnut Street, had just undergone a complete rebuild with amongst other things, a modern metal-and-glass facade replaced the colonial-era red brick.

Basically, stores on either side of Weintraut Jeweler’s and all around Jeweler’s Row at large had been modernized.... And this triggered the ire of the Historical Societies of Philadelphia into action.

Being rather frugal, Ed Weintraut didn’t redo his colonial-era front - instead, he had mounted a blue sign with white letters of the long



Weintraut name, that some have suggested was of such size and brightness that it could be seen from outer space.

This was certainly how the Philadelphia Historical Society felt. Ed Weintraut's modern sign glommed onto the side of a 1790 colonial facade was exactly the type of sacrilege for which the society exists.

So they filed a lawsuit against Ed Weintraut and his business Weintraut Jewelers.

As with anything to do with the government, this lawsuit just festered through the grindingly-slow calendar of the Courts.

Other than the initial filing of the lawsuit, the Court had been - tellingly - quiet about it.... Until this Italian American walked into Ed Weintraut's store and reminded Ed Weintraut that he worked for a Judge at City Hall who also "happened" to be the Judge that would be deciding the fate of Ed Weintraut's cherished tall blue sign.

Returning to the scene where the man was in Weintraut Jeweler's telling Ed Weintraut about his "employer"...

This man went on to inform Ed Weintraut that it also "so happened" that Judge Sartuchi was remodelling his house with all the latest fixtures including the latest craze at the time, namely Waterpik Shower Massagers.

The man then thumb through Ed Weintraut's catalog and "matter of factly" saw that Weintraut Jewelers sold these hot-new Waterpik Shower Massagers. He closed the catalog, and with just one final comment - namely that the Judge was redoing two bathrooms with Waterpik Shower Massagers - the man walked out never to be seen again.

A few days later, Ed Weintraut took two Waterpik Shower Massagers from inventory, wrapped them in brown paper, and then walked up to the Courthouse. There he found Judge Sartuchi's office and just told Judge Sartuchi's admin that he the brown-paper package was a delivery for the Judge, and left.

Nothing.

Six months or so went by, and nothing had been heard about the lawsuit.

So Ed Weintraut called Judge Sartuchi's office, gave the Judge's admin the number of the lawsuit and asked the Judge's admin to check on the status of the case. The admin put Ed Weintraut on hold for a minute, and upon returning, spoke in a way suggesting that this was not the first time that she had told someone that: "*Gee Mr. Weintraut, there doesn't seem to be a case with that number on file.*"

Ed Weintraut knew what that meant.

Some Forty years later, that large blue sign that allegedly could be seen from outer space remained glommed onto historical 735 Walnut Street just blocks from Independence Hall.

*This story is an embellishment including fictional characters.