

November 21, 1982: NYTimes: by Edward A. Gargan.

Abraham L. Pomerantz, a lawyer who pioneered shareholder suits against major corporations and for a time directed the prosecution of German industrialists after World War II, died yesterday in New York City. He was 79 years old and lived in New York.

Mr. Pomerantz, the founder of the law firm of Pomerantz Levy Haudek & Block, was a man of extraordinary contrasts. He championed the virtues of Socialism and the rights of the poor while commanding large legal fees. He defended a Soviet diplomat accused of spying at the height of the cold war, and also represented some of the largest corporations in America.

Mr. Pomerantz, who was often described as looking a bit like a giant panda bear, was an articulate courtroom orator who reveled in fencing with his political and legal adversaries.

"I love the buck," he said once. "I'm for it. I'm out to make it. But with the money I've made I haven't forgotten that it's a hard, cruel world, and when it's a question of the rich against the poor, I'm for the poor." Law School at Night

Born in Brooklyn in 1903, Mr. Pomerantz worked his way through Brooklyn Law School at night. In 1924 he got his first job as a lawyer, for \$4 a week in Manhattan.

His first foray into what became known as shareholders' derivative suits came in 1933. A shareholder's derivative suit is similar to a class-action suit in that it represents grievances of a group, and members of the group share any award. In the derivative suit, however, the award is made to a company and shareholders benefit indirectly. In class-action suits, the award goes directly to those who have brought the suit.

In the 1933 case, a woman who owned 20 shares of the National City Bank of New York, which had dropped from \$585 to \$17 a share after the stock market crash of 1929, called Mr. Pomerantz to see if she could sue.

When he discovered that the principal officers of the bank had set aside a considerable percentage of the bank's profits as incentive bonuses, he took the case. Mr. Pomerantz won and devoted himself to defending the rights of minority shareholders. Active in Politics

Mr. Pomerantz was active in Democratic politics in the late 1940's, running unsuccessfully for the Supreme Court in New York in 1945. But he broke with the party to work as the campaign treasurer for Henry Wallace in his race for President against Harry S. Truman in 1948.

In 1946, he was sent to Germany to lead the prosecution of German industrialists for collaborating in Nazi war crimes. Eight months later, he left Germany after accusing the Truman Administration of not really wanting to pursue the trials.

In one of the era's most celebrated espionage cases, he defended Valentin A. Gubitchev, a Soviet diplomat accused of having conspired with Judith Coplon, a Department of Justice analyst, to funnel defense secrets to the Soviet Union.

Both were convicted in 1950 and received 15-year prison terms, but Mr. Gubitchev's sentence was stayed when he agreed to leave the country. Miss Coplon was freed on bail and 16 years later the indictment was dropped by the Justice Department.

Mr. Pomerantz is survived by his wife, Phyllis; a son, Daniel, of Massachusetts, and a daughter, Charlotte, of Manhattan.