

# VALLEY LAWYER

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## **A Legacy of Resilience: Remembering Leon and Maurice Lewitt**



**Defining the Client  
in a Family-Driven  
Context**

**Packard v. Packard (2025)  
By Expanding the Definition  
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By John B. Marshall and Keith T. Zimmet

# A Legacy of Resilience: Remembering Leon and Maurice Lewitt



**T**HE LEGAL COMMUNITY mourns the recent passing of both Leon Lewitt, founding shareholder of Lewitt Hackman in Encino, and his older brother Maurice Lewitt, who founded a predecessor firm in Beverly Hills. Their extraordinary life journeys from war-torn Europe to the San Fernando Valley's legal and business landscapes exemplify the transformative power of determination, intellect, and unwavering integrity.

Though Leon had retired from active practice, his death in December 2025 resonates deeply throughout the

firm he co-founded, where his vision and values continue to guide Lewitt Hackman's work. Maurice also passed, less than a month after Leon.

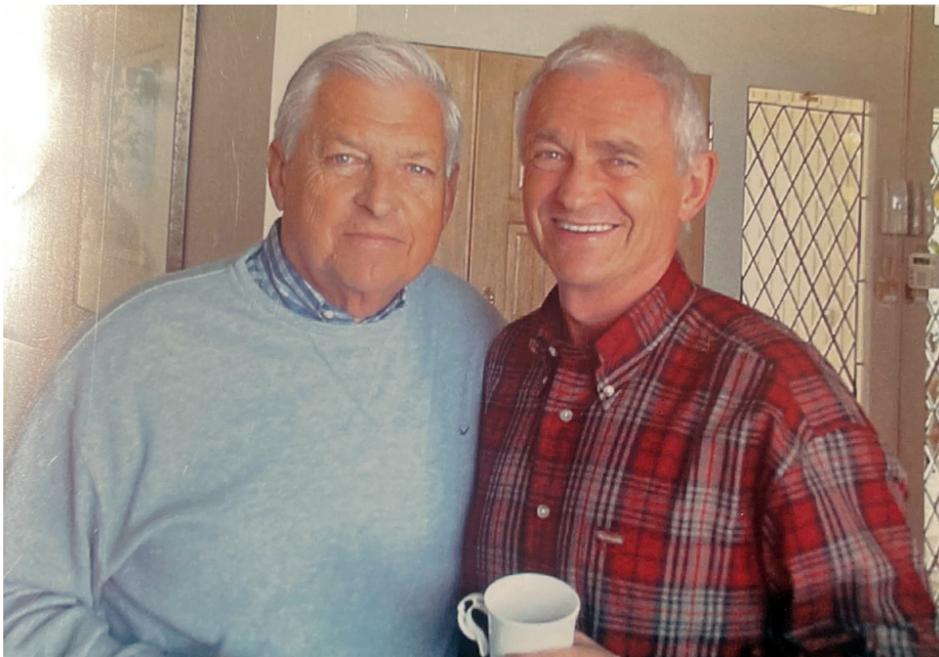
### **Growing Up in War-Torn France**

The Lewitt brothers' story begins in circumstances that would have broken lesser individuals.

Leon experienced the Nazi occupation of Paris as a very young child during World War II. In a desperate bid for his safety, his family sent him to live with a family in the French countryside, hoping the

rural setting would shield him from the horrors unfolding in the capital. Meanwhile, Maurice at age 11 fled Paris and sought help through a resistance movement. He worked on farms run by Christian families in unoccupied France.

Before the brothers left Paris, Nazis took their father and uncle to an internment camp called Drancy, then sent them to Auschwitz, where they perished. This loss shaped Leon and Maurice's lifelong commitment to Holocaust remembrance and Jewish causes.



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### Resilience Sparks Success

After the war, Maurice departed for America and began his studies at Kent State University at age sixteen. He graduated with a degree in business administration in 1951 and earned his Juris Doctor from The Ohio State University Law School in 1954. He became a U.S. Citizen in 1953 and served in the U.S. Army from 1954-1956.

Leon immigrated to the United States to join his older brother, arriving with minimal knowledge of English but possessed of an indomitable spirit. He not only mastered the language but excelled academically in ways that laid the foundation for a distinguished legal career. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from The Ohio State University in 1960, majoring in Finance with a minor in Accounting. Three years later, he obtained his Juris Doctor from the University of San Diego School of Law,

where his academic excellence earned him recognition as a member of the Master of the Rolls.

Maurice established himself in Beverly Hills by opening the law firm Lewitt, Firestone & Wilk in 1956, though he later left the practice to form SETCO Inc., a public company that developed and operated acute general hospitals. Leon continued to practice law.

### Lewitt Hackman and Legacy Building

Fortuitous timing aided both brothers’ endeavors. The San Fernando Valley experienced explosive growth during the 1950s and 1960s as physicians established practices and sponsored hospitals throughout the region. The Lewitt brothers, with their combined expertise in business, corporate law, and healthcare, served this expanding market.

Leon devoted the majority of his legal career to structuring, negotiating, and handling mergers, acquisitions,

and divestitures across many industries. His work ranged from representing small and medium-sized businesses to serving as counsel for public companies in financing and merger activities. He advised clients in diverse sectors including hotels, restaurants, manufacturing, intellectual property, healthcare, garment industries, retail, insurance agencies, accounting firms, and other service enterprises. His transactions spanned California, the nation, and international markets, reflecting Leon’s ambition and the trust clients placed in his counsel.

**John B. Marshall** is a Los Angeles business lawyer and Shareholder at Lewitt Hackman, one of the largest law firms in the San Fernando Valley. He represents clients in four primary practice groups: Business & Civil Litigation, Commercial Real Estate, Corporate and Health Care Law.

**Keith T. Zimmet** is the President and Managing Shareholder of Lewitt Hackman, Chair of the Firm’s Commercial Finance Practice Group, and a member of both the Firm’s Corporate Practice Group and Real Estate Practice Group.



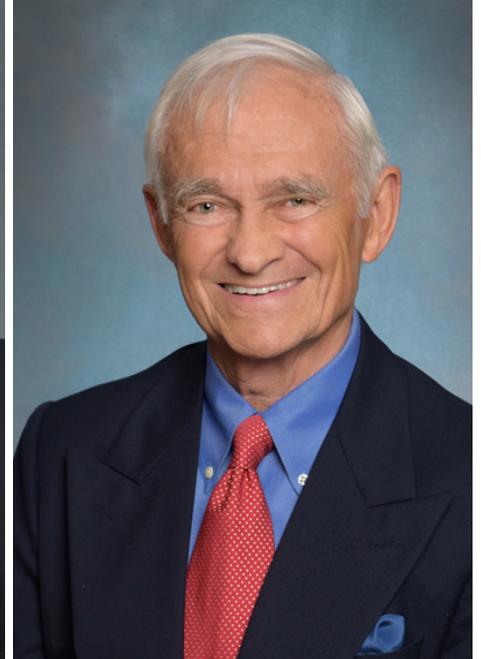
In the healthcare sector particularly, Leon became a trusted advisor to hospitals and physician groups, continuing the practice Maurice established. His expertise in corporate restructuring proved invaluable as he successfully structured and negotiated shareholder and partner buy-ins and buy-outs, and resolved disputes related to multi-party ownership. He rendered critical services to professional practices, representing accounting firms and medical practitioners in complex purchase and sale transactions.



*Young Maurice and Leon with their mother Razel (Rose).*

Those who knew Leon well remember his strategic business acumen coupled with a sharp sense of humor. He possessed the rare ability to navigate complex legal matters while maintaining the warmth and genuine care that made clients feel truly valued.

In 1969 Maurice left his legal practice to serve as Chairman of the Board of SETCO, Inc. The crown jewel of this venture, Tarzana Hospital, opened in 1973 and remains a cornerstone of San Fernando Valley healthcare today, now called Providence Cedars-Sinai Tarzana Medical Center. After Hyatt Corporation purchased the hospital, Maurice became Chairman of the Board and CEO of Hyatt Medical Enterprises, Inc.,



and joined the Board of Directors of Hyatt Corporation. Later, he headed Nu-Med, another national hospital system, from 1985 to 1996.

When Maurice returned to practicing law, he joined Leon at Lewitt Hackman as Of Counsel, bringing decades of healthcare industry experience that enriched the firm's capabilities. He served as a mediator for the American Arbitration Association and as a settlement officer in the Voluntary Settlement Conference Program for the Los Angeles County

Superior Court and the California Court of Appeal 2nd Appellate District. In 1993, Western University of Health Care Sciences recognized his contributions to healthcare with the Humanism in Medicine Award.

### **An Enduring Legacy**

From the ashes of the Holocaust, Leon and Maurice built new lives in America, pursued excellence in education and professional achievement, and created institutions that continue to serve their community. Today, Lewitt Hackman is one of the San Fernando Valley's largest full-service law firms.

Keith T. Zimmet, who has served as Lewitt Hackman's Managing Shareholder since 2001, noted that "Leon's and Maury's legacy lives on not only in the firm that bears their name, but in the values the two of them championed: dedication, perseverance, kindness, and commitment to excellence. As a law firm, we honor Leon's and Maury's legacy by remaining committed to those values."

For the attorneys and staff of Lewitt Hackman, and for the countless clients and business associates who benefited from their counsel and business acumen, Leon's and Maurice Lewitt's memories will remain a blessing and an inspiration. 



*Private hard hat site tour of Providence Cedars-Sinai Tarzana Medical Center's new replacement hospital wing. Maurice was the cofounder of the hospital, which originally opened 50 years ago.*