

THE  
**HELMMSLEYS**

THE RISE AND FALL OF  
**HARRY & LEONA**

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Joe Benfante, summing up for Joe Licari, played the clown. "Poor Joe Licari," he said. "He's on trial for his life. Not for his own tax returns, not for his own money, not for Dunnellen Hall that he never even got to go to. His whole life is on trial because of a lousy mansion he never even saw. He doesn't even get to hear the music from Disney World. Give me a break. Give me a break. This is ridiculous."

What happened to Licari, he said, was he was just a good guy trying to do his job and getting caught in the middle, particularly because of Leona Helmsley's dislike. "Why did she hate Joe Licari?" he asked. "Because Joe Licari was Harry Helmsley's Jiminy Cricket, his conscience. He would tell Harry Helmsley, 'Mrs. Helmsley is spending your money again' and she went nuts. The queen did not want to go to the king and ask for an allowance. Money was no object. Leona wanted to get it done her way."

And all those fake invoices. Harry dreamed them up because he didn't want anyone to know how much Leona was spending, or what she was spending for. "He didn't want everyone to know his wife was a little strange, his wife was beating up on him. Nobody, but nobody, knew what Mrs. Helmsley was going to spend or what she was going to spend it on. Perhaps Mr. Helmsley was embarrassed that she spent \$500,000 on an ugly gray and brown buffalo. It was the ugliest buffalo I ever saw."

It was all very funny, especially after eight hours of Feffer's so-deliberate confusion. But there were a few times when Benfante went just a little too far. He pointed to a couple of government witnesses and said, "They lied through their teeth."

"That opinion," Judge Walker interrupted, "is not relevant."

"Maybe not, but after eight weeks, they are beginning to know that," Benfante said, gesturing to the jury.

And Judge Walker wouldn't let him open a huge gold paper-wrapped box he brought into court intending to present it to the IRS. There was a card attached to the outside. It read: "This is how I bought the bras." Inside was a huge stack of expense vouchers for Leona Helmsley's personal purchases.

Benfante was a hard act to follow. Fortunately, he finished late Thursday afternoon, so Bill Brodsky didn't have to compete right away. He had a night to think over what he would say in Frank Turco's defense.