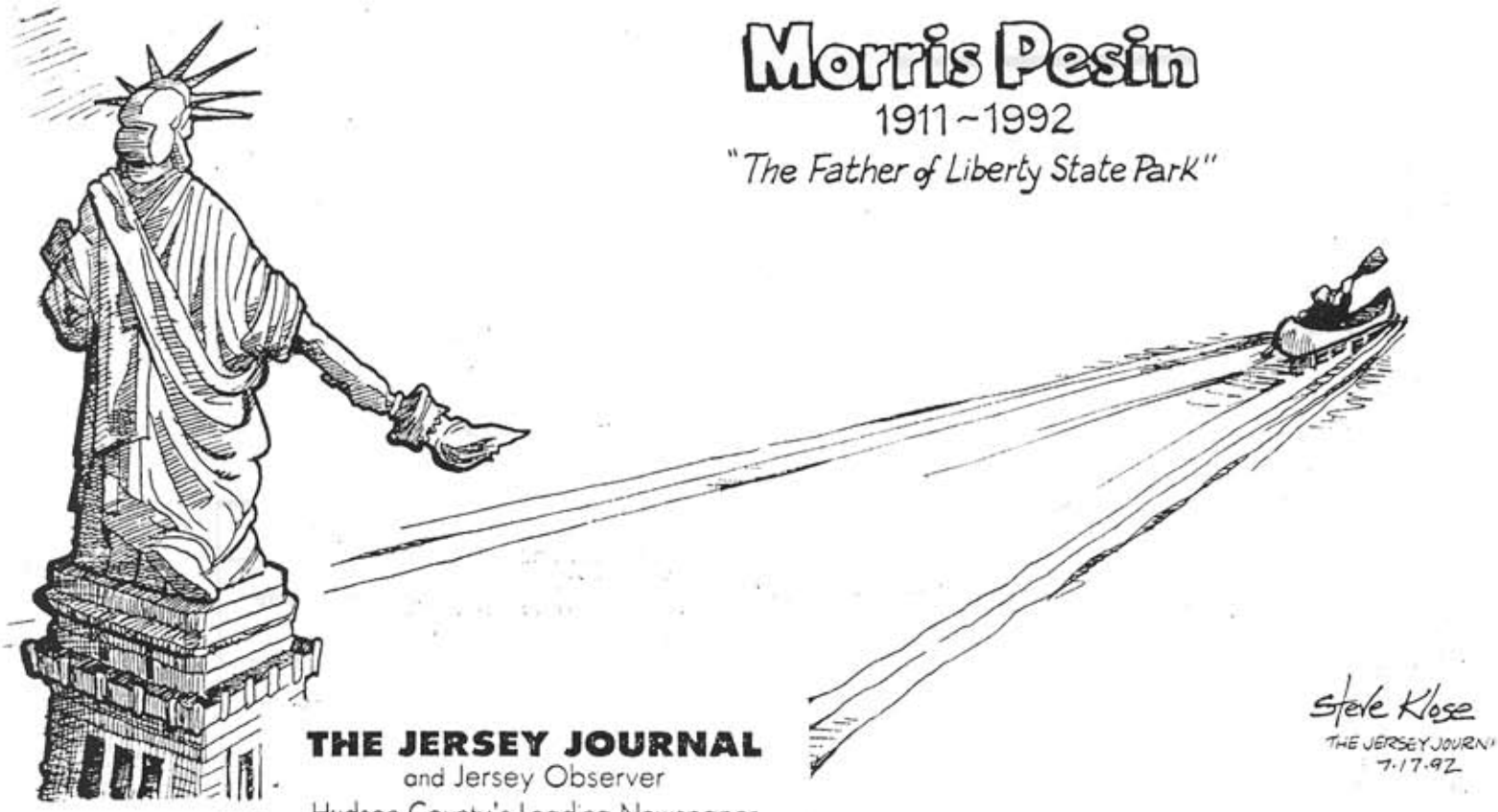

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In Our Opinion

Morris Pesin's selfless quest

Morris Pesin served as a catalyst for the creation of Liberty State Park, and that beautiful, spectacular park on the Jersey City waterfront is a tribute to his memory.

But this Jersey City hero, who died last Friday, did not limit himself to fighting for that park.

He had fought against racial discrimination in hiring more than 40 years ago. As a councilman in the late 1960s, he spoke out against a city administration sinking in its own corruption. He fought to keep PATH train fares a bargain. He worked long and hard to get the range of ethnic groups in the city to work together in the city's annual cultural festival. On a shoestring budget he brought a fascinating array of musical entertainers and live cultural performances to appreciative local audiences.

One of the remarkable aspects of his public career was not only how much he tried to do, but how much he was actually able to accomplish.

One explanation for his extraordinary success was that he loved Jersey City fiercely.

Another was his great sense of public relations, accompanied by a willingness to do whatever he could to dramatize his cause.

But a crucial part of his success was his selflessness. He would make request after request of journalists, but they were always about his causes, never about mentioning his name or his personal role in any project.

He garnered support from numerous city administrations for his projects, and he won a good share of his battles with various state bureaucrats over what he thought should be done or shouldn't be done at Liberty Park.

But Morris Pesin never sought a paid government appointment or a government contract for himself. That selfless quality helped empower Morris Pesin in a city where too many men — rich or poor, establishment or insurgent — became bogged down in searches for endorsements, jobs, contracts or personal favors