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The Meaning of a Lawyer's Oath of Office

Delivered by Judge Hugh C. Todd of the Superior Court for King County to the Newly Admitted Lawyers, January, 1937

Young men, each one of you has now reached that crucial milestone on the pathway of your career, the place and time at which you first begin the practice of law. Today you become a member of one of the highest professions in the country. The oath of office which you have just taken is sufficient admonition to you, and from it you can gather ample instruction regarding your conduct in your office and in the court room. It should not be necessary for this court to admonish you that your client, rich or poor, high or low, is entitled to the full measure of your ability and best effort. Industry and honesty and integrity should be your watchword in the faithful representation of those who entrust their cause and their liberty and at times their very lives to your hands and mind. There is practically no limitation on the good you should do for them, except that which is imposed by honor, conscience and a sense of duty.

In the court room, of course, you will be courteous and gentlemanly to opposing counsel, and respect the rights of the other side. and treat opposition witnesses with respect, yet with that degree of firmness necessary for the protection of the rights of your clients.

The profession of the law is regarded by many as the leading profession in this country. It is a profession in which its members are called upon not alone to accumulate money or wealth for themselves, but to "promote the common good and the welfare of the community." You can do much to maintain the prestige of the legal profession in the public mind. Strive to maintain and increase that prestige.

Because of the natural gifts usually possessed by those who choose to practice law, to become lawyers, and because the law profession has to do, not only with the making of the laws of the land but with applying their principles and advocating their application to the affairs of men and state, the lawyer not only naturally attains but is often accorded a position of leadership in the affairs of the state and the nation. Strive to maintain on a high pedestal that leadership which your profession now holds.

In these tortuous times of unrest and social readjustment there is too often a disposition to berate the institutions of the nation and to attack the Constitution of your country, the Constitution which you have taken an oath to uphold, protect and defend, and which has been its firm foundation from the inception of the oldest Republic in existence. You are the Advocates. To you falls the duty to publicly maintain the institutions and traditions of the nation, and in the end you may depend upon the Courts to still be the last bulwark of the Republic.

In closing permit me to suggest that you become acquainted as rapidly as possible with your fellow members of the profession; take an active part in the affairs that have to do with the welfare of the lawyer, and always have confidence and faith in your fellow lawyers and trust them and take their word upon all matters until

you have reason to do otherwise. Join your local bar association; you are by law a member of the state bar association. Be helpful to the members of this Court; they will be helpful to you.

And as you go about your work from day to day, be not unmindful of those who have been helpful to you along your pathway to the goal which you have reached today, and particularly be not unmindful of the sacrifices which have been made by your fathers and your mothers in the realization of your ambition and in the realization of their ambitions and hopes for you.

THE FINAL BRIEF

Carl D. Eshelman, associated with the Internal Revenue Department, Federal Building, Tacoma, died suddenly January 16, 1937.

Parker W. Kimball, having offices in the Old National Bank Building, Spokane, died suddenly of heart failure at Spokane on March 30, 1937. Mr. Kimball was born at Waltham, Minnesota, in 1877. He graduated from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1899. He came directly to the State of Washington, was admitted in the same year and practiced at Pullman for seven years where he held the office of city attorney. On leaving Pullman he moved to Spokane where he remained as an active practicing attorney at all times until the date of his death.

F. C. Highsmith died at Spokane April 1, 1937. Mr. Highsmith was born in 1865 at Bastrop, Texas. He was educated at the A. & M. College preparing for a career as a civil engineer but thereafter studied law at Austin, Texas, and was admitted to practice in 1895. While practicing in that State he held the several offices of county attorney and county judge and was president of the County Judges' Association. He also served as mayor of the town of Mineral Wells, Texas. Mr. Highsmith moved to Spokane in 1916 where he engaged in the active practice of law until retiring from practice about five years ago.