

Address to the Graduating Class of 1953

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ADDRESSES

REMARKS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 1953*

Honorable George R. Currie**

In a few weeks you, members of the senior Class of 1953, will be entering upon the active practice of the law, and it is my great pleasure to extend a word of warm welcome to you. There are other professions which are far more remunerative from the monetary viewpoint than the law, but I know of no profession which has more to offer from the standpoint of true personal satisfaction over the years.

In the first place, there is the responsibility of the matters on which your advice will be sought by your clients and the handling of those which will be entrusted to your care. This is so whether the matter be the planning of the disposition of an estate or the handling of the administration thereof after death; the advising of the businessman or manufacturer on the problems of his business and the drafting of contracts involving goods or services aggregating immense sums of money; the handling of personal injury or workmen's compensation claims which are of the most vital importance to the person who has such claim; the protecting of the interests of a husband and wife who are purchasing their first home, which may be the only piece of real estate they will ever own, and, therefore, a matter of tremendous concern to them; or the handling of labor negotiations leading up to a collective bargaining agreement between a labor union and an employer in which the part you play may have some influence in determining whether the result will be industrial strife or the creation of a relationship of mutual trust and goodwill between the parties. A great deal of self satisfaction will accrue to you from achieving satisfactory results for your clients in the handling of such matters for them.

Secondly, and this applies particularly to you who may be so fortunate as to engage in a general as contrasted to a specialized practice, there will be the experience of having your work bring you into contact with all phases of the life of your community. There is a thrill connected with constantly having these close contacts with the vital phases of life that one in a more cloistered occupation never experiences.

Thirdly, there is a camaraderie among lawyers one does not find among the members of any other profession. You will find this feeling of goodwill exhibited in any gathering of lawyers in which you may be fortunate enough to participate, whether it be a casual group in some courthouse corridor or hotel lobby, or some meeting of the organ-

* Delivered at the Annual Marquette Law Banquet, April 23, 1953.

** Associate Justice, Wisconsin Supreme Court.

ized bar. The very nature of a lawyer's work requires that he get along with his fellow lawyers with whom he must negotiate contracts or settlements or controversies. Surprisingly enough, it is often the lawyers who battle the hardest against each other in the courtroom who are the best of companions and friends after the heat of the battle is worn away. Young lawyers starting out in practice can reap a real advantage from the goodwill which so universally prevails among lawyers, by seeking the advice and counsel of older lawyers when they have a troublesome problem. You will be surprised how freely such advice will be given.

Lastly, as a lawyer your work will consist of securing for your clients the enforcement or protection of the rights to which they are entitled under the law, including those guaranteed by the constitution. The commodity in which you will be dealing is justice. Can there be any higher calling? However, there always seems to be a lag between law and perfect or ideal justice measured in the light of the conscience of society as of any particular moment. Another way of stating it is to say that law is the embodiment of man's imperfect attempt to codify the will of God. It is the duty of lawyers to strive to improve law so that it comes closer to approximating our ideals of perfect justice. Individually, some of you will have the rewarding experience, as a result of litigation in which you participate, of persuading some appellate court to adopt a new principle that is in better accord with the demands of justice. Others of you may render distinguished service in improving our law in the capacity of legislators or judges. However, it lies within the power of all of you to have a part in this betterment of law and the improvement of the administration of justice by supporting, and participating in, the effort of your local and state bar associations directed to that end. Our legislature, in recent years, has had a growing respect for the recommendations of the organized bar, but much more can be accomplished if our bar associations received wider and more active support from the lawyers. No greater satisfaction can come to any lawyer than that of knowing that some effort of his very own has contributed to the improvement of the law, or the administration of justice.