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Remarks on the Dedication of the Robing Room in Honor of Judge Robert Allen Grant

*Hon. Robert L. Miller, Jr. **

Dean Dutile, Father Beauchamp, fellow members of the bench and bar, Judge and Mrs. Grant:

It is a wonderful thing that this law school is honoring the career of this distinguished alumnus. I gather I am here in a dual role as a former law clerk, and as one who has shared office space with Judge Grant for the past six and a half years. I would like to tell you everything I have learned from Judge Grant, to tell you about the love, admiration, respect, that I feel for him, but I was only asked to speak for a few minutes, and lunch will get cold, so I can only relate a small part of it.

I have never forgotten the first week of June, 1975, when I began work as a law clerk for Judge Grant. At that time, he was already on senior status, but he was the only judge in South Bend, as the other branches of government could not figure out how to replace Judge Beamer. In the first three days of that week, Judge Grant presided over the criminal trial of a county commissioner. Having attended college in Chicago, I thought that was the run-of-the-mill grist of the federal courts. Having just arrived, I had no responsibility for that case. My task was to get things ready for the other trial that week: a two day evidentiary hearing on the conditions at the Indiana Boys' School.

The criminal case went to the jury late Wednesday. I bid everyone farewell and went home for dinner, did whatever things I used to do around the apartment, and then, never having seen what happens when a jury is out, went back down to the courthouse around 8:30 to see what was going on. No verdict had been returned. I visited with people until about 9:30, then decided to go home and get some sleep. After all, I had a big day ahead of myself, what with the first case I had worked on coming to trial the next day. The Judge was still in his office, waiting for the jury. In the course of a conversation time has otherwise erased, I re-

* Judge, United States District Court for the Northern District of Indiana; Northwestern University, B.A. 1972; Indiana University, J.D. 1975.

member Judge Grant telling me, "We don't punch a time clock around here."

His meaning came clear to me the next day as I watched him preside over the Boys' School case with considerably less sleep than I had gotten. This man supposedly was semi-retired, and yet here he was, putting in a sixty-hour week. That was the first, and perhaps one of the most important lessons I learned from Judge Grant: if there is work to be done, we must do it. I have tried to live by that ever since, and I can attest to Judge Grant's having lived by it. The public has gotten its money's worth out of him. Almost twenty years after having taken senior status, he can be found in his office every day; he sits by designation on the Seventh Circuit (more often, I believe, than some senior judges of the Seventh Circuit); he is ruling on a substantial number of district court cases. Again, I could go on and on, but lunch will get cold.

There is one other thing I want to tell you about, though, because it is not as widely known. Work in a courthouse is a high-stress proposition; there are always more things to do, important things, than there is time to do them in. If those working in the courthouse do not recognize the common goal and interest they share, the pressures can increase unnecessarily through petty personal disputes and turf battles. Having worked at times in such an environment when I was on the state court, I can tell you that such an environment increases the stress unnecessarily and affects everyone's work product adversely.

Judge Grant has kept that environment from infecting the courthouse that will soon bear his name. Early on, he led those who work in the courthouse to think of themselves as "the federal family," and to work together accordingly. And he has been the patriarch of that federal family, reminding all of us at various times throughout the year of our interdependence and common interest. I cannot believe this has been easy, because the size of the federal family has grown like topsy. When I left the federal family for the state court in 1975, the building housed Judge Grant, Bankruptcy Judge Rodibaugh, and a part-time magistrate whose office was not in the building. By 1987, the building housed three district judges, two bankruptcy judges, a magistrate judge, two appellate judges, and law clerks everywhere you step, with the other offices having expanded accordingly. But still, it is the federal family.

So the workload of the South Bend federal courthouse has expanded many times more than Judge Grant's workload has reduced, but, through his role as patriarch of the federal family, he still continues to contribute immeasurably to the quality of the work produced in that courthouse. In this, as in all things, he continues his contribution to his community, and his contributions deserve the gratitude of that community. Whether his community is defined as the Northern District of Indiana, "Michiana," or the bar, this law school and I are citizens of that community. I am glad to have this opportunity to express my gratitude, and am delighted that the law school is doing so as well.

