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## No Ordinary Individual

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## NO ORDINARY INDIVIDUAL

HONORABLE GERALD W. VANDEWALLE\*

Writing a tribute to Judge Rodney Webb is easy and a pleasure. It has an unexpected and unanticipated benefit for me as I begin to write. My mind is flooded with memories going back to the time we were law students at the University of North Dakota School of Law. Rod entered the law school after a triumphant career with the University of North Dakota football team. We wondered how he would make the transition from football star to first-year law. Rod quickly dispelled any thought he left his talents in the locker room. He proved to be as hard-hitting in his approach to learning the law as he had been on the football field.

Rod returned to Grafton to practice law with one of our mutual heroes, Elton Ringsak, who taught, by example, both of us about principles and integrity. Rod was a state's attorney in Walsh County and I was an assistant attorney general. Rod also held an appointment as a special assistant attorney general for, as I recall, the Grafton State School. Our paths crossed frequently. For example, we were both members of an interim legislative committee in the 1975-1977 biennium, a time when non-legislators were occasionally asked to sit with legislators on interim committees as "citizen committee members." That committee had a broad range of study assignments, including a study of administrative law, appellate review of criminal sentences, and the substance and form of all statutory losses of civil rights and other disqualifications resulting from conviction of a crime. Neither Rod nor I was stingy with our opinions on the matters before the committee. I recollect the two of us agreed with one another on some matters and vociferously disagreed on others. It was a stimulating adventure to match wits with Rod, and the experience reconfirmed my admiration and respect for his work ethic, insight, and judgment.

Rod's ensuing career is, of course, more well-known. His appointment as United States District Attorney, subsequent appointment as United States District Judge for North Dakota, and service as Chief Judge of the North Dakota District are alone reason for acclaim.

I am not surprised by Rod's success as a lawyer and a judge. The characteristics necessary for that success were evident from the beginning.

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\* Chief Justice, North Dakota Supreme Court.

When I consider his public success combined with his successful career as a private practitioner and counselor at law to many, his public and private community service and philanthropy, and the outstanding example of the loving husband he is to Betty and their five children, it is immediately apparent Rod Webb is no ordinary individual. I am privileged to have known him these many years and to have watched with joy and some awe as his career unfolded. I am proud of Judge Webb's accomplishments. As a lawyer, a judge, a husband, a father, and a citizen, he sets a wonderful example for succeeding generations to follow.