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Jane L. Dynes

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## A MAN OF ENERGY AND FOCUS

JANE L. DYNES\*

Judge Webb had just been appointed to the bench when my clerkship with him began. Prior to his appointment, he had served as United States Attorney for North Dakota. In that position he not only expanded his legal skills, but he developed management and leadership skills that continue to serve him well. Through the force of his personality, intelligence, and vision, he built teams. He preferred a staff of people who brought a mixture of talent, personality, and outlook to the job. He took satisfaction in seeing a person's potential where others might see only shortcomings. He set a tone of respect and cooperation in his dealings with litigants, attorneys, and staff in the courtroom and in chambers. Judge Webb has excelled in his position, in large part, because he genuinely likes, and has compassion for, people.

As anyone who has seen him stride to the bench before a hearing or court session can attest, Judge Webb is a man of energy and focus. Those characteristics have helped him thrive in his profession and have helped him distinguish himself on the bench. He is not, however, comfortable with merely maintaining the status quo. No one could have been surprised by Judge Webb's enthusiastic and successful efforts behind the impressive Quentin N. Burdick United States Courthouse. He was one of the first people to champion and implement technological advances beginning with the ELMO evidence presentation system and ending with the fully wired courtroom.

Judge Webb has consistently worked to build and improve the measure of justice that the federal court provides those who appear before it in North Dakota. Judge Webb takes pride in his North Dakota heritage, the education he earned here, and the professional and family life he has been able to pursue here. He is a true believer in the University of North Dakota School of Law and, as one show of support, consistently hires its graduates to clerk for him.

Judge Webb used to say there was no greater opportunity for a young lawyer than to serve as a clerk in a trial court. I doubt he has changed his opinion even after years on the bench. As his clerks, we were allowed

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\* The author served as a law clerk to Judge Webb from 1987-1990, and is currently an attorney and shareholder in the Serkland Law Firm in Fargo, North Dakota.

unlimited access to hearings, trials, and briefs, which allowed us to observe and consider the work of some of the best attorneys in the country. Judge Webb would freely admit his admiration for a particularly masterful argument. No one more enjoyed the artistry involved in carefully constructed direct examinations or in laser-like cross-examinations that ruined them. Judge Webb also respected and upheld the traditions and rituals of his position. This was always most apparent during naturalizations. Work on the ceremony took months because speakers, musicians, organizations, and endless details had to be arranged. All that could be done was done to welcome the newest citizens of the United States. Judge Webb once noted that presiding over the naturalization ceremony was the one truly uplifting proceeding he could conduct. Those ceremonies meant much to him because he knew how much they meant to the new citizens, their families, and ultimately, to all of us.

Unlike some jurists, Judge Webb has stayed connected to the local bar. When he first came to Fargo as United States Attorney, he would go over to the Elks Club and eat lunch with his colleagues and fellow practitioners at the attorney round table. After he took the bench, the camaraderie with his former colleagues necessarily changed. He often had to settle for lunching at the Elks, and later elsewhere, with his court reporter and a couple of law clerks. During his tenure, however, Judge Webb has continued to attend local bar meetings and has encouraged his law clerks to do likewise. Whether the court was sitting in Grand Forks or Fargo, if the local bar association was meeting Judge Webb wanted to be there. This practice set a wonderful example for his law clerks. It showed us that the legal profession requires us to be more than good practitioners; it needs us to be participating citizens. Judge Webb has been and continues to be a visible, contributing member of our legal community.

Many of Judge Webb's law clerks have stayed in North Dakota and Minnesota. This is not surprising given Judge Webb's commitment to his home and profession. He has invested a considerable amount of himself into the development of able attorneys who will work to improve our system of justice. As his clerks, we reaped the benefit of that investment and are forever grateful. Many thanks to Judge Webb for sharing his energy, intelligence, and commitment with all of us.