

Law Quadrangle (formerly Law Quad Notes)

Volume 42 | Number 2

Article 3

Summer 1999

Message from the Dean

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Recommended Citation

Jeffrey S. Lehman, *Message from the Dean*, 42 *Law Quadrangle (formerly Law Quad Notes)* - (1999).

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/lqnotes/vol42/iss2/3>

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During my tenure as dean, I have used my messages in *Law Quadrangle Notes* to explore various qualities that help to define an outstanding attorney. I have had occasion to discuss how great lawyers pursue intellectual growth and renewal, maintain integrity, teach others about the law, serve as citizens, and bolster our profession's image. In the coming year, I would like to turn my attention to a different attribute that we admire when we see it: patience.

The most memorable words I ever heard about that quality came from the late Justice Thurgood Marshall during the year that I served as a law clerk to Justice Stevens. I was meeting with one of the Marshall clerks when Justice Marshall came in to talk with him about a case. He insisted that I stay, and after the case discussion was completed we all talked more generally about the practice of law. During the course of that discussion, Justice Marshall offered the following observation: "There's only one kind of reputation that a young lawyer can get in a hurry."

Since that day, I have often remembered Justice Marshall's comment. And I have had occasion to consider the different messages it might convey. On one level, Justice Marshall was noting how much lawyers value the quality of painstaking care. Rigor is assumed to the point of almost being taken for granted. To be distinguished, a lawyer must show a high level of care for a long time. Conversely, even one careless slip can do significant damage to a lawyer's reputation along this critical dimension.

Yet Justice Marshall's words can also be understood in a different way. I believe he was telling us that our time as students was coming to an end. We were in the midst of a transition from lives as students to lives as lawyers. From a campus world with

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tests and grades to a far more subtle and complex world, a world where many different human qualities contribute to success, a world with no closed-book examinations and no four-point evaluation scales. Reputation emerges slowly and painstakingly, as a lawyer demonstrates a consistent ability to perform work of the highest quality.

This past May 15, as we launched the Class of 1999 into their professional lives, I thought back to Justice Marshall's words. I wondered how well we had prepared our students for this transition. The pressures of contemporary practice are enormous, and today there is added allure to the dream of making one spectacular leap after another up the ladder of professional success. "Ever faster, ever onward," is a tempting strategy.

How can we let our students know, before they face such temptations, that people do not receive a special prize for reaching the end of life early? That the quality of an accomplishment is not defined by the speed of its production?



That the achievements that matter most to us invariably require a sustained period of careful attention, hard work, and patience?

This is a challenge for all of us in the profession. It is a challenge for those of us who hope to prepare new lawyers. And it is a challenge for those of us who serve as mentors to our new junior colleagues. I look forward to exploring this theme further in the year ahead.

Jeffrey S. Lehman