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JOHN W. REED

*James K. Robinson**

In 1986 Wayne State University Law School began its search for a new dean. As a graduate of the Law School, an adjunct professor who taught evidence there for over a decade, a former president of the Wayne Law Alumni Association, and as a partner in a law firm which relies heavily on Wayne Law School graduates for new associates, I was keenly interested in a successful search. I quickly decided that, if he could be persuaded to take the job, John Reed would be the ideal person to lead Wayne Law School at this important stage of its development.

I felt that John would bring not only his formidable academic and administrative talents, but also would, by his decision to accept the position, bring immediately enhanced prestige and stature to the Law School. Accordingly, I urged Wayne's President David Adamany, members of Wayne's Board of Governors, members of the Law School's search committee, faculty members, and members of the School's Committee of Visitors affirmatively to seek out and recruit John instead of simply processing applications for the position.

While I knew that John would not apply for the job, I hoped he could be convinced to take on this important new responsibility as a fitting cap to an outstanding career dedicated to legal education. Fortunately for Wayne, the Reed recruitment campaign was successful. I take great satisfaction and pride in my small role in this achievement. John and Dot Reed will be great assets to Wayne State University Law School.

John brings to Wayne his powerful intellect, his wise and sound judgment, his outstanding abilities as a law teacher, his considerable skills as an administrator, his charm and wit as a speaker, his enormous reservoir of respect and good will among judges, law professors, and lawyers throughout the country, and, of course, Dot, whose charm, wit, and zest for life are a tremendous asset to John, and whose joyous presence is felt wherever she goes. John and Dot have already received an enthusiastic welcome to Wayne from the faculty, students, and alumni. I am confident that under John's able leadership Wayne

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Law School will continue to prosper and reach even greater heights of success.

My first opportunity to work with John came in 1975. The Michigan Supreme Court, inspired by the adoption of the Federal Rules of Evidence, appointed a committee of judges and lawyers to draft rules of evidence for Michigan. I was named Chair of the committee and John was appointed its Reporter. John had taught evidence for many years and was a recognized scholar in the field. I had been teaching evidence for a few years as an Adjunct Professor at Detroit College of Law and Wayne Law School; I had also written the evidence article for Wayne Law Review's annual survey for several years. My knowledge of Michigan evidence law and practice coupled with John's deep background in the subject made us a good team. We hit it off immediately, both personally and professionally.

The Evidence Committee consisted of prominent lawyers and judges, many with quite different views concerning the wisdom of the recently adopted Federal Rules of Evidence. John's knowledge of evidence law, coupled with the great respect which all the committee members had for him, enabled us to proceed efficiently and produce a nearly unanimous report for the Supreme Court. Although not all of the Committee's recommendations were adopted, most were and the Michigan Rules of Evidence were adopted by the Court and took effect in 1977.

The process of orientating Michigan's lawyers and judges on the new rules produced the "John and Jim Show" with which we traveled throughout Michigan conducting seminars for judges and lawyers on the new rules. John has a unique capacity to make evidence interesting and understandable for his students. I learned much from him which greatly assisted me in my own teaching and lecturing activities. It was during our Michigan evidence rules orientation circuit that I came to know John's formidable skills as a storyteller. Although John's stories are often borrowed, his application of them in making a point and keeping his audience interested was and is masterful. Once in Marquette, we arrived to conduct our seminar on the new Michigan Rules of Evidence to find only one lawyer in the audience. Undaunted, John related the story Justice William Douglas was fond of telling about his father's similar experience as a minister in a rural area of the State of Washington. It seemed that Reverend Douglas had started a weekday evening prayer meeting for the benefit of the ranchers in the outlying areas unable to make it to church on Sunday, John explained. Upon arriving at church for the first of such meetings, Reverend Douglas, like us, found only one person in attendance. Having la-

bored for many hours over his weighty text, Reverend Douglas asked the man if he should proceed or wait until more ranchers learned of the new meetings. The rancher replied: "Well Reverend Douglas, I'm only a cowboy, not a minister, but if I took a wagon of hay out to feed my stock and found only one cow, I'd still feed it." Encouraged, Reverend Douglas proceeded to deliver his message for an hour and three-quarters. At the end, Reverend Douglas shook the man's hand as he left the church and asked, "How did I do?" The response: "Well, Reverend Douglas, I told you if I took a wagon of hay out to feed my stock and found only one, I'd feed it — but I don't think I'd dump the whole load." John has been and continues to be my best source of stories, anecdotes, and one-liners as I'm certain he is for many others.

In 1976 John recommended my appointment to the five-member evidence test drafting committee of the National Conference of Bar Examiners. The committee drafts the evidence questions for the Multistate Bar Examination. The committee, which John chairs, meets twice a year to draft and refine questions. The sessions, which are ably shepherded by John, afford the committee members a unique opportunity to probe the corners of the law of evidence. During these sessions, I have gained considerable insight into the rules of evidence. The most delightful aspect of service on this committee, however, has been the committee's relatively free hand in choosing where it will meet — resulting in some wonderful experiences and great dinners over the years for my wife Marti and me with John and Dot and our fellow committee members in such difficult-to-tolerate places as San Francisco, New Orleans, San Diego, the Grand Canyon, Salt Lake City, Long Boat Key, and San Antonio.

John was instrumental in my election in 1983 as a Fellow of the International Society of Barristers, a group of trial lawyers for whom John acts as executive director and editor of its quarterly publication. When John first addressed the group as a speaker, he noted, in his self-effacing way, that while he devoted his career to teaching evidence and civil procedure (including his annual direction of Michigan Law School's famed Advocacy Institute), he really had little trial experience before beginning his career as a teacher. Nevertheless, he was flattered to be addressing such a distinguished group of trial lawyers. As John put it: "If you want to be a big flea, you've got to run with big dogs."

John is one of the busiest people I know. He is constantly in demand as a banquet speaker, committee chair, problem solver, choir director, facilitator, etc. For many years now John and I have planned to write a book on Michigan evidence law together. Time, however,

and the press of other commitments for both of us have prevented completion of the book. A few years ago, John and I served with Wayne County Prosecutor John O'Hair on a special committee appointed by the Supreme Court to review the Michigan Rules of Evidence for possible amendments. The report was completed, thanks mostly to John's efforts. While it inspired a temporary rekindling of our interest in writing the book, it remains an unfinished task. Perhaps one day . . .

More important to me than the many professional relationships I have enjoyed with John, has been the opportunity for my wife Marti and me to count John and Dot Reed among our very best friends. John Reed is one of a kind. He is a very special person who has meant so much to so many. John, as much as anyone I have known, has achieved — indeed far surpassed — the definition of "Success" offered by Harry Emerson Fosdick:

To laugh often and much; to win respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you lived.¹

1. R. MILLER, HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK: PREACHER, PASTOR, PROPHET 274 (1985).