



MARK WHITE



They Were Lawyers

Each year, during the opening of court ceremony, the president of the Alabama State Bar is tasked with the sobering opportunity to honor the memory of those lawyers who passed during the preceding year. It was a humbling experience and a fine tradition to read through the names of those we've lost. They are men and women who hail from big cities and small towns, from Dothan to Huntsville, and Demopolis to Anniston. They served as jurists and general practitioners. While I didn't know them all, I was fortunate enough to know many of them and my life and practice are better for it. They all shared the calling of the practice of law and I had many an occasion to ponder that special bond this past month.

Honoring the recently departed members of our bar is a solemn and well-deserved tradition. The fact that we do this in a session of the Supreme Court of Alabama signifies the value of the separate and collective service rendered to our system of justice by each of those we honor. The lives we celebrated during that ceremony were worthy of that recognition, and it is my privilege to share a taste of that celebration with you here in these pages.

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We honored Scout leaders, Sunday School teachers, PTA members, Little League coaches, community and neighborhood leaders, Red Cross volunteers, and supporters for all sorts of causes. They were members of probably every civic club known to this state; they were political and social advocates; and they were patrons of the arts. AND THEY WERE LAWYERS.

We honored fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, children, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. AND THEY WERE LAWYERS.

We honored judges, litigators, corporate attorneys, law partners, plaintiff's counsel, defense counsel, those at the end of their careers, and those at the beginning. AND THEY WERE LAWYERS.

Yes, we practice law and promote justice, but we also play a critical role that often goes uncelebrated. We are strong threads in the fabric of our society and that is why it is difficult to find a good cause that is not organized or supported by one

of us lawyers. Our call to justice is a shared bond that requires much of us. We bring a special understanding of the role justice must play in the lives of those around us, even those for whom justice is a distant and vague idea. Each of us, like those who have gone before us, must continue to provide that glimpse of justice for others through involvement in our communities and in the causes that truly make a difference.

We lost some fine folks in the last year, such as:

Judge Sam Pointer. A former federal judge who served nearly 30 years on the bench before his retirement in 2000 to return to private practice. His courageous decisions on school desegregation, employment discrimination and prison conditions recognized the rights and dignity of all citizens. Not long before his final illness, I saw Judge Pointer. When he asked me if I was working on anything interesting, I laughed and told him that on that particular day I was working on a matter that involved a judge who wanted to use his contempt powers against a lawyer. Judge Pointer's



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