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In Memoriam -- The Honorable William J. Jameson

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IN MEMORIAM

The Honorable William J. Jameson

August 8, 1898—October 8, 1990

In 1975, at the end of my clerkship with Judge William J. Jameson, Senior Federal District Judge for the District of Montana, I asked a close friend, a professional photographer, to photograph Judge Jameson. I urged my friend to use his best efforts to capture the spirit of this man whom I had come to revere and whom I considered a mentor and friend. I must admit that when I saw the photographs my friend had taken, I was deeply disappointed. After studying them, I realized that I had really expected too much of any photographer! One cannot adequately capture on film the manifold nature of a man like Judge Jameson. When I was asked to write this statement for the *Law Review*, I was likewise impressed that lines of words, like the photographic efforts of my friend, would necessarily prove wanting.

How does one sum up adequately a Judge Jameson? How does one describe his remarkable intellectual abilities—that keen, analytical, and philosophical mind which enabled him to move quickly to the heart of any case and to analyze, synthesize and apply the law with such lucidity and grace—that mind for detail which never failed him and which enabled him to remember names, cases and events? Surely, the hundreds of opinions which he wrote for the federal district and circuit courts reflect best those qualities of mind that distinguished him as a jurist. His opinions are models of brevity, clarity and precision. To study them is comparable to taking a course in legal reasoning and legal writing from a great teacher.

Judge Jameson loved the law. I will never forget an exchange that occurred on his birthday in 1974. The Judge asked me to come to his office to assist him in carrying some material to his car. He and his wife, Mildred, were going to spend the weekend in Red Lodge, Montana at their beloved summer home, Camp Senia. When I arrived at his office, I was surprised to see that he had

readied a number of briefcases filled with appellate briefs. I commented to the Judge that I hoped he was not going to work the entire weekend of his birthday. He smiled and explained: "Martin, I enjoy my work; I love the law."

His love for the law and his commitment were also manifest in the enthusiasm with which he approached each day's work. As all of his law clerks and his long-time secretary, Thelma Green, can attest, Judge Jameson believed in arriving at the office early (usually before 7:30 a.m.), taking very short lunch breaks, and working on Saturdays and most federal holidays. His enthusiasm for his work was particularly evident when he was on assignment to one of the various federal circuit courts of appeal. The Judge loved to walk, and we invariably walked from the hotel where we were staying to the federal courthouse. The distances were often significant! It was clear to me each morning as we set out walking from our hotel that he was anxious to get to work. I always considered myself a fast walker but found keeping pace with Judge Jameson in Washington, D.C., San Francisco, New York, or Chicago a genuine challenge.

An ethic of service guided the Judge throughout his career as an attorney and judge. The nation, the state, his community, the legal profession, the University of Montana, and a host of civic and charitable organizations were the beneficiaries of his commitment to public service. The list of the positions he held before being named to the federal bench suggests the broad scope of that commitment: member of the local school board, chairman of the Yellowstone County chapter of the Red Cross, state legislator, president of the Montana Bar Association, president of the American Bar Association, and president of the American Judicature Society. And that is only a partial list! I suspect that Judge Jameson's impressive record of public service is unparalleled in the history of the organized bar. He was truly a man without peer.

In 1973, Judge Jameson was named the thirty-eighth recipient of the ABA Medal, joining an illustrious group, including Elihu Root, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Roscoe Pound, Charles Evan Hughes, Tom C. Clark, and Felix Frankfurter, who had previously received this, the highest award conferred by the ABA. In the award citation, the ABA noted: "It is said that law is a public profession. The tradition of service and leadership which supports that profession is nowhere better illustrated than in the career of Judge William J. Jameson. . . . He has brought honor to the pro-

fession”¹ In recognition of his legacy of service and his commitment to the high ideals of the legal profession, the State Bar of Montana created an annual professionalism award that bears Judge Jameson’s name.²

Judge Jameson loved young people and was deeply interested in education. His dedication to higher education was evident in his involvement with his alma mater, the University of Montana, his service as Trustee of Rocky Mountain College in Billings, and his work on behalf of Eastern Montana College. Reflecting his strong belief in the quality of education at the University of Montana School of Law, he proudly selected graduates of the Law School to serve him as clerks. He was always anxious to come home to the University of Montana and the Law School to work with our students, to judge our moot court competitions, and to lecture to our classes. He kept himself informed about the School and its curriculum and always inquired about the quality of each year’s new first year class. Higher education in Montana never had a better friend than Judge Jameson.

Judge Jameson was a family man. His law clerks deeply respected the Judge’s devotion to his family. Each clerk had the pleasure of meeting many of the Judge’s grandchildren, whom he often invited to the federal building for lunch. His children, grandchildren and great grandchildren were his pleasure. He was for them a source of much love and wise counsel.

Each person whose life Judge Jameson touched has his or her own stories about Judge Jameson. Those stories reflect the many different roles which the Judge played: friend, mentor, partner, hero, judge, father, grandfather, neighbor, citizen, leader, legislator, counsellor, scholar, servant and humanitarian. In a 1955 *ABA Journal* article, Dean Erwin Griswold of Harvard Law School used terms such as “patient,” “fair,” “reasonable,” “genial,” “firm,” “open-minded,” and “earnest” to describe Judge Jameson.³ The Yellowstone County Bar Association, in its memorial tribute to Judge Jameson, elaborated on those characteristics noting:

Judge Jameson was a man of many dimensions. Each of the facets of his spirit radiated excellence. . . .

No Montana lawyer was ever more highly esteemed, none more widely admired. None has ever attained such a high pinna-

1. L. SMALL, *JOURNEY WITH THE LAW: THE LIFE OF JUDGE WILLIAM J. JAMESON* 173 (1984).

2. *Nominations Now Open for Jameson Award*, MONT. LAW., Jan. 1989, at 5.

3. Griswold, *A Further Look: Lawyers and Accountants*, 41 A.B.A. J. 1113, 1113 (1955).

cle of [eminence]. Yet none was ever more kind and gentle, none less pretentious. No lawyer in Montana or elsewhere ever was more diligent, more dedicated to the law.⁴

But no matter how many words one writes about Judge Jameson (and much has been written about his life and accomplishments), one still falls short of adequately describing this remarkable man. To paraphrase Judge Learned Hand's remarks made at the memorial service for Justice Brandeis:

[Judge Jameson's] life, like a piece of tapestry, is made up of many strands which interwoven make a pattern; to separate a single one and look at it alone not only destroys the whole, but gives the strand itself a false value. . . . It would be impossible . . . to do justice to the content of . . . so full a life [The] memorial [to Judge Jameson's life] stands written at large . . . perhaps best preserved in the minds of living men and women.⁵

—J. Martin Burke, Dean, School of Law, University of Montana

4. Yellowstone Bar Ass'n, *Bar Pays Tribute to William J. Jameson*, excerpted in *MONT. LAW.*, Nov. 1990, at 2, 4.

5. L. HAND, *Mr. Justice Brandeis*, in *THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY* 167-68 (I. Dillard 3d ed., enlarged 1963).