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MY MENTOR - JOHN HOWIE

ANDREW L. PAYNE

IN CLEANING out my beloved friend's office, I ran across many scholarly books ranging from complex choice of law issues to the art of trial advocacy. But among volumes of legal works was a small book entitled: "Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On!" This book contains snippets of life's wisdoms expressed in simple and humorous vignettes. "You can't teach a billy goat to read the New York Times;" "We're down to the lick log;" "Timing has a lot to do with the outcome of a rain dance;" "Never try to run a bluff when your poke's empty." These are just a few gems that could have easily rolled off John Howie's tongue. Among John's many gifts as a trial lawyer was his ability to distill the complex and creatively communicate it in simple "Don't Squat With Yer Spurs On" terms. This ability was undoubtedly a cornerstone of his remarkable success as a trial lawyer.

But, John Howie's contribution to me, and indeed much of the Bar, goes well beyond his success in the courtroom. Leader. Mentor. Counselor. Cheerleader. These are all terms that describe John Howie. In the midst of a difficult jury trial, John Howie would edit together the inspirational "Toga, Toga" clip from the movie *Animal House*. If you lost, he would help you improve by providing suggestions. In victory, John was the first to give excited congratulations and praise.

John was a mentor to me and countless other trial lawyers. Not until after his death, not until after so many shared stories of his impact on their lives, did I realize the depth of John's impact as a mentor. John spent his time and talents helping law students and young lawyers as well as seasoned veterans. He was always available to mentor and encourage a colleague. I personally owe him a debt of gratitude for teaching me how to try a case and practice law honorably.

Beyond the courtroom John Howie spent time, energy and resources fighting for those less fortunate. Service at legal clinics for the needy was a given in his firm. Pro bono cases were

not taken and assigned to junior lawyers. We all handled pro bono cases, but John Howie often took twice as many pro bono cases as his younger attorneys. Outside the legal arena he also gave his time, efforts and resources to the needy. Each Christmas he gave all of his employees money to spend on needy families. We would all take time to purchase clothes and toys for those in need and deliver the items during our work day. The firm Christmas lunch began by serving food at the Salvation Army soup kitchen. These are just a few examples of John's generosity, attitude and commitment to give back to the less fortunate. This was John Howie. Leadership by example, actions not words, and results not promises.

In preparing these words about my mentor, my example, and my friend, I am struck with the thought of how many of us aspire to give back to others and to live life the John Howie way. His life will continue to be my personal example and my inspiration. No doubt, I am in the company of many fine lawyers who also find their example and their inspiration in John's life.

Articles

