

Remarks on the Occasion of the Dedication
of the Thomas E. Delahanty Library,
Androscoggin County Courthouse,
Auburn, Maine, June 29, 1985

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It is good to be back once again in this courtroom, the single most important room in my professional life. Here is where I took my oath and was admitted to the practicing bar. Here I tried my first case, won a few victories, and suffered some agonizing defeats. But, more important, here is where I saw the law I had studied become flesh and blood in the persons of the star performers of the Androscoggin Bar and the trial judges presiding over their cases. And, most important, here were the paramount role models for any young lawyer, the resident Justices of the Supreme Judicial Court who maintained their chambers in this building: The line, for me, started with Justice Harry Manser whose benevolent and kindly advice, salted with humor, helped ease the way of youngsters like Tom Delahanty. The same tradition was carried on by Justice Webber, Chief Justice Dufresne, and, finally, Justice Delahanty himself.

Within the hour we shall memorialize the life and career of this man in all its decency, nobility, humor, and courage. But for the time being we celebrate the very special and unique contribution that Justice Delahanty made to his beloved profession -- the modernization and vitalization of this county's law library.

I would like to use these few moments to make three points: to sketch the dimensions of this contribution, to note its significance for the bar, and to reveal something of the nature of the doer of these deeds.

It was in 1973 that Justice Delahanty inherited from Justice Webber the mantle of Librarian. The times were ripe for what was to prove an entirely constructive revolution in the state's law library world, something roughly analogous to the structural changes our nation experienced when we moved from the Articles of Confederation to the Constitution. Working with a state-wide committee, the creative and ever helpful Edith Hary, the Librarian of the state's law library, and others, Justice Delahanty helped draft and secure the passage of legislation bringing all the country law libraries within a structure of state law libraries funded within the state's appropriation for the judiciary.

Building on this foundation, Justice Delahanty turned his attention to his local responsibility as Librarian of this library. He managed to bring about a complete revision of the By-Laws, a board of trustees whom he wheedled and cajoled (John Cole uses the word "strongarmed") into not merely serving but actively participating, and a schedule of quarterly meetings meticulously planned and run, so I have it on good authority, like clockwork.

The results over time were dramatic. Funding, largely through his efforts, was substantially increased. The collection was expanded so that it includes reports of all federal and state cases, federal and state statutes, a representative selection of leading law journals, and key treatises. Shelving was reorganized. At the same time the taxpayers got the most for their dollars as redundant, obsolete, or less useful volumes were weeded out, sold, or traded. Today the Library is second in size only to those in Bangor and Portland. As Justice Webber summed it up, "Tom really did a job."

Why is this job so worthy of our grateful remembrance? It is not merely because a facility has been upgraded and modernized. The deeper significance lies in the fact that this work beyond

the strict call of duty is a quiet and permanent reminder that the law is a learned profession, that reports of cases, current scholarly commentary, and the best treatises available are a vital part of a lawyer's workshop. And so demanding is the practice of law today that no solo practitioner or firm can expect to be self sufficient. Without a communal library of quality, a bar is like a craftsman, however skilled he may be, working with a rusty saw and a dull chisel. I have always thought that this bar, man for man and woman for woman, was second to none in both its scholarly competence and its trial ability. What Justice Delahanty did was to give his bar the tools it deserved.

There is more that can be said. The work we celebrate gives us a window on the man. I would not want this dedication to focus solely on Justice Delahanty's political and bureaucratic expertise and tenacity. There was one other quality revealed in this public man with a very private life, this seeming extrovert who was also inner directed, this accomplished athlete (who once ran 90 yards in the mud for a touchdown against Edward Little) who was also a closet intellectual -- a love of books. I do not mean that he had an immense library; his labors for his family, community, and state preempted too much time. But the books he had he cherished.

Thanks to his sons John and Tom, the new Justice Delahanty, I can share with you something of his love affairs with books. He had three favorite fields of interest. The first, not too surprisingly for this son of Erin, was Ireland and its people. "The Irish in Ireland", Bill Shannon's "The American Irish", and Leon Uris's "Trinity" were standbys. A second passion was politics, whether the form was history, biography, or fiction. He had small families of books on and by Winston Churchill, including "The Gathering Storm" and "Grand Alliance", and Harry Truman. When the two subjects of the Irish and politics merged in John F. Kennedy, our Justice threw restraint to the winds, relishing, among others, such books as "One Thousand Days", "Kennedy Wit", and "Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye". I suspect his first choice was JFK's own "Profiles in Courage". And of course when the Irish, politics, and great story telling joined together in Edwin O'Connor's "The Last Hurrah", well, what could be better?

Tom's profession -- the law -- was his third field of special interest. Young Tom writes "From the time that I first understood the role of an attorney I remember him talking of Gene Fowler's The Great Mouthpiece. I found the book dog-eared and bound together with tape." Then of course there were books on Clarence Darrow, Louis Nizer, Justice Jackson, Judge Musmann's "That's My Opinion", "The Judiciary in America", Tony Lewis's "Gideon's Trumpet", and, covering just about everyone, "Men of Law, Hammurabi to Holmes". I am proud that he also had my books.

Beyond these three major fields of interest, there were two other kinds of reading our Justice couldn't resist. A true Irishman, we all know, has a bit of the leprechaun in him. In Tom's case, he had on occasion an unfortunate propensity for vertiginous verbocination, i.e., big words. He loved not only books but words. At the dinner table he would inflict his obsession on his defenseless children. A new word each week for each son. Young Tom tells me that "Kevin was the only one in the first grade who understood 'syzygy' and 'erysipilas'." As bad luck would have it, Phil Gleason, his law clerk in 1976 and 1977 gave him this subversive book, "Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure, and Preposterous Words". (My copy was given to me by our staff attorneys.)

Finally, young Tom tells me that he found a well worn volume of "One Hundred and One Famous Poems" in a desk drawer, with some additions pasted in. This is a book you have probably never heard of. Here is my copy, published in 1929 and with my grandmother's bookplate in it. As I thumbed through it, I came across a poem that I just bet was read and reread

many times by Tom. I wonder if he ever realized how well it fitted him. "The Happy Warrior" by Wordsworth begins with these lines:

"Who is the happy Warrior" Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
- It is the generous Spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright:
Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn. . ."

I think that our friend and loved one, the Honorable Thomas Edward Delahanty, would be deeply pleased to know that this Library would long be serving his profession and his people in his name, and that his name would continue to be linked with books.