



Resolution of Appreciation
for
A. Root Edmonson

The Council of the North Carolina State Bar in regular quarterly session duly convened does hereby publish and adopt the resolution set forth below:

WHEREAS, A. Root Edmonson was employed as a trial attorney by the North Carolina State Bar on May 16, 1979, and has faithfully served the council as its lawyer in various capacities ever since. During his career on the State Bar's legal staff he has, among other things, counseled the Grievance Committee, the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee, and the Client Security Fund's Board of Trustees. He has represented the State Bar in more legal proceedings than any other attorney, including dozens of disciplinary trials and reinstatement hearings. For a period of 11 years between 1980 and 1991, he served as counsel, and

WHEREAS, Root Edmonson has given notice of his intention to retire as a member of the Office of Counsel after a career of unprecedented length and remarkable distinction. After 41 years, spanning six decades and two centuries, Root is participating in his last quarterly meeting of the council, albeit remotely, and taking with him into retirement a disproportionate amount of the organization's heart and soul, and a considerable portion of its institutional memory. Under these circumstances it is entirely fitting that we now formally consider, at long last, the dimensions of his character, his stature in the legal profession, and the quality of his service to the State Bar and the people of North Carolina.

Though not susceptible of proof, it cannot be doubted that Root Edmonson leaves us as the best known and best liked person ever to work for this agency. For legions of lawyers he is the face of the State Bar and is widely acknowledged to represent what we should all aspire to be as lawyers and human beings. As a colleague once observed, "[T]he longest walk you can ever take is from the entrance of Kenan Stadium to your seat in the company of Root Edmonson. Most of the hundreds of people you encounter will recognize Root, dozens will insist on greeting him, and more than a few will indulge his passion for long discursive conversation. It's ironic, he loves to go to football games and has probably never seen a kickoff. It relates to one of the primary reasons he is so beloved. He always has time for other people, no matter what."

As a member of the State Bar's staff, Root has served the profession and his fellow man in myriad ways. Let us now reflect upon some of the roles he has played.

As a friend and colleague he has been dependable and inexhaustible. He has reliably and sensitively embraced us all in times of exhilaration, crisis, triumph, and grief. He has always done what was required, and often more than his share, with grace, style, and humility. He has inspired us to be better people and better lawyers.

As a mentor he has taught by example and by storytelling, personifying professionalism rather than preaching it. He has cultivated empathy in our young lawyers and has modeled compassion instead of condemnation. He has publicly and persistently insisted on doing the right thing, not the easy or expedient thing. And he has often been observed doing his clients the great service of not telling them what they want to hear.

As a prosecutor he has been a zealous and effective advocate who has never taken unfair advantage. He has unfailingly honored the humanity and dignity of his legal adversaries and, especially, their clients. He has consistently endeavored to make professional discipline meaningful rather than mean. And no one at the State Bar has ever been more observant of the prosecutor's fundamental obligation to "do justice." For Root Edmonson, the only victory in a disciplinary case is an outcome that fairly serves the public interest while taking fully into account the possibility of reformation. Incredibly, most of the people he has opposed in such matters seem to have ultimately come to respect the State Bar's position and to appreciate the decency and integrity of Root's actions on its behalf.

As a legal troubleshooter, Root has put the State Bar's best foot forward in difficult cases in tribunals throughout the State. More often than not, of course, his appearances have simply required the technical legal skills that all of the State Bar's lawyers possess but, occasionally, it has been necessary for him to deploy a remarkable talent that is his alone. As it happens, Root Edmonson has an uncanny ability to facilitate dialogue and civility among lawyers and judges who appear to be incapable of either in the midst of hotly contested legal proceedings. Root is the profession's peacemaker. Time after time he has been able to restore professional decorum in explosive situations, often, it would seem, simply by showing up and bringing his incomparable personality to bear. Perhaps not surprisingly, people find it hard to be unprofessional in his presence. How can such a man ever be replaced?

As staff counsel to the Client Security Fund, Root has carefully guided the Board of Trustees in its application of the program's rules. From the program's inception he has understood that by collectively underwriting the integrity of the Bar through the Client Security Fund, lawyers have justified in large measure the privilege of self-regulation. In support of the fund's critical mission, Root has facilitated a culture of responsible liberality within the board that promotes the resolution of doubt in favor of the innocent victim and ultimately enhances the public's trust in the legal profession. It may be his greatest legacy.

And, finally, as a member of the profession at large, Root has brought great credit to the North Carolina State Bar. Active in various state and local voluntary bar associations, he has also been highly visible on the national scene, principally as a dedicated member of the National Organization of Bar Counsel. In 2011 he received its President's Award for lifetime achievement in the field of professional responsibility. Since assuming his position as counsel to the Client Security Fund in 1996, he has also been very active in the National Client Protection Organization, serving as its president from 2004 to 2006. His service to and leadership of these important national organizations has been quite significant. He has been instrumental in formulating rules, policies, and procedures that have vastly improved the profession's regulation of itself. And in so doing, he has always been identified by those present and participating as the wise and exceptionally personable lawyer from North Carolina, our most highly esteemed ambassador for many, many years.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the North Carolina State Bar does with surpassing affection and appreciation acknowledge the splendid service of its lawyer, A. Root Edmonson, and expresses to him in this public statement the unqualified respect, admiration, and gratitude of the lawyers of North Carolina for his efforts on their behalf for the benefit of the public.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be made a part of the minutes of this meeting of the council and that copies be published in the State Bar *Journal* and delivered to A. Root Edmonson.

Adopted by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar unanimously by acclamation, this the ____ day of July, 2020.



C. Colon Willoughby, President

Alice Neece Mine, Secretary

