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Presentation of the Portrait of I. Beverly Lake, Sr., Associate Justice, Supreme Court of North Carolina

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PRESENTATION OF THE PORTRAIT OF I. BEVERLY LAKE, SR. ASSOCIATE JUSTICE, SUPREME COURT OF NORTH CAROLINA

DR. NORMAN ADRIAN WIGGINS*

Mr. Chief Justice and distinguished members of the Court, Dr. and Mrs. Lake and members of the Lake family, friends:

I count it a great honor to have been invited to present this portrait of my teacher, colleague and friend to one of the most outstanding state supreme courts in the nation. As I come representing former students and longtime friends, I realize that many of his friends, former students and research clerks relish the high privilege that is mine.

As a youth growing up in the First Baptist Church in Burlington, I was taught by men who were steeped in the heritage and tradition of Wake Forest College. I came to know that the "Lake" family name was an important part of the lore of that great institution. Yet, it was not until Millie and I completed our work at Campbell, then a junior college, and transferred to Wake Forest that I had the privilege of meeting our honoree.

Although a critical and necessary part, the process of registration is not popular with students. Students come looking for the less difficult courses and the more charitable professors. Good advisors insist upon difficult courses and demanding teachers. Dr. Lake was a good advisor!

On the day of my first registration in the forest of Wake on the Old Campus, we made our way to Gore gymnasium. There behind a small table identified as "pre-law" sat a very distinguished looking advisor. I joined the line. Upon inquiry, I was informed that our advisor was "Dr. Lake."

I quickly observed that our advisor, who appeared more youthful than some of his veteran students, had a very strong face. His eyes were sharp with the characteristics of quick change. They literally danced with merriment as serious advice was leavened with encouragement and light-hearted banter. Although teacher and student were enjoying the process, it was

* Speech given by Dr. Norman Adrian Wiggins on June 15, 1994, when presenting a portrait of Dr. I. Beverly Lake, Sr. to the Supreme Court of North Carolina.

obvious that the students were losing the battle of "soft courses and charitable professors."

Soon, we were at the head of the line. I handed Dr. Lake my record and a list of proposed courses and suggested teachers. As he had done with each student before, he immediately stood and with all the courtesy we associate with the term "southern gentleman," he warmly welcomed Millie and me to Wake Forest. He acted as if our coming by for a visit was doing him a great favor. As we settled the schedule for the semester, there was a glow to his countenance and a laughter in his voice. Little did I know that the contact with this advisor who complimented me on my selection of courses as he wrote in more difficult courses and demanding teachers while explaining "they are more worthy of your ability," would ripen into an enriching and lasting friendship. Later I learned that almost all of his students became life-long members of the "extended Lake family." Nor did I dream that one day I would have the pleasure of trying to help his son, who would later be a distinguished member of this court, as his father had helped me and so many others.

Dr. I. Beverly Lake is one of our nation's finest classroom teachers. He is a master of the Socratic method. He stated his questions clearly and pointedly. You had no alternative. You had to respond. You learned early not to miss the footnotes. It was not uncommon for him to question one student, as he did this speaker, for the entire class period. Of course, students came somewhat apprehensive and occasionally were resentful of this friendly but demanding teacher. But in the end, they came to know what he was doing for them, and they came to enjoy and appreciate this meticulous and imaginative teacher and scholar who taught law in the "grand manner."

Demanding though he was in the classroom, it was not uncommon to find Dr. Lake and some of his colleagues joining the students for a Saturday evening softball game at Caddell Field. This warm personalized interest added much to the educational experience.

On Sunday, Dr. Lake taught a Sunday school class in which he taught those basic principles of life and moral character as explained so clearly by Jesus of Nazareth. Every student was encouraged to learn and appreciate the values of the spirit and character.

In the light of his interest in and contribution to the lives of his students, it is not surprising that Dr. Lake would receive what

he describes as his ultimate reward in seeing two of his students serve as Justices of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, one as a United States Senator, another a Congressman, and another a President of the United States Chamber of Commerce. Others have served or are serving as judges, state and federal, legislators, business executives, law professors and a university president. Without exception, these leaders attribute much of their success to a talented and gifted teacher who called them by name, who insisted upon them being the best they were capable of becoming, and who was never too busy to lend a helping hand or just listen if that was needed.

Grateful as he is for those students who have made their marks in other fields, Dr. Lake has expressed special gratitude for those students who serve as practicing lawyers. In the preface to his last book, he acknowledged his indebtedness to his former students in these meaningful words:

"[T]o the several hundred young lawyers in the state who were my students at Wake Forest College and who, while there, taught me so much. If in the pages of this book, they would find some usable suggestions, I shall have made token payments on my account to them."

Dr. Lake was reared on the campus of a small Baptist college located in a small North Carolina town. He was surrounded by parents and teachers who were familiar with the nations of Greece and Rome. Like the great Roman emperor, Marcus Aurelius, these elders believed and taught their children and their students that it is the duty of every citizen to do his or her part by living willingly in the community and helping others. Justice Arthur Vanderbilt would translate the Emperor's admonition into something of a requirement that lawyers should use their talents to serve their state and nation and help to preserve the values and moral order upon which they were founded. This included offering oneself for public office.

Responding to the demand for public service, Dr. Lake authored *Discrimination by Railroads and Other Public Utilities* in an effort to abolish the wrongful discrimination rail rates too long inflicted upon an innocent people. Many believe it helped hasten the day for the final reconciliation of sectional division that scarred our nation.

As Assistant (now Deputy) Attorney General of the State of North Carolina, Dr. Lake represented our state as it dealt with one of the most difficult problems of the day. His deft handling of

this sensitive problem and the differing viewpoints of the parties served our state well.

Following the mandate of Chief Justice Vanderbilt to offer oneself for public office, on two occasions Dr. Lake ran for the office of Governor of North Carolina. Although unsuccessful in his bids for office, he was greatly strengthened in his preparation for a thirteen year tenure of service as a member of the Supreme Court of North Carolina.

All will agree that few men have ever been better prepared for the practice of law than Dr. Lake. His service as practicing lawyer, distinguished professor of law with special expertise in Constitutional Law, acting Dean of the Wake Forest College School of Law, Deputy Attorney General of the State of North Carolina and his important and extensive service in the federal government in times of national crises combined with his special experiences in serving as counsel to the National Production Authority, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Utilities Commission greatly enriched his service as one of North Carolina's most outstanding Supreme Court justices.

As one would expect, in his tenure on the court, the opinions by Justice Lake reflect the principles that he taught in the classroom. In matters of the Constitution, he made a special effort to see that decisions handed down did not do violence to the original ideas upon which the document was based. Always he has strived for justice, tranquility, prosperity and a secure liberty for this Republic. And he has always taken special precaution to insure the separation of powers between the President, the Congress and the Federal courts which makes possible justice, tranquility, prosperity and liberty.

It is not surprising that one with Dr. Lake's integrity and self-discipline would honor his commitments and maintain a happy and optimistic outlook on life. Shortly after going to Campbell, Millie and I happened to meet Dr. Lake on the streets of Raleigh. He congratulated us and wished us well. I said, "I have a dream for Campbell that one day you will come and teach." And he said, "Wait until I retire." He was as good as his word. Upon retirement, he came and taught Constitutional Law in our newly established law school, adding luster to the faculty and the school. He refused any compensation. Instead, upon our request he permitted us to take the funds and endow the "I. Beverly Lake Constitutional Law Award." It is awarded annually to the student exhibiting the most outstanding scholarship in this area of law.

No person is a stranger to disappointment. That is especially true, said Theodore Roosevelt, if you leave the sidelines and enter the arena of life. Yet, the optimism Dr. Lake reflected in our first meeting many years ago continues unabated. On several occasions in recent years, I have heard him use his great talent in urging young people to enter the arena of life and spend themselves in a worthy course. If they will do so, they can follow in the steps of the one we honor who has found joy and satisfaction in the service of others.

Mr. Chief Justice and distinguished members of the Supreme Court of North Carolina, on behalf of Dr. Lake's former research clerks, I would like to present this portrait to the Supreme Court.