

IN MEMORIAM

THE HONORABLE HARRY L. CARRICO

*The Honorable John A. Gibney, Jr. **

Before I get started, I have a question for Justice Carrico's family. Does he have a hat on in there?

He always wore a hat. That hat said a lot about Justice Carrico. It was a symbol of a time gone by, with a style and gentleness we don't really know about now.

One of my favorite quotations is by the Irish author and playwright, Oliver Goldsmith. He once said: "You can preach a better sermon with your life than with your lips."

I was Justice Carrico's law clerk for two years. During that time, I learned many things about the law.

But the most important lessons came from the sermon he preached with his life.

The sermon of his life taught me not to take myself too seriously. When I showed up for the first day of work, I was terrified. The main thought in my head was: "How can I do this? I don't know anything about anything."

To put me at ease, Justice Carrico called me into his office and said, "John, you're probably wondering why I hired you. Well, I invited you back for a second interview because you were so bad in your first interview that I thought no one could possibly be that inarticulate. You did better the second time, and I decided to give you a shot."

* Remarks delivered at the Memorial Service for Justice Carrico. Federal Judge, U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. Former Law Clerk to Justice Harry L. Carrico 1976-78. J.D., 1976, University of Virginia School of Law; B.A., 1973, College of William and Mary.

And then he added, "I've never made a wrong decision about hiring a law clerk." And then there was a long pause. "But I have my doubts about you."

The sermon that was his life taught me to find and love humor in a lot of things. Justices Carrico, Poff, and Compton always went out for lunch together. One day they came back, and there was a new capitol police officer at the entrance to the court building. She didn't know who they were, so she asked them for their IDs. Justices Carrico and Poff showed theirs, but Justice Compton didn't have his. He said, "I'm with them." The guard looked at Justice Carrico. As he was getting on the elevator, Justice Carrico said, "I never saw him before in my life." And Justice Compton was stuck there until someone came down to get him.

There was a gesture that spoke volumes about the Judge, and it involved his hat. Whenever we were in the elevator and a woman came in, he automatically took his hat off. That was a simple gesture that showed a world of courtesy and respect, another lesson in the sermon that was his life.

And he showed that courtesy and respect to everybody—from the governor to the janitor. And from him I learned that's the way to live.

Every day he worked hard and lived with honesty and strength to do what he thought was right. And I learned that's the way to live.

I have often said that Justice Carrico taught me not just how to be a lawyer but how to be a man. He was kind enough to swear me in as a judge. I cannot tell you how much that touched me. I can never hope to be so honored again.

He has been a lighthouse to guide us all in life. That lighthouse is now gone from this world.

But that beacon burns brightly in my heart and mind, and in the hearts and minds of everyone who knew him well. In that way, he will always guide us.