

COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES
OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS

SCHOOL OF LAW

JUNE 3, 1961

Remarks by Paul A. McDermott on the Fiftieth Anniversary
of the 1911 Class

Dean Keeton, President Carrington, members of the 1961 Law
Class, distinguished guests, and Ladies and Gentlemen.

The 1911 Law Class of the University of Texas is happy to
greet you of the 1961 Law Class. It is a gratifying thing to
us to be able to appear before you, to congratulate you upon
this event of your becoming members of the profession.

As a matter of time, fifty years lie between us, but we
have the common bond with you of having been prepared for the
practice of law by a great law school, now grown greater.

It is a token of the lengthening history of our law school
that after half a century our class can greet yours. I am re-
minded in this Centennial year of the Civil War that if any
group of lawyers had been otherwise disposed to address us
upon the occasion of our 1911 graduation they would have had
to come to the Bar in the first year of the Civil War. I may
add that none did.

We emerged from the Law School into a placid world. The
economy was still modest. No substantial changes had occurred

for a generation in the method and manner of the law practice nor in the subject matter about which it was to be practiced.

But, if fifty years hence your survivors should appear before the University's 2011 Law Class, and we earnestly hope and believe that there will be one, it seems certain that you will have passed through a period of far greater change than our class has witnessed, great as that has been. The changes that have occurred in our fifty years were largely the result of tremendous increases in the economy, great increases in the population and great shifts in the population. The methods of the practice have certainly been bettered by new codes and other statutory enactments, and by new rules of procedure. But we still have the administration of justice, as participated in by lawyers, essentially as it has been. However, in what is coming to be called "this weird new world", there would be the expectation of changes and troubles that we now know not of. It may be your greatest task to preserve the rule of law in the society of the future.

Now, if I may reminisce a little, which I think would be expected of me, we had 228 men in our Junior Law or first year law class. We were the first class to go into what was then the new law building, since abandoned for that purpose for the magnificent structures which you now occupy. Of our first year men, some took the course and their degrees in two years, which

was then permitted, some took the bar examinations, not then required of men with law degrees, and some dropped out. Seventy-seven took degrees in June, 1911. With these and those who had spent the principal part of the three-year course with us, the 1911 Law Class was organized as a group of 105 men. Of these 44 survive, exclusive of our honorary members, including Dean Keeton and our quizmasters, one of whom was the eminent Chief Justice Hickman, now retired.

We have met in reunion every year of these fifty years at the annual meetings of the Bar Association or State Bar, with frequent additional meetings. We proffer to you our experience, as an example of this way of the maintenance of the friendships of old association.

Somebody has said that money is not important if you have enough of it. Well, from that standpoint it was very important to most of us, who had to start out with only an ambition to practice law, but all of us soon caught on somewhere. As I understand, now your classes are scouted before graduation by the large city law firms and the legal departments of corporations, competing for your services. In our time the number of corporations having legal staffs was negligible and there were no really large law firms. Such a demand was practically non-existent for us. In the cases of many of you, to begin with your incomes from employment or on your own will nearly equal if not

exceed the income of the average mature lawyer in our early days. You will need it. You will deserve it. Early success will be a fitting tribute to the wide scope of the thorough preparation which you have had for the far more varied and, I may say, profitable types of law practice than existed at our beginning.

I am speaking here only of a comparison of beginnings. I do not speak of our class as figures brought out for view today as from a lost world. In justice to those of our resolute members who have gone on, and their survivors, let me say that we kept up. Our class contributed seventeen men to one or another of the judicial posts of the state, all of whom have passed on or retired except one, United States Judge J. B. Dooley, of Amarillo. Most of us are still actively in the practice. But some of us have gone into or are about to go into the retirement or semi-retirement which is the normal capstone of any kind of professional career; and it is normal also, I should say, that it is with some regret. Every old warhorse still snorts at the sound of battle.

I think we have been animated, as I am sure you will be, by the principle expressed more than one hundred years ago by Daniel Webster: "Justice is the great interest of man on earth." What is meant, I think, is that the people have the great interest in justice. They must secure it. It is and will be your function, as judges and lawyers, to see, not only from the altruistic

standpoint but also from your own interest, that they get it, lest they turn elsewhere.

There will not be too many good lawyers, and, I think, the more the better. The time should come when there should be none but well equipped lawyers at the bar. This school is doing its great part in that endeavor. The schools and this school have made great strides in preparing lawyers not only in professional expertness but also in a sense of responsibility for the public interest. There ought to be enough of you and of those who follow you that every man with a just cause can afford a skillful, diligent and conscientious lawyer.

And now I am sure that the time has come for me, on behalf of my fellows of the 1911 Law Class, to say, in the nearly forgotten Latin: "Ave atque vale", Hail and Farewell.