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Dedication to the Honorable John J. Rooney

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DEDICATION

C. Stuart Brown

The judiciary is the silent branch of government; John J. Rooney was its most silent member. While some may seek publicity, praise and adulation, he just as zealously avoids these things. He sincerely believes that the reward for a thing well done is to have done it, and John Rooney has done many things well, both in his professional and personal life.

John Rooney is no stranger to accomplishment. He served Wyoming in all three branches of government, first as a legislator, then as Attorney General, and finally as a Justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court. Before that, he served the public as a special agent for the FBI, working up through the ranks until he was a resident agent. Even in areas that some consider to be recreation, John Rooney excelled. Because of his inclination to avoid publicity, few know that he played on two national championship football teams and shared the same backfield as Justice Byron White of the United States Supreme Court in the Cotton Bowl.

Despite protestations to the contrary, almost everyone wants to be remembered for something. From conversations over the last five years, I distilled that John Rooney would like to be remembered foremost as a man who dearly loves his family. Perhaps he would not be offended if he were occasionally thought of as a man who loved his country, church and profession. He would suffer discomfiture if he were only thought of as a man who held high public office or a man who wrote an erudite treatise.

Justice Rooney was a prolific writer and wrote many important opinions. As a justice for seven years, he wrote more opinions than any other justice in a like period of time. He always kept his caseload current, even during his two years of administrative duties as Chief Justice. His opinions were crisp and concise. They did not have to be explained in succeeding opinions. They did not track the history of a legal principle from Hammurabi to Sandra Day O'Connor; nor did Justice Rooney have in mind winning the Pulitzer Prize for Literature when writing his opinions. They set out the law clearly and with dispatch.

Greatness eludes those who seek it. Rather than an end in itself, greatness is an incident of long and dedicated service. John Rooney has engaged in such service. Throughout his career, he has exhibited intelligence, wisdom and a great capacity for work. More than that, he has served with quiet integrity, seeing no need to convince himself or others of his intellect, his many abilities, or his devotion to the law and the people. It was my privilege to sit on the same bench with John Rooney for five of the seven years he served on the Supreme Court. We are all better for having associated with him.