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## In Memory of Lawrence Yonkee

Tom Toner

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## **In Memory of Lawrence Yonkee**

*Tom Toner*

Because of his commitment to the University of Wyoming College of Law and the pleasure he took in working with young lawyers in the Western Trial Advocacy Institute, Larry would have been pleased — surprised, but pleased — that the law review staff would dedicate an issue to him. The best way to tell you about Larry is to describe his last case, which started on December 22, 1995, and I imagine went something like this:

*St. Peter:*

According to the allegations in this pleading, you were the editor-in-chief of the Wyoming Law Journal, a strong supporter of Wyoming's merit selection of judges as a member of the Wyoming Legislature, and a president of the Wyoming State Bar. It also says that you were a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers and a member of the Society of International Barristers.

That's very impressive, but this concerns me. It says you played football for the "Devil Dogs" of the United States Marine Corps. Are you sure that you're in the right jurisdiction?

However, that is somewhat counterbalanced by this notation which says you also played football for the University of Wyoming Cowboys, and we all know they are on the side of angels.

Now, let's see what opposing lawyers have to say about you. They always like to dish the dirt. That's strange. Part of the file must be missing. The words "gentleman" and "courteous" keep popping up. This one writes, "You can't 'out nice' Larry Yonkee in front of a jury." Even Mr. Spence says you're a cross between Clark Kent and Jesus Christ. Very insightful — a tad blasphemous, but insightful.

How about your clients? My, my, you certainly had a lot of jury trials. You represented an usual assortment of saints and sinners, but now I am sure that someone misplaced part of the file. The usual carping about failure to return phone calls, over billing, and not caring is missing. Instead, I have comments like "a calm, reassuring presence" and "a good man."

What do your partners say? This is more like it. They complain that you set impossibly high standards. You apparently had two rules which only you could follow: first, treat every opposing lawyer like he is going to be your next district judge, and, second, treat everyone else like they are going to be a juror in the most important case of your life. Is that some sort of lawyer's version of our Golden Rule? Not quite up to our standards, but it's a start.

Mr. Yonkee, you may have some potential, but this will take some thought. Do you have anything you would like to say?

*Larry:*

I request a trial by jury.

Of course, St Peter knew it was all over then.