

**OPENING REMARKS
and
RECOGNITION of
WILLIAM FARTHING on behalf of SYDNOR THOMPSON
by CHIEF JUSTICE SARAH PARKER**

The Chief Justice welcomed the guests with the following remarks:

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen. I am pleased to welcome each of you to your Supreme Court on this very special occasion in which we honor the service on this Court of Associate Justice Francis Iredell Parker.

Today marks an important milestone in the history of the Court as we continue a tradition that was begun almost 125 years ago. The first session of the Court to receive a portrait of a former member was held on March 5, 1888, when the portrait of Chief Justice Thomas Ruffin was presented. The Court takes great pride in continuing this tradition into the 21st century.

The presentation of Justice Parker's portrait today will make a significant contribution to our portrait collection. This contribution allows us to appropriately remember not only an important part of our history but also to honor the memory of a valued member of our Court family.

At this time, it is my distinct pleasure to recognize William Farthing, on behalf of Sydnor Thompson, who will present the portrait to the Court.

PRESENTATION OF PORTRAIT
by
WILLIAM FARTHING on behalf of SYDNOR THOMPSON

Today the portrait of Justice Francis Iredell Parker, who graced this world from August 21, 1923, to March 5, 2008, is being hung here in the Supreme Court of North Carolina. Francis came from a distinguished family, including a long line of outstanding members of the legal profession. His father, the eminent jurist John Johnston Parker, served with distinction as Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit for nearly thirty years and as a judge at the Nuremberg War Crime trials after World War II. In fact, the highest honor that the North Carolina Bar Association can pay any of its members is named for him—the Judge John J. Parker Award.

Francis was also a descendent of Justice James Iredell, one of the original members of the United States Supreme Court appointed by President George Washington in 1790. Much of Justice Iredell's library has been recently restored through the efforts of the North Carolina Supreme Court Historical Society and many of his books are now on display in the History Center here in Raleigh.

In World War I, Francis' uncle, Samuel Iredell Parker, was awarded our country's highest honor for heroism, the Congressional Medal of Honor. Francis himself served with great distinction both in the Pacific near the conclusion of World War II and as a Navy Lieutenant in the Korean War.

An outstanding real estate lawyer, Francis may have been the last of the great title examiners for whom no challenge posed by the records of the Register of Deeds was too great. In that regard he continued in the tradition of such celebrated members of the Charlotte Bar as his contemporaries—the late John Shaw and the late Neal Pharr.

Beside specializing in real estate law, Francis was also a generalist, i.e., an outstanding student of jurisprudence. In fact, for fourteen years he served as a member and eventually as Chairman of the North Carolina Board of Law Examiners, at a time when some of you here were put to that test as applicants to the Bar. The members of the Board of Law Examiners continued to call on Francis to help them grade the bar exams long after he had resigned from that Board and they remained among his close friends.

Of course, Francis had the greatest opportunity to display his legal acumen when he was appointed by Governor James Martin in

1986 to the post of associate justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina where he served as a highly valued member in the prime of his professional life.

Francis' other accomplishments are far too numerous to permit detailing them here, but they included serving as president of the Mecklenburg County Bar and as the first president of the Mecklenburg Bar Foundation.

He received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of North Carolina School of Law, having also attended UNC-Chapel Hill to earn an A.B. degree. In fact, as many of you know, he rarely missed a Tar Heel football game until serious illness intervened, and he followed the basketball team's contests with equal enthusiasm.

Justice Francis Parker's surname prominently graces the front door of the firm with which he and I practiced law for more than fifty years—Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein—and we who practiced with him treasure it as a daily reminder of the man himself.

Francis was devoted to, and in his last days grew to depend heavily upon, his wife, Mary Sommers Booth Parker. He was also devoted to his three children: son, John Johnston Parker, III, our fellow member of the Mecklenburg County Bar; son, William Booth Parker of Birmingham, Alabama; and daughter, Mary Sommers Parker Welch of Huntersville, North Carolina. They were his pride and joy as were his seven grandchildren: Virginia Booth Parker; John Johnston Parker, IV; Mary Laurens Welch; William Francis Parker; Virginia Sommers Welch; Elizabeth Ann Parker, and Parker Alexander Welch.

That is the official or biographical side of Justice Parker. There was another Francis whom I knew well and greatly admired. It was the Francis who could not abide the artificial, the contrived or the affected. He was constitutionally opposed to putting on airs. He drove his father's old Packard, "Bessie," until the wheels nearly fell off. In fact, Francis was perhaps the most genuine human being I have ever known, and on that account, one of my very best friends. Indeed, it was his practice to insist upon the genuine—the real—whenever afforded the opportunity. He delighted in puncturing any idea, any thing or any person that he considered unduly inflated. It was a service he regularly provided those of us who occasionally overstepped the bounds of self-importance. Fortunately he performed that service with a twinkle in his eye, reflecting the dry wit that we came to know so well.

I can think of no better example of Francis' own self-effacing manner than the request he made of the minister who conducted his

funeral service at Christ Episcopal Church and who told us that Francis had insisted: “I don’t want any preaching at my funeral. If the Book of Common Prayer was good enough for King Henry VIII, it’s good enough for me.”

There was too the Francis who was a “gentleman’s gentleman.” His manners were exemplary—perhaps even courtly. He never failed to express his appreciation of a favor—often in writing. But Francis also embodied a broader definition of “gentleman.” General Robert E. Lee, whom Francis greatly admired and whom, consciously or unconsciously, he emulated in many respects, once defined a gentleman as follows:

“The manner in which an individual enjoys certain advantages over others, is a test of a true gentleman . . . A true man of honor feels humbled himself when he cannot help humbling others.”

That was Francis. The persons who worked for him were among those who regarded him most highly. Security guards at the entrance to our office parking garage were greatly concerned about him during his last illness. To meet Francis Parker was certainly to respect and admire him, but it was also to regard him as an exceptionally congenial human being. Everyone liked Francis.

Not only were his manners always those of a gentleman but so was his attire.

Casual Fridays were not for Francis. We could see our reflection in his highly polished Navy shoes, though the customary bow tie reminded us that he refused to take himself too seriously.

I should like to close with a tribute I made to Francis on the occasion of a 70th birthday luncheon held in his honor. It was, I must say somewhat apologetically, cast in the form and meter known as a limerick. In it I sought to capsulize the nature of the exceptional individual we knew as Francis Iredell Parker:

Here’s to a consummate gent
who, like Holmes, may often dissent.
With a pedigree
to match Bobby Lee
and hardly a sin to repent.

ACCEPTANCE OF JUSTICE PARKER'S PORTRAIT
by
CHIEF JUSTICE SARAH PARKER

Thank you Mr. Farthing, on behalf of Mr. Thompson, for that fitting tribute to our former colleague. At this time, I am privileged to call upon Justice Parker's grandchildren to unveil the portrait of their grandfather.

Thank you. Your participation today makes this ceremony special, and we are honored that you could be with us. On behalf of the Supreme Court, I am indeed honored to accept this portrait of Justice Parker as a part of our collection. We are delighted to have this fine work of art, and we sincerely appreciate the efforts of the family and all who helped to make this presentation a reality.

Justice Parker's portrait will be hung in an appropriate place in this building as quickly as possible and will be a source of strength to us and to our successors throughout the years. Additionally, these proceedings will be printed in the North Carolina Reports.

On behalf of the Parker family, I invite all of you to a reception at the Parker Poe law firm. I thank all of you for being with us today. I look forward to having a chance to meet with you and to talk with you at the reception.