

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY AND DISCIPLINE

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THE FIRST MONTH . . . A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

November 1st marked my one month anniversary on the job as your Administrative Director of Professional Responsibility. This tenure qualifies me as an expert and entitles me to write a column to instruct those of you who lack such extensive experience in legal ethics.

I must admit this first month has been a learning experience for me. Here are some items of my newly acquired knowledge.

I have learned that I have three capable, dedicated assistants in my predecessor, Paul Sharood, who retired as Administrative Director and will be leaving the office February 1, 1976, Robert Meier, and Audrey Sterner.

I have learned that district ethics committees and members of the State Board of Professional Responsibility work long, hard hours donating their services to preserve the integrity of the legal profession.

I have learned that our Supreme Court is acutely aware of professional misconduct by members of the Bar, and is not about to tolerate a deterioration in the standards of the legal profession.

I have learned that the overwhelming number of lawyers in Minnesota are proud of their profession and have nothing but disgust for those few in our ranks who would tarnish our professional reputations.

I have also learned some things that are not so flattering to us attorneys. Here are some of the disheartening facts.

I have learned that many of us are dilatory in attending to our business, thereby needlessly giving ammunition to those who disdain the profession.

I have learned that lawyers often fail to communicate with their clients, thereby causing unnecessary misunderstandings.

I have learned that many of us keep inadequate records, so that it is difficult for us to justify our fees when challenged.

I have learned that some of us take on more business than we can handle, and jealously refuse to refer any of it to those who have time to give it the priority it deserves.

I have learned that some attorneys actually mislead their clients by telling them that certain progress has been made on a case, when in fact almost nothing has happened.

I have learned that some attorneys, fortunately few in number, show a decided diminution in effort once a retainer has been paid.

The list is hardly exhaustive. After all, I have only been on the job some thirty days.

Although I have been a member of the Bar for twenty years, only a little over five years of that time was spent in private practice. Nevertheless, while reviewing the last list set forth above, of things I have learned since coming on the job, I must confess I often see myself in the mirror. Do you?