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McGeorge Law Review

Volume 18 | Issue 1

Article 8

1-1-1986

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Recommended Citation

George A. Gould, *A Salute to Frank J. Trelease*, 18 PAC. L. J. vii (1986).

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/mlr/vol18/iss1/8>

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A Salute to Frank J. Trelease

George A. Gould‡

Gentlemen:

I am writing to recommend Frank J. Trelease for a position with your organization. I have known Mr. Trelease for some time, having first become acquainted with him while attending law school. Since then I have been associated with him in several capacities. Consequently, I believe I have a good perspective from which to comment on his abilities.

I have attached a copy of Mr. Trelease's resume. You will note that his educational background and performance seem adequate. It does appear that he was a little slow in earning that last degree from the University of Wisconsin, but perhaps he has an explanation. You may also be concerned with some of the strange organizations he appears to have belonged to while in school, such as Phi Beta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, and Order of the Coif. While I am not quite sure what these organizations do, I can assure you that they were never on the Attorney General's List of Subversive Organizations.

As I recall, it was difficult not to notice Mr. Trelease while I was in law school. To paraphrase a popular television commercial, when Trelease spoke others listened. In fact, one might say he was the dominant figure in the classroom, indeed in the law school during those years. Although his name is Frank, for some unknown reason he was given the nickname of "Dean," in those years, and it seems to have stuck.

Honesty compels me to mention one minor character flaw which exhibited itself during that period. Mr. Trelease was quite a demanding person and sometimes got upset when others were not prepared to discuss the assigned materials. Although he categorically denies the rumor that he sometimes threw blackboard erasers at persons who were unprepared, he admits that he sometimes

‡ George A. Gould is a Professor Law at McGeorge School of Law, University of the Pacific. [Editor's Note: This is a reprint of a farwell speech given by Professor George A. Gould in honor of Frank J. Trelease.]

asked such persons to, "walk the long mile," as he so colorfully puts it. I have heard that he has mellowed somewhat, although I find that hard to believe. In any case, you should be forewarned that Mr. Trelease might require that those under his charge actually learn something. You will note that despite his unreasonably harsh attitude, he appears to have had some success as a teacher.

You will also note that he has had extensive employment experience. It may concern you that he seems to have "visited" at so many places. However, despite the impression this may give, I assure you he is really quite steady. It may also concern you that he seems to have voluntarily spent so many years in Laramie, Wyoming. I really don't know how to explain this character defect, but at least it appears that eventually reason prevailed.

The attached resume contains a list of publications by Mr. Trelease. You will note that he has done a little writing. Having reviewed some of his writing myself, I can assure you that it contains some interesting and novel thoughts, particularly in the area of water law. His association with the hot bed of radical legal thought, the American Law Institute, may cause you a little concern, but I assure you he was only an Associate Reporter for the second edition of the Restatement of Torts, so perhaps this indiscretion can be forgiven. You will also note that he has been a consultant to and has prepared numerous reports for state, federal, and foreign governments. I realize that such a close association with government is troubling, but I can tell you that he has frequently championed the marketplace and private property rights, so, again, perhaps he can be forgiven.

There is a certain felicity of expression in his writing, and I believe with greater experience he will become a truly accomplished writer. I note, however, that his writing does have one drawback; he has a propensity to express complex concepts in clear, readable language. He simply has never learned the talents of obfuscation which marks a truly great academic. I used to believe he would overcome this shortcoming but he continues to write with style and clarity. Perhaps, however, you can overlook this defect in light of his other qualifications. In any case, I believe he does have promise as a scholar.

I feel you should judge Mr. Trelease's writings for yourself. Consequently, I am sending one copy of each of his publications under separate cover. I am informed that the moving van will arrive at your address next week.

In addition to his own writing, he has been responsible for the initiation of several publications. I understand that the Wyoming Law Journal was first published under his direction the University of Wyoming College of Law. Foreseeing the importance of natural resources to western states, he was later instrumental in changing this publication into the Land and Water Law Review.

I once heard Mr. Trelease attribute his success to "serendipity," which he defined as "dumb luck." While Frank has undoubtedly had his share of good fortune, I am reminded of the comment of another law school dean who, after noting his own good luck, observed that the harder he worked the better his luck got.

One recent event illustrates Frank's character well. He and his wife, Mary, recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary, which is no mean feat.

In closing, I would like to say that, all in all, Frank Trelease ain't done too bad for a boy from Colorado. I recommend him without reservation as a good friend, a great colleague, and a superb teacher, scholar, and writer; in short, as a complete man. His presence was always noted and his absence always felt.

Very truly yours,
George A. Gould
Professor of Law

