

1 Proceedings attendant upon the induction of  
2 Hon. Robert Van Pelt as a Judge of the United States  
3 District Court, at Lincoln, Nebraska, commencing at  
4 10:15 o'clock a.m., on Thursday, August 1, 1957, in the  
5 courtroom of the United States District Court.

6 Courtroom seating and arrangements as directed  
7 by United States Marshal William Raab.

8 Entrance upon the bench of the Hon. Joseph W.  
9 Woodrough and Harvey M. Johnsen, judges of the United  
10 States Circuit Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit;  
11 Hon. Richard E. Robinson, Chief Judge, and John W.  
12 Delehant, Judge (retired) of the United States District  
13 Court, District of Nebraska.

14 Court was formally opened by the marshal.

15 JUDGE ROBINSON: Ladies and gentlemen, the  
16 court is convened for the solemn and pleasant purpose of  
17 the taking of the oath of the judge of this court, a duly  
18 designated member of the bar of the court. As the nature  
19 of the ceremony will be distinctively judicial, I am sure  
20 that I need not remind you that the exhibition of any  
21 applause or demonstration would be inappropriate.

22 I am informed that the Honorable Robert  
23 Van Pelt, a member of the bar of this court, has been  
24 nominated as a judge of this court in succession to the  
25 former chief judge, the Hon. John W. Delehant, now

1 retired, and that his nomination has been confirmed.  
2 Recognizing Mr. Van Pelt, I now inquire whether that  
3 understanding is correct.

4 MR. VAN PELT: That is correct.

5 JUDGE ROBINSON: Mr. Van Pelt, have you  
6 received and do you now have in your possession your  
7 formal commission as a judge of this court?

8 MR. VAN PELT: I do.

9 JUDGE ROBINSON: Will you present the  
10 commission to the clerk, and upon its delivery will the  
11 clerk read the commission?

12 (Whereupon the Clerk of the District Court read  
13 the commission.)

14 Mr. Van Pelt, I now inquire of you whether  
15 you are prepared and now desire to take the oaths  
16 appropriate to your office.

17 MR. VAN PELT: I am so prepared and now  
18 desire to take the appropriate oaths.

19 JUDGE ROBINSON: Anticipating such a response,  
20 I have respectfully requested Judge Delehant to administer  
21 the oaths, and all persons in the courtroom will stand  
22 while the oaths are being administered.

23 (Whereupon Judge Delehant administered the  
24 respective oaths, and Mr. Van Pelt executed them and the  
25 accompanying affidavits.)

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You may be seated now.

Mr. Van Pelt, I now respectfully ask you to assume the robe of your office, assisted by your son, Samuel Van Pelt.

(Ceremony of robing.)

Judge Van Pelt, now escorted by the Marshal, you will assume your position upon the bench.

(Whereupon Judge Van Pelt assumed the bench.)

Ladies and gentlemen, it is appropriate that, though quite briefly, remarks fitting the occasion be offered by the selected group of gentlemen who are present here this morning. It is my privilege to invite them to speak.

The new judge will have occasion to have frequent contact with the United States Attorney's office. I now present to him Mr. William C. Spire, present United States Attorney for the District of Nebraska.

MR. WILLIAM C. SPIRE: May it please the Court, and Judge Van Pelt.

On behalf of the Department of Justice, the staff of the United States Attorney's office for this district, and certainly for myself, I extend our sincere congratulations and our best wishes to you for many years of service. As Judge Robinson has observed, we are in close and daily contact with the court. We welcome

1 this coming association with you, sir, and look forward to  
2 being privileged to serve with you.

3 JUDGE ROBINSON: The next gentleman whom I  
4 shall call on is president of the Lincoln Bar Association,  
5 of which Judge Van Pelt is a member. Mr. Frederick  
6 Patz.

7 MR. FREDERICK J. PATZ: May it please the  
8 court; Your Honor, Judge Van Pelt:

9 It is with a keen sense of personal pride that  
10 I, as President of the Lincoln Bar Association, and on  
11 behalf of that association, welcome you, Judge Van Pelt,  
12 to this newly-appointed position as Judge of the United  
13 States District Court. When we learned of your  
14 appointment we were very pleased. We congratulate you,  
15 and we extend to you our best wishes for a happy and  
16 successful execution of your duties.

17 The members of the bar know that this high  
18 position is one of the most honorable and dignified to  
19 which a lawyer could be appointed. Your broad  
20 acquaintance with the life of this community and our state  
21 and your deep concern and interest in the welfare of our  
22 country and our state and your deep concern and interest  
23 in the welfare of our country has made your appointment  
24 a most happy one. We lawyers who have had contact with  
25 you in our practice can frankly and honestly say that you

1 have always conducted yourself and your practice on a  
2 high plane and in the highest traditions of our profession.  
3 You have been an active member of our association; you  
4 are one of our past presidents; you have gained our respect  
5 and our affection.

6 You know, I am sure, that you are  
7 succeeding one of the finest men of all judges this court  
8 has ever had, and we take this opportunity to thank His  
9 Honor, Judge Delehant, for the many courtesies he has  
10 bestowed upon our association. We are confident, however,  
11 that we shall again have as a judge of this honorable court  
12 a gentleman, a man of honor, with legal ability and a  
13 keen sense of justice.

14 Judge Van Pelt, you have honored yourself,  
15 and you have honored our association. We say again,  
16 welcome, congratulations, and best wishes.

17 JUDGE ROBINSON: I shall now call upon Mr.  
18 Edward G. Garvey, of Omaha, Nebraska, to respond for  
19 the Omaha Bar Association.

20 MR. GARVEY: Honorable judges, fellow  
21 members of the bar, ladies and gentlemen, friends of  
22 Judge Van Pelt:

23 On behalf of the Omaha Bar Association,  
24 Judge Van Pelt, it is a real pleasure and privilege to have  
25 the opportunity of congratulating you and complimenting



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Association is honored to join in this happy occasion, 742 years since the signing of the Magna Charta, to honor you as a member of our bar who so completely conforms to the principles of the Magna Charta in being a justiciary who understands the law of the realm and is well disposed to observe it.

The purposes of the Nebraska State Bar Association, as outlined in the preamble of our rules, are the advancement of the administration of justice according to law, the advancement of the honor and dignity of the legal profession, the encouragement of cordial intercourse among the members, and the improvement of the service rendered the public by the bench and bar. It seems to me very fitting and proper that the Nebraska State Bar Association should have this opportunity to pay tribute to one of our members who has in all respects abided so faithfully throughout your years of practice by the announced purposes of our association. As an integrated bar it is of extreme importance to all of the lawyers of this state that our judicial offices be occupied by men for whom the members of the bar uniformly have the highest degree of respect and cordiality. While the Nebraska State Bar Association as such, of course, can claim no credit for the excellence of the selection of the federal judges who serve us, we can express our

1 wholehearted appreciation of the selection of such well  
2 qualified judges as have been chosen to occupy these  
3 places of high honor and distinction.

4 The membership of the Nebraska State Bar  
5 Association is well aware of the unselfish service which  
6 Judge Van Pelt has rendered in the counsels of the  
7 association for many years, serving as chairman and  
8 member of a number of our important committees guiding  
9 the destinies of our association. Among the more recent  
10 notable of these, of course, has been the service of Judge  
11 Van Pelt as chairman of our committees pertaining to the  
12 judiciary, and this year as a most valued member of our  
13 Committee on Legislation.

14 It is probably because the distinguished  
15 honor which comes to you, Judge Van Pelt, is a life  
16 appointment and, therefore, seems to set the pattern for  
17 all your future labors, that there is a certain tone of  
18 finality about an occasion such as this. It has some  
19 aspects of a farewell gathering to pay homage to a  
20 distinguished citizen moving to a foreign country. But I  
21 think this is a wholly improper attitude, and if I may be  
22 pardoned on this occasion for referring to the Canons of  
23 Judicial Ethics, they contain one provision to which it may  
24 not seem inappropriate to direct attention. Canon 33 of  
25 the Canons of Judicial Ethics, in referring to the social



1 relations of a judge, states that, and I quote, "He should  
2 not discontinue his interest in or appearance at meetings  
3 of members of the bar." I well recall the occasion,  
4 several years ago, when Judge Delehant accompanied some  
5 of the other members of the association in an Institute on  
6 New Legislation, travelling across the state, when Judge  
7 Delehant so ably explained recently adopted legislation  
8 pertaining to discovery and interrogatories and other  
9 matters of practice in which newly enacted statutes  
10 created a degree of conformity with the federal rules.  
11 More recently Judge Robinson, aware of the importance  
12 of our annual meeting to members of the bar, inquired  
13 of me as to the dates of our next annual meeting in order  
14 that he might avoid setting matters in court for hearing on  
15 those dates. Of course, no bar meeting seems complete  
16 to Nebraska lawyers without the presence of Judge  
17 Woodrough and Judge Johnsen. On behalf of the Nebraska  
18 State Bar Association, I am happy to express the  
19 confidence which our association has in your continued  
20 interest in the activities of our organization and our  
21 expectation of your continued presence at various  
22 functions of the bar.

23 The members of the Nebraska State Bar  
24 Association are unanimous in their pride in our new  
25 United States District Judge. We feel that your

1 appointment, while indeed a most distinguished honor for  
2 you, is also, because of your possession of all of those  
3 qualities of integrity and knowledge and temperament  
4 which go to make an excellent judge, an honor to our  
5 association. We wish you the utmost in happiness and  
6 success in the future, and we pledge to you the support and  
7 respect of the bar which a worthy judge is entitled to  
8 expect from lawyers who may appear before him.

9 JUDGE ROBINSON: The American Bar  
10 Association has taken note of this occasion today, and the  
11 president, who is in Europe, has designated Mr. George  
12 Turner to speak on his behalf.

13 MR. GEORGE H. TURNER: May it please the  
14 court. The American Bar Association is very proud of  
15 the part it is privileged to play through its standing  
16 Committee on the Federal Judiciary in the making of  
17 recommendations to the Department of Justice and to the  
18 Senate Judiciary Committee with respect to lawyers under  
19 consideration for appointment to positions in the Federal  
20 Judiciary. The Committee consists of an outstanding  
21 lawyer from each of the 10 federal circuits and a  
22 chairman chosen at large. From a personal  
23 acquaintanceship with most of the members of the  
24 Committee I can attest that each member represents the  
25 very finest ideals of our profession.

1                   The Committee on the Federal Judiciary,  
2                   and indeed, the American Bar Association itself, takes no  
3                   part in furthering consideration by the President of any  
4                   individual for appointment to a federal court. Its function  
5                   is to make a searching investigation into the personal and  
6                   professional background of persons being considered for  
7                   appointment to important positions in the federal judiciary  
8                   and reporting its conclusions.

9                   Every lawyer, as well as all other citizens,  
10                  has a very real interest in seeing that none but the best  
11                  qualified are appointed to our federal courts. When the  
12                  name of a prospective appointee is submitted to the  
13                  Committee for its recommendation it becomes the duty  
14                  of the Committee to thoroughly investigate all phases of  
15                  that person's life; his habits; his reputation and his  
16                  professional attainments and report its conclusion as to  
17                  that person's fitness for the high office for which he is  
18                  being considered.

19                  It is not a pleasant task when a member of  
20                  the Committee or the Committee as a whole is  
21                  constrained to report unfavorably upon one being  
22                  considered for judicial appointment, for, almost without  
23                  exception, the reports of the Committee have been  
24                  respected by the Department of Justice and by the  
25                  Committee on the Judiciary of the Senate. Conversely,

1 it is a very happy experience when the Committee can,  
2 after thorough investigation, report that the lawyer under  
3 consideration is mentally, morally and professionally  
4 qualified to serve as a federal judge.

5 In the case of the one whose induction into  
6 office we observe today, a most thorough investigation  
7 was made by the Committee and happily a unanimous  
8 report of approval was submitted. This report was  
9 formulated after consideration of Judge Van Pelt's home  
10 life, his civic activity and his preeminence in the practice  
11 of his profession as well as upon a determination of the  
12 esteem in which he has always been held by his friends,  
13 neighbors and fellow practitioners.

14 The members of the Committee on the  
15 Federal Judiciary of the American Bar Association take  
16 pleasure in having reported favorably on the  
17 nomination of Judge Van Pelt to be United States District  
18 Judge and those of us who have enjoyed his friendship for  
19 a great many years know that the confidence reposed in  
20 him by the Committee is fully warranted.

21 He has been an outstanding citizen in his  
22 community; he has been active in his church and in the  
23 field of education and during the whole course of his  
24 career at the bar he has stood for those principles and  
25 ideals which make for greatness in his profession.

1 JUDGE ROBINSON: From the legislative branch  
2 of our government United States senators Hruska and  
3 Curtis were anxious to be here and participate in the  
4 ceremony today. I need not confide in you that their time  
5 is well occupied in Washington at the present time.  
6 However, they have designated representatives to speak  
7 on their behalf today. I first call upon Mr. Guy Chambers,  
8 representing the Hon. Roman L. Hruska, United States  
9 Senator from Nebraska.

10 MR. GUY C. CHAMBERS: May it please the  
11 court. The following telegram is addressed to me by the  
12 Hon. Roman L. Hruska, United States Senator:

13 "Because of continued official duties it will  
14 not be possible for me to attend the induction of the new  
15 federal judge in Lincoln tomorrow. I would very much  
16 appreciate your appearance there and your reading on my  
17 behalf of the following statement:

18 "May it please the court: The American  
19 citizenry generally, and members of the bar especially,  
20 the latter being themselves a very integral part of the  
21 judicial system, are aware of the imperative necessity of  
22 competent, high principled, and dedicated men for  
23 service on the bench.

24 "My experience in the Congress has brought  
25 home to me the fact that the United States Senate is

1 "conscious of this fact and is guided accordingly. This is  
2 reflected in the thorough and careful process of  
3 selection by which members of the federal judiciary are  
4 named, the life tenure they are accorded, and the many  
5 safeguards which are placed to insure their ability to  
6 function fearlessly and impartially.

7 "Those of us engaged in making laws for  
8 the conduct of human affairs know full well that it is  
9 extremely difficult at best to achieve the declared and  
10 desired objectives of any legislation. It is not difficult to  
11 write the rule. Its application to specific facts however,  
12 often presents hard situations. Therefore, one of the  
13 crucial parts of the process is to obtain services of the  
14 most highly qualified men available to preside at trials  
15 where such laws are applied so that there can be  
16 reasonable assurance that their declared objectives can be  
17 approximated.

18 "High qualification is based heavily on  
19 sound experience and on a wholesome character and  
20 temperament. These are found abundantly in the one who  
21 becomes a member of the federal judiciary today. He  
22 brings much to the splendid line of judges who have  
23 heretofore graced the Nebraska federal bench, most  
24 recently and illustriously occupied by the new judge's  
25 immediate predecessor, who will continue some portion

1 "of his judicial duties, we are happy to say.

2 "To members of the bar present here today,  
3 I want to say that you have produced and yielded from among  
4 your number one who is well fitted for his new post. All  
5 of us know that the administration of justice requires the  
6 utmost of understanding, cooperation, and good faith  
7 between bench and bar.

8 "None of these will be lacking, I am  
9 confident, on the part of either the new judge or the  
10 members of the Nebraska bar. The real beneficiaries will  
11 be citizens everywhere for this cause of good government  
12 advances well when our court system is one of competence  
13 and of integrity.

14 "In closing, I extend hearty congratulations  
15 and the very best of wishes to Federal District Judge  
16 Robert Van Pelt.

17 "Roman L. Hruska, U. S. Senator,  
18 Nebraska."

19 JUDGE ROBINSON: The Hon. Carl Curtis, United  
20 States Senator for Nebraska, has appointed Mr. Maurice  
21 S. Hevelone to represent him on this occasion. The court  
22 now recognizes Mr. Hevelone.

23 MR. HEVELONE: May it please the court. In  
24 addressing the court at this time, it is my privilege to  
25 speak not only for myself, as a member of the bar of this

1 court, but also at the special request of Senator Carl T.  
2 Curtis, that I represent him on this occasion. He regrets  
3 that his duties in the continuing session of the Senate  
4 require his presence in Washington. He has asked me to  
5 read this telegram.

6 "It will be impossible for me to leave  
7 Washington to be present for the swearing in ceremony of  
8 U. S. District Judge Robert Van Pelt on Thursday, August  
9 1st. Important business on the floor of the Senate plus  
10 scheduled sessions of the Senate Select Committee on  
11 Labor-Management Practices requires that I be in  
12 Washington.

13 "Will you please extend my congratulations  
14 to Judge Van Pelt and give greetings to all members of the  
15 bar and bench who are present.

16 "Our judicial branch as one of the three  
17 coordinate branches of our federal government has an  
18 important responsibility in forever perpetuating our  
19 government of law and our American system. I am  
20 confident that Judge Van Pelt and Judge Robinson and all the  
21 officers of the court in our state of Nebraska will measure  
22 up to this responsibility in the highest tradition.

23 "Carl T. Curtis, U. S. Senator."

24 Both for Senator Curtis and myself, I wish  
25 for Judge Van Pelt a long and illustrious career on this



1 bench, which has been adorned by such great judges as  
2 Your Honor and Your Honor's predecessors. Thank you.

3 JUDGE ROBINSON: I am sure all those present  
4 today know Judge Van Pelt's great interest in the University  
5 of Nebraska law school, and it seems quite fitting,  
6 therefore, that the school should be represented on this  
7 occasion. It is now my pleasure to present Mr. E. O.  
8 Belsheim, Dean of the College of Law, University of  
9 Nebraska.

10 MR. E. O. BELSHEIM: May it please the court.  
11 The faculty and student body of the College of Law join me  
12 in extending to you, Judge Van Pelt, our sincere  
13 congratulations. We are confident that you will maintain  
14 the same high standards for this court that have been set  
15 by your predecessor, Judge Delehant. We have enjoyed  
16 the association that has existed between us over the past  
17 eleven years, during which time you served as lecturer  
18 in the field of conveyances. While this appointment now  
19 comes to an end, we are hopeful that the association  
20 between us will remain as close as ever. We extend to  
21 you our very best wishes during the years of service  
22 that lie ahead.

23 JUDGE ROBINSON: As you all well know, Judge  
24 Van Pelt for many years has been a very active trial  
25 lawyer in Lincoln and throughout the state of Nebraska.

1 It seems quite fitting, then, that on this occasion we should  
2 have a response from the Hon. John L. Polk, District  
3 Judge of Lancaster County. Honorable John Polk.

4 HON. JOHN L. POLK: May it please the court,  
5 members of the bar, Judge Van Pelt:

6 As a member of the judiciary before whom  
7 Robert Van Pelt has practiced law for many years, I feel  
8 I should make some observations on this occasion. In his  
9 many years of practice he has always manifested in court  
10 the attributes and principles of conduct so admired by a  
11 trial judge, namely, thoroughness of preparation, ability  
12 to discern and collate the issues of fact and law in a law  
13 suit, absolute fairness and honesty in the presentation of  
14 a case, and the evincing of professional courtesy and  
15 standards of ethical practice advocated by the legal  
16 profession.

17 We of the bench feel that the appointment of  
18 Robert Van Pelt is a distinct contribution to the  
19 administration of justice in this state. We feel that it is  
20 likewise a personal reward to him in recognition of his  
21 many years of faithful and honorable practice of law. To  
22 maintain the highest standards of ethical practice is not  
23 always easy. It requires vigilance, perseverance,  
24 singleness of purpose, adherence at all times to the  
25 basic principles of common honesty and professional

1 integrity. Someone has said that the lives of men are  
2 like rivers, it is following the line of least resistance that  
3 makes them crooked. Robert Van Pelt has not drifted with  
4 the current. He has shaped his course. He has fought  
5 the good fight. He is now receiving, and justly so, the  
6 cap sheaf of his professional career.

7 Permit me if you will to refer to one of the  
8 great lawyers of all times, and one-time member of the  
9 English judiciary. I refer to that great advocate of  
10 individual rights and fearless judge, Lord Coke of  
11 England. In early English history his controversy with the  
12 crown in defense of human liberties is without parallel.  
13 This controversy involved for the most part his refusal to  
14 subordinate his sworn duties as a judge, as he conceived  
15 them, to the whims and caprices of the sovereign. I need  
16 not relate the threats that were made to him as the result  
17 of his stalwart refusal to compromise principle as he  
18 perceived it to the dictates of despotic rulers. His  
19 resoluteness of purpose and adamancy remained firm and  
20 is best shown in his decision in Bonham's Case decided  
21 in 1610, where despite the attempted coercion and threats  
22 of the crown and contrary to its dictates, he delivered his  
23 decision and in so doing said, "I will do that which  
24 becometh a judge."

25 Robert Van Pelt, we of your local judiciary

1 join in the appreciation of your appointment to the federal  
2 bench of this state. We feel that your sterling character,  
3 your legal ability and principles of advocacy have been  
4 justly recognized, and that you will in all your activities  
5 on the bench, "Do that which becometh a judge."

6 JUDGE ROBINSON: The next man that the court  
7 will call upon certainly needs no introduction to this group.  
8 The former chief judge of this district, the Honorable  
9 John W. Delehant. Judge Delehant.

10 HON. JOHN W. DELEHANT: Chief Judge Robinson,  
11 Judges Woodrough and Johnsen of the Court of Appeals,  
12 Judge Van Pelt, and friends of this court:

13 May I be permitted briefly to signify my  
14 appreciation of the high privilege that has been mine this  
15 morning. The administration of the oaths of office by a  
16 judge of the United States District Court to his successor  
17 in the judicial service is itself a comparatively rare event.  
18 And for this opportunity to participate in it I am frankly  
19 grateful.

20 But today's ceremony has for me a special  
21 significance which arises out of the confidence, to which  
22 all of us testify, in the abundant preparation and capacity  
23 for his position, of the newly qualified judge of this court.  
24 We who are allowed to serve in the federal judiciary  
25 come, through the day by day performance of our duties,

1 humbly and reverently to appraise the institution of which  
2 each of us is a part. We have a natural solicitude for its  
3 endurance, its integrity, its acknowledged worthiness.  
4 Thus, despite his awareness of his own inadequacies,  
5 each of us cherishes the hope that he may yield his gavel  
6 to one by whom the office he holds will be advanced in  
7 efficiency, in dignity, and in the general esteem. So,  
8 today, confident that I shall realize that hope, my  
9 dominant sentiment, in all reverence, may be reflected  
10 in the prayer, "num dimittis servum tuum, Domine".

11           However, lest a mistaken inference be  
12 drawn from that allusion, I hasten to add that, happily for  
13 me, my withdrawal from the active status will not involve  
14 my complete surrender of the judicial function. For what  
15 I should like to think will be several years, I shall continue  
16 to perform strictly judicial duties and, probably in large  
17 measure, in the district of Nebraska. I expect, therefore,  
18 personally to witness during that continuing interval of  
19 service, the full realization of the hope whose  
20 entertainment I have just reflected. It was in that  
21 expectation that I retired; and by it I am confirmed in my  
22 conviction of the prudence of that course. Judge Van Pelt,  
23 mine is a very special and personal welcome to you.

24           JUDGE ROBINSON: We are honored by the  
25 presence on the bench of two judges of the Court of

1 Appeals of the Eighth Circuit. I shall now call upon the  
2 Honorable Harvey Johnsen, Judge of the Court of Appeals  
3 of the Eighth Circuit.

4 HON. HARVEY W. JOHNSEN: Judge Robinson,  
5 my brethren of the federal bench, and a special salutation  
6 to Judge Van Pelt.

7 This occasion is one of complementary  
8 aspects. It marks the yielding up by one judge of the  
9 federal judicial post, duties and responsibilities,  
10 centered here at Lincoln, and the taking over of these  
11 things by another.

12 It is not, however, our purpose today to  
13 deal with the matter of Judge Delehant's retirement, but  
14 rather with the welcoming of Judge Van Pelt. I only  
15 mention Judge Delehant's name, because I think it adds  
16 an element of significance to the congratulations which are  
17 gathered to extend to Judge Van Pelt.

18 This judicial post at Lincoln has a history  
19 and a repute that are unique among the federal district  
20 judgeships of the country. It has typified for 50 years,  
21 throughout the federal judicial system, the highest  
22 standard of service and quality of work, which it is  
23 possible for a trial court to give.

24 That identification began to become attached  
25 to it with the appointment of the late Thomas C. Munger

1 as a United States District Judge for the District of  
2 Nebraska, in 1907. He was the first resident federal  
3 judge at Lincoln. In his many years of service, Judge  
4 Munger came to be recognized as one of the outstanding  
5 trial judges of the federal system.

6 It was the privilege of Judge Delehant to  
7 succeed him and to take over the responsibility of  
8 carrying on the fine tradition and high repute of the  
9 Lincoln judicial post, both here in Lincoln, throughout  
10 the State, and in the federal system generally. This  
11 Judge Delehant has done, in a manner that not only has  
12 preserved the preceding lustre of the post but that, in my  
13 opinion has even further extended it. Judge Delehant,  
14 too, has gained a name as one of the outstanding trial  
15 judges of the federal system.

16 It is a remarkable fact that any individual  
17 judicial post should have become possessed of and have  
18 held an unbroken aura of this nature for 50 years, so that  
19 it now stands in the position of being able to claim a  
20 golden anniversary of such tradition and repute. It is in  
21 the light of the fact of that golden anniversary that I find  
22 double cause and increased measure for my congratulations  
23 to Judge Van Pelt today.

24 I think any judge has a special  
25 fortunateness who is privileged to take over a post that

1 has come to have such an individualistic, identifying  
2 standing. I therefore congratulate Judge Van Pelt on  
3 having the opportunity to step onto such a splendid stage  
4 and setting.

5 But more than this, I congratulate him on  
6 his having been selected as one deemed worthy and  
7 qualified to carry on and still further extend the high  
8 eminence which Judge Munger and Judge Delehant have  
9 given to the post which he is assuming.

10 If I did not feel that I knew Judge Van Pelt,  
11 not just personally but also fairly well--and I may  
12 interject that our acquaintanceship is one of more than  
13 30 years--I would perhaps, with judicial restraint, allow  
14 my congratulations to stop here. I am happy, however,  
15 to be able to go beyond these institutional limits, and to  
16 add a separate, personal measure of congratulations.  
17 Because I feel that I know Judge Van Pelt's attributes,  
18 qualities and capabilities, I would extend my  
19 congratulations to him most of all upon this individual  
20 basis. I am certain that he constitutes in fact a most  
21 worthy successor to judges Munger and Delehant, and  
22 that he will carry on the work in this judicial post at  
23 Lincoln with the same high quality and repute that have  
24 given it its distinctive 50-year aura in the federal  
25 judicial system. I believe further that he will grow in



1 judicial statute and, as he does, will not only preserve, but  
2 also extend, the lustre and tradition of this particular  
3 judgeship. I may add too that I think that he will, as  
4 well, acquire for himself a reputation in the trial court  
5 field--though this is of the least importance  
6 institutionally in the field of judicial service. Faithfully  
7 serving the cause of justice, and not ambitiously seeking  
8 to attain personal renown, is the real dedication of a true  
9 judge.

10 From what I have said, it necessarily  
11 follows that I would voice too a word of congratulation to  
12 the bar of the state, to the people of Nebraska, and to the  
13 community of Lincoln, that Judge Van Pelt has been  
14 chosen for this position.

15 Concluding, then, I once more voice my  
16 sincere congratulations to Judge Van Pelt, and I repeat  
17 that word of congratulations to the members of his family,  
18 his relatives and his many friends. As a member of the  
19 federal judiciary, I add to this my best wishes and a  
20 warm hand of welcome to the judicial fold of the 8th  
21 Circuit of the United States. As time goes on, Judge  
22 Van Pelt, you will come to understand more fully the  
23 meaning of that welcome, as you have the opportunity to  
24 experience the spirit of unity, integration and  
25 dedication by which the federal judicial system is

1 permeated, and as you find yourself realizing that you  
2 have today taken over, not just an individual judicial  
3 post, but a position of responsibility and concern as to  
4 the whole federal judicial system, in this task of ours of  
5 achieving national justice, constitutionally and legally,  
6 so that freedom and democracy may endure.

7 So again, Judge Van Pelt, my sincere  
8 congratulations, my best wishes, and my hearty welcome  
9 to you.

10 JUDGE ROBINSON: The next judge whom I shall  
11 call upon likewise needs no introduction to this group.  
12 He presided over this court when he was serving as United  
13 States District Judge, and later was elevated to the United  
14 States Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit. The beloved  
15 Honorable Joseph W. Woodrough.

16 HON. JOSEPH W. WOODROUGH: Judge Van Pelt,  
17 every time I go down to work in the morning I pass under  
18 a great big sign that arches the driveway in which I am  
19 proceeding and which proclaims to the world that our town  
20 of Omaha is the biggest packing center and livestock  
21 market on the face of the earth. And it would be strange  
22 indeed if a man didn't take a reasonable pride in being a  
23 citizen of no mean city. On the contrary, he takes great  
24 pride in Omaha and its vast geography.

25 But when I come to Lincoln I see from afar

1 the beautiful and amazing cupola of the capitol, of the  
2 statehouse, where I know that devoted men are gathered,  
3 enlightened men, devoting themselves to the great  
4 problems of government, combating things that are wrong  
5 and fighting for better things. Many of them, year after  
6 year, have so labored under that great dome, that I feel  
7 good as I come here. And then I come past the wonderful  
8 university; also so many, many devoted men who are  
9 learning and teaching to know better what is already known  
10 and then advancing into the unknown and doing a great work  
11 for all of us. And then I go on the streets of Lincoln and  
12 behold the marvelous youth that keeps you here, you know,  
13 like you ought to be; they look beautiful to me, so full of  
14 life, full of enthusiasm, so full of hope.

15 Now, one other thing. My old preceptor,  
16 Frank Irvine, who was on our Supreme Court many years  
17 ago, and hardly any of you remember him, I expect, but  
18 he was a teacher and a jurist. Well, he said to me,  
19 "There is no city on earth, I think, that affords a man  
20 more opportunity to live a full life, to increase his  
21 knowledge and his youthfulness and his happiness than the  
22 city of Lincoln. There isn't a soul in it that's ignorant."  
23 That's a fact; I don't believe there is. I never  
24 encountered one in many years here.

25 And then I come off the street and come into

1 this room, and I say this beloved courtroom, and meet  
2 with those men of the bar, the learned men of the bar, the  
3 lawyers and the judges. Yes, Roscoe Pound, it was, who  
4 took pleasure in reminding us from time to time that the  
5 vocation we follow of law and judging is no mere business  
6 and trading affair, but it is an honorable, it is a learned  
7 and fine profession, honoring and respecting what the  
8 German says, "Everything that goes through the heart on  
9 the higher plane." You find it here in Lincoln.

10 I have always thought and I have always  
11 known of Robert Van Pelt to be one of the men who  
12 embodies these high ideals that exist and always continue  
13 in Lincoln. Every word that has been said in compliment  
14 to him struck a responsive chord in my heart. I know  
15 it is true.

16 I can't let the opportunity go because it is  
17 expected of a man of my age and experience to give  
18 advice, not that anybody cares particularly (laughter), but  
19 then you try to live reasonably up to expectations, I turn  
20 then to Robert Burns. I am hoping things for Van Pelt,  
21 and for a successful career for him, which I know he will  
22 have. I don't hope for him that he won't encounter much  
23 human wickedness. Even in Lincoln we find some of that.  
24 (Laughter) But maybe I might say not much of it. So I  
25 am hoping things for him. I am not hoping that he will

1 do all that he hopes to do because he hopes for a good deal  
2 and intends it, and he has taken this oath and he means  
3 every word of it.

4 And I hope for him he won't get hardened,  
5 even though you do meet some of those who fall by the  
6 wayside and don't live up to what I always think of as  
7 Lincoln standards. You can't expect that; you can't expect  
8 that. But on the other hand I recall the advice of Robert  
9 Burns that he gave his young friend. "Never come to  
10 think that mankind are all wicked. The real, downright  
11 hardened wicked that have no check but human law are but  
12 few, no matter what it might appear sometimes." In the  
13 grinding down of the court--and that's my best hope--  
14 never will he be hardened; never will he forget that there  
15 are an awful lot of good people as well as a few bad ones.

16 JUDGE ROBINSON: As all of you are undoubtedly  
17 aware, those who have responded to the court's  
18 invitation to speak this morning have kept their remarks  
19 brief. As it is my desire to do likewise, I have reduced  
20 my remarks to writing and should like to ask your  
21 indulgence while I read them. I shall address myself to  
22 the gentleman in whose name and honor this ceremony is  
23 being held.

24 Before continuing, however, I would like to  
25 take this opportunity to say how gratifying and comforting

1 it is to know that the former chief judge of this district and  
2 your predecessor on this bench, Judge Delehant, will be  
3 available for service, counsel and advice. His help has  
4 been invaluable to me in my first year on the bench.

5 Judge Van Felt, may I welcome you both  
6 personally and on behalf of the federal judiciary to the  
7 bench where you now sit. You enter this morning upon a  
8 service which entails great responsibilities, but at the  
9 same time, as you will soon find, rewards each of us  
10 with the far greater satisfaction of accomplishment that  
11 comes from the day to day labors of that which we term  
12 administering justice. For this is a service, as you well  
13 know, which lies at the very foundation of our democratic  
14 society.

15 You bring to the bench a knowledge and  
16 understanding of many fields, gained from your active and  
17 praiseworthy work in religious, educational, and civic  
18 affairs. Your ability as a practicing lawyer is best  
19 attested to by your fine reputation amongst your brethren  
20 of the profession, and your numerous contributions that  
21 you have made to the law itself. The record of your life  
22 shows without a doubt that you possess a sense of integrity  
23 and moral purpose in the highest degree. That you are  
24 eminently qualified for this position is beyond question,  
25 and we are confident that the quality of your judicial

1 career will be an inspiration to all.

2 We heartily welcome you.

3 And now, realizing that this is no easy  
4 matter, I am going to call upon you to make such  
5 response to this morning's ceremony as you desire.  
6 Ladies and gentlemen, the Honorable Robert Van Pelt,  
7 now Judge of the United States District Court for the  
8 District of Nebraska.

9 JUDGE ROBERT VAN PELT: Chief Judge  
10 Robinson, brethren of the bench and bar, and friends:

11 Your presence here warms my heart.  
12 Words will not properly or completely express my  
13 appreciation any more than words would substitute for  
14 your presence. I do thank each of you. While this is an  
15 occasion when I should be seen and not heard, you must  
16 realize that I am not yet far enough removed from the  
17 practice of law not to want to speak whenever an  
18 opportunity is afforded. I do want to speak, however,  
19 because I want to publicly thank Judge and Mrs. Delehant  
20 for their kindness to my family and to me. At what I  
21 fear is great personal inconvenience, they are leaving  
22 Lincoln in order that I, on the oath which I have this day  
23 taken, can designate my official station as Lincoln,  
24 Nebraska. This generosity is characteristic of both of  
25 them and I would not permit this hour to draw to a close

1 without recognizing this great personal favor, and  
2 expression of friendship.

3 Likewise, I cannot take a place on this side  
4 of the bench--which doesn't seem as high from this side  
5 as when seated at the counsel table--without feeling  
6 humble in remembering that two of the nation's greatest  
7 trial judges, Thomas C. Munger, whose picture I look  
8 up to at the rear of this room, and John W. Delehant, who  
9 sits on my right, both long-time personal friends, have  
10 preceded me as the trial judges in this room, and without  
11 expressing the hope, however undeserved, that a part of  
12 their luster may shine through me in serving justice in  
13 this room. I recognize that I cannot be a Thomas C.  
14 Munger; I recognize that I cannot be a John W. Delehant;  
15 I recognize that I am only Bob Van Pelt. Perhaps in the  
16 way life moves that is as it should be. To bask in their  
17 reflected glory could never be a goal in itself, even  
18 though I would like to emulate their fine qualities. I do  
19 solicit the cooperation of the bar, who have been so  
20 generous in their spoken words here today, and of the  
21 public who will be serving as jurors and witnesses in this  
22 court, that I too may be dedicated to the doing of justice  
23 in this courtroom that these distinguished jurists have  
24 graced so long and so well.

25 Some of you know my own personal



1 philosophy, for it has even been publicly recorded. To  
2 me the greatest rule of conduct of the Holy Scripture is  
3 not found in the New Testament but in the words of Micah,  
4 where it is written:

5 "For what does the Lord require of thee but to do  
6 justly and to live mercy and to walk humbly with  
7 thy god?"

8 If from each of you, my friends, I may request one more  
9 favor, it would be your prayer that I may do justly, that  
10 I may love mercy and that in all these things I may walk  
11 humbly with my God.

12 And to you, Mr. Chief Judge Robinson, and  
13 to all assembled here, my sincere thanks for making this  
14 day one that will live forever in my memory. No man  
15 deserves such fine friends or such a fine family as God  
16 has given me. I am grateful.

17 JUDGE ROBINSON: Ladies and gentlemen, on  
18 behalf of Judge Van Pelt and the court here this morning I  
19 want to add my thanks for your appearance here to honor  
20 Judge Van Pelt. We will shortly be in recess. Judge Van  
21 Pelt has advised me to suggest that he will be available  
22 in chambers immediately after the ceremony.

23 The marshal will now recess court.

24 (Whereupon court was adjourned, followed by  
25 reception in chambers.)

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(Reported and prepared by David H. Brown,  
Official Shorthand Reporter, United States District Court,  
District of Nebraska.)