

**INVESTITURE**  
**OF**  
**JUSTICE THOMAS L. STEFFEN**

**Tuesday, April 6, 1982**

**12:00 Noon**

**Clark County Commission Chambers**  
**Bridger Building**  
**225 E. Bridger Avenue**  
**Las Vegas, Nevada**

**NEVADA STATE SUPREME COURT**

**CHIEF JUSTICE E. M. GUNDERSON**  
**JUSTICE NOEL E. MANOUKIAN**  
**JUSTICE CHARLES E. SPRINGER**  
**JUSTICE JOHN MOWBRAY**  
**SENIOR JUSTICE DAVID ZENOFF**

**GOVERNOR ROBERT LIST**  
**FATHER JOHN McVEIGH**  
**ANNA PETERSON**  
**HARRY REID**  
**PAUL C. PARRAGUIRRE**  
**SENATOR JAMES I. GIBSON**



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## INVESTITURE OF JUSTICE THOMAS L. STEFFEN

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**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

On behalf of the Supreme Court of the State of Nevada and Nevada Court System, I wish to welcome all of you to what we consider to be a very, very happy occasion.

At the outset, if I may, I would like to introduce some of the persons present with us here today.

First of all, the Board of Bar Governors. We have with us Paul C. Parraguirre, President; John O'Brien, Vice President; Stewart Bell—perhaps you gentlemen would stand so they could see who I am talking about.

Paul Parraguirre, John O'Brien, Stewart Bell, Tom Cochran, Bill Curran, Gardner Jolley, Stephen Morris, Kent Robison, Julien Sourwine, Steven Walther, and Roger Detweiler, our Executive Director.

I appreciate your being here, gentlemen. We thank you very much.

Present here with us today, we also have some members of the County Bar. The officers, Sally Loehrer, Treasurer; John O'Reilly, Secretary. Is that Bill Skupa?

**MR. SKUPA:**

Yes.

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

Bill Skupa, Vice President. Paul Schofield sends his regrets. He is unable to be with us today.

I would now like to introduce a number of our Federal, State and Local officers who are with us here today.

Senator Howard Cannon, United States Senator; Richard Bryan, Attorney General; Al Levy, City Commissioner; Ron Lurie, City Commissioner; Bill Swackhamer, Secretary of State; Bruce Woodbury, County Commissioner; Loretta Bowman, County Clerk; Manny Cortez, Chairman of the County Commission; David Canter, County Commissioner; Jack Petitti, County Commissioner; Woodrow Wilson, County Commissioner; Dick Ronzone, County Commissioner; and Thalia Dondero, County Commissioner.

We also wish to acknowledge the presence of the members of County Government who have been especially helpful to us for preparing for this ceremony. Bruce Spaulding, the County

Manager; Joe Denny; Pat Mulroy; and Margie Purdue who participated intimately in helping us structure the ceremony.

I would like to introduce to you, starting on your right, my extreme left, the members of the State and Federal and Local judiciary. I think I have a complete list, but they are not in order.

We have on my far left Harry E. Claiborne, Chief Judge of the United States District Court; Roger D. Foley, United States District Court; U.S. Magistrate Phil Pro; United States Bankruptcy Judge Lloyd George.

Howard Babcock is not able to be with us today, but did wish me to wish Tom Steffen and his family all of the best and happiness for today.

Jim Brennan of our local District Court; Carl J. Christensen; Paul Goldman; Stephen Huffaker; Robert Legakes; John Mendoza; Jim Thompson from the Second Judicial District Court; and Michael Wendell.

With us also from the Justice and Municipal Courts are—did I miss Carl Christensen? Oh, Llewellyn Young. I'm sorry, Lew. Lew Young, and Charles Thompson.

Present also from the Justice and Municipal Courts are Jim Bixler, the Justice Court; Dow Chenoweth of the Justice Court of Pahrump; Jim Jensen. He was going to be here and apparently was unable to be.

Jim Kelly from North Las Vegas Justice Court; John McGroarty, Las Vegas Township Justice Court. Richard Minor from Reno was going to be here; apparently he didn't make it.

Clifford Segerblom from Boulder City; Reginald Tabony; Earle White from Las Vegas Justice Court.

Have I omitted anybody? Dan Ahlstrom. Very good. Earle White; did I get Earle White? He is over there. Hi, Earle, how are you?

At this time, I would also like to mention our speakers from whom you will be hearing shortly.

Senator James I. Gibson; Father John McVeigh of St. Anne's Catholic Church; Anna Peterson, the Clark County Court Administrator; Kathy List, our lovely First Lady; Harry Reid, long-time friend of Tom's who will be a speaker with us today; and our illustrious Governor, the Honorable Robert List.

At this time, we will begin the formal proceedings, but, first, Father McVeigh, would you give the invocation, please. If you will stand, please.

**FATHER McVEIGH:**

We would like to share the meaningful prayer composed by

Archbishop Carroll of the Carroll Family of Carrollton, Maryland, The Prayer for Civil Authorities.

Oh, Lord, the whole world is full of Your glory. We commend our country to Your merciful care that we may follow Your guidance and live in peace. Give to the President of these United States, to the Governor of this State, and to all in authority wisdom and strength to know and to do Your Holy will.

Fill them with the love of truth, honesty, and righteousness. Make them always remember that they are Your servants, called to lead and serve this Nation, this State, in the fear of Your righteous judgments.

In a special way, we ask Your blessings upon Justice Designate Thomas Steffen, upon his family, also upon the members of the Supreme Court of this, our State of Nevada.

We ask all of this through Jesus Christ, Your Son and Lord who lives and governs with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

Will you remain standing and we will ask Judge Earle White of the Las Vegas Justice Court to lead in the Pledge of Allegiance.

(The Pledge of Allegiance was given.)

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

At this time, I would like to call upon our Governor Robert List, the appointing authority, to address us on behalf of the State of Nevada.

**GOVERNOR LIST:**

Thank you very much, Mr. Chief Justice. Members of the Supreme Court, Members of the Bench and the Bar and Friends.

It's a very distinct and a very special pleasure for Kathy and for me to be here on this occasion. It's a seldom occurrence that the Governor has an opportunity and a privilege and responsibility of making a selection to our high court, and today marks such an occasion for me and we celebrate today, I think, the expansion of the court to a new dimension.

Having spent much of my adult life in the practice of law in Carson City, I feel a very special kinship for the Supreme Court. I recall growing up as a young man in high school—in fact, I think I have known every Supreme Court Justice for over thirty years now—and I recall as a young man, there was

one particular justice that had a special influence upon me and upon my life, as well as upon this State, and I've never had an opportunity until this moment to say so publicly.

His name was Milton Badt. Justice Badt was, in my mind, the epitome of wisdom and thoughtfulness as a writer and as a scholar, as a witty and a generous individual.

For me, he made an impression that I have never forgotten, the kind of an individual that we seek on our high court.

And over the years since then, after I went through law school at his urging, came back and attended the court as a District Attorney and then as Attorney General and finally as Governor, I have come to know each of those justices as personal friends and colleagues, and I want to say today that I have an enormous amount of respect for the integrity of the institution of our State Supreme Court.

And in a sense, we celebrate that today, as well, as this investiture ceremony takes place. This is an important moment in a historical, constitutional sense for our State, for it happens very seldom.

Today, as we swear in that newest member, I think it would be well to reflect for a moment upon the respect that each of us as citizens and as individuals, and for those of us who are members of the Bar, hold for our Court.

Tom Steffen, in my judgment, is truly the right man at the right time for our Court. He's been a good lawyer, he is a tough advocate, practiced for some seventeen years. He is a bright man and I think it's fair to say a brilliant practitioner of the law.

He possesses those unique qualities, in my judgment, which have to do with his temperament, his fairness, his intellectual capacity, his devotion to the public good that for so long have characterized the forty-one brethren who preceded Tom Steffen to the bench of our Supreme Court.

No appointment of any Governor has a greater significance than the one that such a Governor makes to this particular Court. As a craftsman, Tom Steffen understands the dynamics of a courtroom. He is a legal scholar and a practitioner who, in my judgment, has no superior in the State of Nevada. He has distinguished himself in the courtroom and in the civil practice of the law.

He also has been recognized as a director of the Nevada Trial Lawyers Association by his colleagues for his skillfulness. As a judicial philosopher, he believes in restraint. He believes that the judge is on the bench to interpret the law, not to make it, and he also shares with me a strong, and I think with our people a strong and a tight judicial system when it comes to

criminal justice, to the protection of the public. He understands the need for swift and for sure justice at the same time.

Nevadans subject our Court and our judicial system, I suppose, to great scrutiny and also to the individuals who serve within that system. We remain in close personal contact with those who go on the bench. We know them as justices certainly, but we also know them as friends, as neighbors, as churchgoers and Little League coaches and family men and community leaders.

In Nevada, our Supreme Court justices aren't off on the top of some mountain or in an ivory tower. They are right across the street and we know them as down-to-earth people.

And so as Tom goes to Carson City, and as he becomes a judge, he will be there for more purposes than simply to judge the facts and the evidence before him. A justice really becomes, in my estimation, a reflection of the community, of the people that have bestowed in him the faith and the trust and the confidence, and I believe that he's going to reflect the very best characteristics of the citizens of the State of Nevada.

Ethically, intellectually, and as a caring individual, Tom Steffen is a very special and a very unique and a very gifted human being. He is a first-class guy, and as he joins the Court, we have in Tom a man who knows the people of Nevada, an individual who loves our State and, in my judgment, he is going to be a great credit to this State and to the bench and to the Bar.

So today, we join with all of you in wishing Tom and LaVona and their five children, Elizabeth, Catherine, Conrad, John and Jennifer, the very best of luck as he begins his new career.

And to you, Tom, and on behalf of all the people of Nevada, I say to you that we express to you our confidence and our trust in your good judgment.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

Thank you.

GOVERNOR LIST:

With that, I would like to present to Tom my Certificate of Appointment as a Supreme Court Justice. Congratulations. You better keep that.

(Applause.)

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Now that he has the commission, I suppose it is appropriate for me to introduce him to you.

On my immediate right is our new colleague Tom Steffen, and his wife LaVona and his youngest daughter Jennifer. And seated in the staff box—I guess they are appropriately called staff, aren't they, Tom?—we have David and Sherida Steffen, his son and daughter-in-law, Cass and Tod Thompson, his daughter and son-in-law, and Elizabeth Callister, his daughter.

At this point in time, I would like also to call upon Anna Peterson who will speak to us now as a representative of the Judicial Branch of Government. Anna is our Clark County Court Administrator.

Ms. PETERSON:

Chief Justice Gunderson, Governor List, Honorable Judges and Guests.

Our family has been close friends with the Steffen family since we came to Nevada twenty years ago.

We share many things, a similar way of life, a strong concern for upholding the law and a love for the people of Nevada, for that is what has kept us here.

I have known Tom as a church leader, a father, husband, friend and professional attorney. I have never known him in any of these roles to be other than honest, fair and yet compassionate. He is exacting in his own life and has high expectations for others. He has an extremely educated conscience and it serves him well.

Tolstoy wrote "Where is there any book of the law so clear to each man as the one written on the heart?"

Tom, you have earned the admiration of each one of us as an attorney because of your legal skills, your evil temperament—(laughter from the audience)—your even temperament, and your composure in the courtroom. You have shown respect for the opposing counsel, as well as their witnesses and your own clients.

But you have earned and command in each of us today a higher and greater respect for you as a man. Your infectious laugh and sense of humor, your enviable vocabulary. For instance, when a neighbor gives you an orange, he simply says, "have an orange."

But when the transaction is entrusted to a lawyer, and especially Tom Steffen, he adopts this form in Steffanese, "I hereby give and convey to you all my estate, right, title and interest in and to said orange, together with its rind, skin, juice, pulp and pits; and including all the rights and advantages therein, to-wit, the full power to bite, suck or otherwise to cut, slice the same or to eat or to give away with or without consideration and



with or without the rind, skin, juice, pulp, or pits, anything hereinbefore and hereinafter to the contrary notwithstanding.”

We admire your absolute integrity and your loyalty to the judicial process, even though judges do have their problems.

Like the two judges who are driving home together at night, when they were stopped by a policeman. They were duly charged and when their case came up for hearing the next day, they agreed that they each should leave the bench, in turn, to have his case heard by the other.

The first went to trial, pleaded guilty and was fined ten dollars plus costs. When they changed places, the second judge, after pleading guilty, was shocked to receive a fine of fifty dollars plus costs.

“That’s a bit unfair,” he complained. “I only fined you ten dollars.”

“I know,” was the reply, “but there is just too much of this sort of thing going on. Why, this is the second case we have had today.”

Being a judge is a powerful position. I have learned about judges on a daily basis the last few years and I have found it to be a lonely profession. Relationships with friends and fellow attorneys must change as they appear before you in the courtroom.

Many decisions are left solely and finally to the judge. Most cases are not easy. Like the one brought to Lincoln: A young man had killed both father and mother and then pled for mercy on the grounds that he was an orphan.

I have come to appreciate the stress and strain of year after year listening to the heartbreak and tragedy in people’s lives. I became acutely aware of this when helping a judge remove his robe after a heavy sentencing one morning. He was wringing wet, but he quietly and sadly said, speaking of the defendant, “I wish he were not so young.”

I have learned that nothing makes a judge prouder than to have an attorney come well prepared, on time, organized and sincerely concerned about his client.

A judge delights in seeing the profession of law practiced properly.

I think I should also report to you, before you move up north and become indoctrinated, how hard the judges in this district are working.

When I first came to District Court about eight years ago, they were hearing approximately one hundred or so jury trials each year. The first three months of this year, they have completed one hundred thirteen jury trials with fifteen thousand citizens being summoned for jury.

As Pascal stated, "Justice and power must be brought together so that whatever is just must be powerful and whatever is powerful is just."

Because Tom Steffen feels the great spirit of the law, as well as the letter of the law, he can maintain his balance.

Why would Tom or any other man or woman want to be a judge, leave a lucrative and busy law practice and become a jurist with poorer pay and a fixed income, often being criticized by the public and enduring this tremendous strain?

The answer can only be they love the law and they love freedom and they know there is no freedom without the law.

During the voir dire questioning of a jury, an attorney often asks this prospective juror, "If you were the defendant in this case, would you like a panel of jurors just like yourself to sit in judgment?" Sometimes there are silent hesitations where we must often judge ourselves.

In talking with Tom, since this appointment was announced, he has expressed his awareness of the awesome responsibility of being a judge. Over two thousand years ago, a great Athenian philosopher named Socrates described the sacred attributes that a judge must have. He must hear courteously and serve wisely. He must consider soberly and decide impartially.

This newly-appointed Supreme Court member will not have any difficulty carrying out any of these guidelines, and I can say without hesitation, if ever I have a case in court, I pray the judge to be one just like Thomas L. Steffen.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

Thank you, Ms. Peterson. Now, I would like to call on Harry Reid, Tom's long-time friend and fellow student, to speak on behalf of the friends and family.

**MR. REID:**

Governor List, Chief Justice Gunderson, Members of the Federal and State Judiciary, Leaders of the Bar, Friends and Guests.

Tom Steffen is my friend. We have been friends for a very long time, for over twenty years. I could stand up here and tell you funny stories about Tom's education and his background. I am not going to.

We're here today for the investiture of Thomas L. Steffen as a justice of the Nevada Supreme Court. It is a position fraught with honor, with power and with duty.

I'm going to talk to you about that honor, that power, and especially about that duty. I'm going to tell you why Tom Steffen is the right man to bear the burdens of this office.

Our system of government is premised upon subservience to the rule of law. It is the courts in their role as interpreters and impartial arbitrators of that law who must make that system function.

Tom Steffen is a fair man, he is a conscientious man. He is perhaps the hardest working man I've ever known. He will bring those qualities to the Nevada Supreme Court. He will need them.

It will be his duty to stand at the center of our society, to balance not just right against wrong, but right against right and to make a principled choice between them.

We place upon our courts the terrible burden of making that choice. It is to our credit that we have relegated that decision to law rather than to force, but if the system is to function, someone must bear the responsibility for applying that law.

Tom Steffen will be one of those men. By assuming his judicial robes, he assumes our burdens. By becoming a judge, he becomes our conscience. By stepping onto the bench, he steps into the harsh spotlight of scrutiny and of criticism. Perhaps he'll not always be right, but he'll always be honorable and fair and compassionate.

Perhaps you'll not always agree with him, but you'll never think that Tom Steffen was anything other than the finest choice for this job. His decisions will be reasoned, lucid and intelligent, because that's the kind of man Tom Steffen is.

He worked his way through law school while supporting a family. He was an editor of our Law Review. He brings to the court a breath of knowledge in the area of civil practice equaled by very few attorneys anywhere.

He is a decent, loving, thoughtful husband and father.

The Bible says, "And thou shalt provide out of all the people, able men such as fear God, men of truth, and let them judge the people at all seasons and they shall bear the burden with thee."

Tom Steffen is an able man, he is a man of truth, he will bear our burden well.

(Applause.)

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Thank you very much, Mr. Reid. At this point, I think I should also acknowledge the presence of two other officers of the court system, our District Attorney, Bob Miller, and our United States Attorney, Lamond Mills, who are also with us.

I have a letter from Congressman Jim Santini which I would like to read to you.

“Dear Tom: I wish I could be with you today to personally congratulate you and share in the excitement as you take up the gavel as the newest member of the Nevada Supreme Court.

“Tom, I am certain your experience and special insight will enhance this already prestigious judicial body. We are lucky to have a man of your caliber to count on to serve our State.

“Ann and I send our best wishes to you and LaVona on this special day. Congratulations and good luck. James D. Santini, Member of Congress.”

And now, it will be my pleasure to administer the oath of office to Tom on behalf of the court. Before doing so, I wish to introduce the members of the court to you.

Starting at my left, Senior Justice David Zenoff, Justice Charles Springer, Justice John Mowbray, Justice Noel Manoukian.

And now at this time I would like to ask the senior member of our court to make a little presentation to Tom on behalf of the court.

**JUSTICE MOWBRAY:**

The chief justice asked me to present the miniature seal of the court to our new justice and, of course, I am honored to do so.

I want to second all the accolades that are made about Tom today and if I might just make this little statement.

It reminds me of a year ago last July I attended the Chief Justice's Conference in Anchorage. The Lord Chief Justice of the United Kingdom was there and spent the week with us.

I got to meet him and visit with him. He was in the RAF in World War II. I heard this statement made and I wanted to ask him if it was true, because of the typical British understatement about the selection of their judges.

I said, “Lord Lane, is it true in the selection of your judges that you say, ‘Give us a man who is a gentleman and if he knows a little law, so much the better.’ ”

He says, “that's correct, we don't want any clever devils on our courts.”

Tom Steffen is a gentleman and he knows plenty of law. He is an esteemed scholar, he is courageous, has convictions and understanding. I know he'll have a great career in the court. We welcome you, Tom.

This is the court's seal, Fiat Justitia. I said, “Chief Justice, what does that mean?” He says, “That is Justice by Fiat.”

We looked it up in the Black's Dictionary and it says “Let Justice Be Done.”

Tom, I'm pinning this on you.

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

Thank you, Justice Mowbray. Senior member of our court, Justice John Mowbray, has just bestowed on the man who is about to become our newest member a small, gold pin and, as Justice Mowbray has indicated, engraved on that pin is the motto selected by our court over a century ago, *Fiat Justitia, Let Justice Be Done*.

It seems to me that it's fitting, indeed, that Tom Steffen should be chosen to bear that motto, for he is a man who's learned in the law and imbued with a sense of fairness and justice. But there is more to our motto and I believe there is more to Tom Steffen than a mere affection for justice.

Those who are here, who are familiar with legal history, know that the full phrase from which the motto was taken, a maxim of Roman law imported into the common law in 1770, by Lord Mansfield, in the celebrated case of *Rex V. Wilkes*, was *Fiat Justitia Ruat Coelum*, "But Let Justice Be Done Though the Heavens Fall."

And Tom Steffen is a man of integrity, a man of principle, a man of strength and character to do justice, even when doing so may not meet with popular approval and even when there may be a cost to himself.

Our State and our court are very fortunate, in my opinion, that attorneys of Tom Steffen's caliber have shown themselves willing to enter judicial service.

Our State and our court are fortunate, also, that the Nevada Commission on Judicial Selection pursued its duties with dedication and submitted three superbly qualified attorneys to the Governor as nominees from whom to make his final choice.

I am sure the Governor is very proud of his three appointees on the selection commission today, one of whom is with us, Steve Morris, an appointee from the Board of Governors, and I'm sure the Board of Governors are proud of their three appointees, also.

For my part, I am extremely grateful to them. The whole court is, I'm sure, and especially I'm grateful to my colleague, Justice Charles Springer, for accepting the task of chairing the Selection Commission in my place.

This is an important day for Nevada, for our court. It's a memorable day for Tom Steffen and his family. It is a day of great accomplishment for the Selection Commission, and I'm sure that it will prove to be a day of pride and great satisfaction to our Governor Robert List.

And now, if I may, on behalf of my brethren, on behalf of the Supreme Court of the State of Nevada, I will administer the oath of office to Tom Steffen, our friend.

Tom, raise your right hand and repeat after me: I, state your name, do solemnly swear.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

I, Thomas L. Steffen, do solemnly swear.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

That I will support, protect and defend.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

That I will support, protect and defend.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

The constitution and government of the United States.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

The constitution and government of the United States.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

And the constitution and government of the State of Nevada.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

And the constitution and government of the State of Nevada.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Against all enemies whether domestic or foreign.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

Against all enemies whether domestic or foreign.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

And that I will bear true faith, allegiance and loyalty to the same.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

And that I will bear true faith, allegiance and loyalty to the same.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Any ordinance, resolution or law.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

Any ordinance, resolution or law.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Of any state notwithstanding.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

Of any state notwithstanding.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

And that I will well and faithfully perform.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

And that I will well and faithfully perform.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

All of the duties of the office.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

All of the duties of the office.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Of Justice of the Supreme Court.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

Of Justice of the Supreme Court.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Of the State of Nevada.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

Of the State of Nevada.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

Of which I am about to enter.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN;

Of which I am about to enter.

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

So help me God.

JUSTICE DESIGNATE STEFFEN:

So help me God.  
(Applause.)

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

I would like now to escort Justice Steffen to the floor and ask the robing committee, composed of Bar President Paul Parraguirre and Steve Walther, a member of the Board of Governors from Reno, Nevada, to participate in robing Justice Steffen in the robe of his predecessor, Justice Cameron Batjer.

JUSTICE STEFFEN:

Probably won't fit.

MR. PARRAGUIRRE:

It's not often we get to robe a Justice of the Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Gunderson, the Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court, Governor List, judges, distinguished guests, and especially to the relatives and friends of Justice Steffen.

As President of the State Bar of Nevada, I am indeed proud and privileged to have been extended an invitation to participate in your induction ceremonies here today of Justice Steffen.

The warm, personal and professional friendship and experiences that we have had and enjoyed since your admission to the bar in 1965, makes this occasion especially gratifying to me.

Throughout your entire professional career, you have always demonstrated the highest professional ethics and standards, and during the years that I have known you as an attorney, you have earned the friendship and respect of your fellow attorneys and adversaries.

The members of the State Bar of Nevada and the people of the State of Nevada will be beneficiaries of your industries, impartiality, fairness and the administration of justice.

On behalf of the State Bar of Nevada, it is my pleasure to present to you, Justice Steffen, this gavel in honor of your office.

Congratulations and the best of wishes to you.  
(Applause.)

CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:

And now I would like to ask Justice Steffen to respond to all of those glowing words that we have said about him with a few impressions of his own. Tom.



**JUSTICE STEFFEN:**

Thank you, Chief Justice Gunderson. My fellow Justices, Governor List, Senator Cannon, honored members of the judiciary, distinguished officials, and representatives of State and Local Government, officials of the State Bar of Nevada, Board of Bar Governors, the Clark County Association and the Nevada Trial Lawyers Association, and distinguished and honored guests.

I am deeply grateful to each of you for your attendance and your participation. I am especially grateful to Governor List, to Harry Reid, and to Anna Peterson for their kind remarks.

It is my hope that I will fare half as well on the occasion of my funeral.

I also appreciate the beautiful invocation rendered by Father McVeigh, and also the benediction that will be pronounced by Senator Gibson at the conclusion of this program.

During this past week as this occasion drew nearer, my thoughts and feelings drifted closer to those special people in my life who could not be here today. As some few of you may know, I was raised in a small, rural community in northern Utah. To move from the obscurity, comparative obscurity of Tremonton, Utah, to the Nevada Supreme Court is a form of fulfillment which makes me wish in the worst way that I could have with me on this occasion two great parents who have passed beyond the veil of death.

It would be typical of them to be very proud and grateful on this occasion. To them I owe my life and most of whatever desirable qualities I may possess.

And I also thought of an older brother who was named Outstanding Senior Boy at Bear River High School who planned a career in law. He never went to law school, however, as his life was cut short over Germany during World War II.

These thoughts made me realize again that all of the cherished freedoms, including the right to seek high judicial office, have been paid for dearly by countless thousands who died in battle.

We all share the obligation to preserve those freedoms which I fear far too often we take for granted.

Now, lest many of you feel I am warming up to a lengthy address that will deprive you of lunch, let me just make a comment or two about the appellate process.

Someone has said in jest that an appeal is where you ask one court to show its contempt for another court. I'm confident none of our trial judges have ever harbored such a thought.

It is, however, a judicial fact of life that appeals result in

decisions which are rarely pleasing to all parties. The appellate process and function, however, is not to please but rather to arrive at correct decisions.

Such decisions are not spawned by computers. They are the product of the refiner's fire, the process of give and take and, yes, honest controversy among the justices. The collegial process demands and deserves nothing less.

In a sense it is analogous to the adversary system used at trial, in that the ultimate decision must reflect the full and fair evaluation of all the issues and positions.

I suppose what I'm trying to say is that we should expect honest and forthright differences among the justices of this court in order to accomplish the purposes of our judicial system, and I trust that those differences will not serve to mischaracterize either the system or the relationship among the justices.

Permit me to illustrate the point with a brief anecdote. The scene is a compartment in a train travelling through Czechoslovakia during World War II. In the compartment are an elderly woman, a beautiful young woman, a German officer and a Rumanian soldier.

The train enters a tunnel and the compartment is engulfed in darkness. There is a sound of a kiss and then a vigorous slap. The train emerges into the light and the German officer is nursing a black eye.

The elderly woman thinks to herself, "My, what a good character that young woman has." And the young woman thinks to herself, "Isn't it odd that the German would kiss the old woman rather than me."

The German officer says to himself, "That Rumanian is a smart one, he steals a kiss and I get hit." And the Rumanian soldier says to himself, "I'm a smart fellow, I kissed the back of my hand, hit the German officer and get away with it."

I suppose the point I'm trying to make is that oftentimes in life things aren't quite what they would otherwise appear to be.

In conclusion, may I again sincerely thank all of you for being here and I would truly be remiss if I failed to again thank Governor List, the members of the Judicial Selection Commission, my sweet wife and children, and the many friends who have supported my candidacy on the court.

I am grateful for your confidence. I accept this challenge and I accept this position as a sacred trust and pledge that I will do my level best to serve honorably and effectively.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

In closing, I would like, first of all, to mention again that the Clark County Bar Association is graciously sponsoring a reception at the Lillie Langtry Room of the Golden Nugget Hotel immediately following the ceremony, and they're going to have a lunch, I believe, in the nature of some very substantial hors d'ouvres, so those of you that care to attend will need not miss lunch as you avail yourselves the opportunity of extending your felicitations to Justice Steffen and his family.

We will try to get him over there right away so that they can all be in a little reception line as you enter. So the staff will move him out and by the time you get there, he should be in position.

In conclusion, I would like to ask Senator James I. Gibson to give the benediction.

**SENATOR GIBSON:**

Dear heavenly Father, once again we marvel at the blessing of our way of life and our system of government in this land. On this great occasion for our State, we're appreciative of the fact that we're able to participate in these important events and to have an opportunity to feel the spirit of them and to perceive the importance of them.

We're so grateful to be citizens of this great Country and to be residents of this great State where we're able to have this opportunity to an extent that is not possible in many other places.

We wish to express also our thanks for our system of government which brings into service great and dedicated men such as Justice Steffen, where they are willing at sacrifice of their plans and talents even to have the opportunity to serve the people that they serve in this State.

As Justice Steffen dons the robes of the Supreme Court Justice, we seek Thy blessing on him that he will be able to manifest in his service on the court the many attributes and characteristics that have been spoken of here in the interest of the citizens of this great State and in the interest of the laws that he will help to interpret and establish in this State.

We seek Thy blessing on him that he may have insight and wisdom and perception, that he might have Thy guidance and inspiration throughout his tenure on the court.

We are grateful to know that he is there and we commend him to his brethren on the court with the firm conviction that he will bring great credit and service to that important body and our State.

God bless his family with him that they will gain much from this experience, that they might give to him their full support and endorsement and that they might sustain him in his activities as our newest justice.

Watch over them all in this new and great adventure for them and, as we close, we seek Thy blessing and benediction on all that's been done here, that it might find favor in Thy sight and in a continuous interest in Thy concern, and we ask this humbly in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CHIEF JUSTICE GUNDERSON:**

Thank you, Senator Gibson. The court will be in recess until the call of the court.

(The ceremony was concluded.)

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#### REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Sharon J. Thielman, hereby certify that the foregoing transcript constitutes a full, true and accurate record of the proceedings.

**SHARON J. THIELMAN**  
CSR No. 73, and Notary Public