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### Mr. Secretary

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## MR. SECRETARY

JOHN W. WADE†

If you look at any good modern dictionary for the definition of the word secretary, you will find that it has three separate meanings. They run like this: (1) a person employed to handle correspondence and take care of routine and detail work for an organization, (2) an officer of an organization who keeps the records of the organization, and (3) an officer of state who manages the administration of a government, an organization or a department.

These definitions are expected to be mutually exclusive and not to overlap. When Frank Ransom Strong becomes secretary of an organization, however, it takes all three of them to describe his functions and his services. I can testify as to that from personal experience insofar as the Order of the Coif is concerned. And from a more limited experience and from widespread hearsay I find it also to be true of the three-year period when he served as Secretary of the Association of American Law Schools (1957-1959). Following the latter service he was elevated to the Association President for the year 1960.

One of the former presidents of the Order of the Coif remarked to a number of friends at a meeting once that the greatest thing he had done for the Order was to persuade Frank Strong to accept the position of Secretary when Leon Green decided that it was time for him to retire; and we all nodded agreement though he had been one of the more distinguished presidents.

Since 1928 there have been seventeen presidents of Coif (including Sam Thurman, who took office last December). During that same period, there have been four secretaries (including Frank Strong, who has occupied the position since 1970). A new president flashes across the horizon every three years, like a meteor. The secretary provides a steady light and warmth, like the sun.

Frank Strong has provided guidance and steadiness to three presidents, and they are all grateful to him. During his incumbency, Coif successfully weathered its worst crisis and the greatest challenge

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† President, Order of the Coif, (1973-76); Distinguished Professor of Law, Vanderbilt University; Earl F. Nelson Professor of Law (1976-77), University of Missouri.

to its effectiveness and even its existence. This was the strong egalitarian movement, particularly among the students, with its refusal to recognize, or to permit others to recognize, any attainment of excellence in scholastic achievement. Due in large measure to his steady influence, Coif has maintained its emphasis upon recognition of scholarly excellence, while making reasonable adjustments to avoid rigidity and permit flexibility.

During his incumbency, the Order revised its original constitution (one that was almost amateurish in language and organization) to one that was professionally prepared and appropriate for use as a constitution for years to come. Years of teaching constitutional law helped in accomplishing that result, you will surely agree.

These have been the two big accomplishments during the Strong secretaryship. There have been other important decisions, of course. There have also been the amassing and organizing of customs and usage, both written and oral, according to the common law wont. There has been the patient, conscientious and, when necessary, persistent carrying on of communications with the national officers and the local chapters and other interested persons. There has been the meticulous keeping up with financial matters.

Through it all he has striven to instill in all concerned persons his own sense of perspective as to the mission of Coif. According to it, standards of excellence must not be compromised, and the Order was established and must be administered to promote the best interests of the law students.

During his career, Frank Strong has contributed much to a number of law schools. He has also contributed much to legal education in general. One of the more significant of his contributions has been through the superlative character of the services he has rendered as Secretary-Treasurer of the Order of the Coif.

It is a distinct privilege for me to be able to join in a minor way this festschrift in honor of Frank Strong and to express my admiration for him and his accomplishments.