

As best I can remember this is the third time I have spoken to Rotary . . . about once every decade. It has always been a thrill to do so. Today I have come to talk about an independent judiciary and teaching high school students to appreciate it.

service / good citizenship

I know its one day before spring break, two days before the final four, surely, you say, Heyburn could talk about the weather in ^{Naples or Destin} Florida or U of L recruiting. We judges are used to such reactions.

Charles Rostrom (circled) with an arrow pointing down

I am reminded of the story . . .

I am sorry to disappoint by appearing as a mere fed jud, not a --

At all levels of society institutions are under attack. One of those under attack is the judiciary. Judges by temperament, ethics and structure rarely respond to these attacks. The attacks have achieved some level of support for several reasons: (1) most people really do ^{not} understand the vital importance of an independent judiciary in their lives and (2) they do ^{not} understand how judges do their work.

Perhaps citizens misunderstand judges because the way we reach decisions is so foreign to them. Our role is admittedly anti-majoritarian in many respects. Our work runs counter to the basic precepts of pure popular democracy. At the same time our role is essential for our democracy to flourish. The primary misunderstanding is that judges ^{might} decide cases based on our own personal views; or that we ^{might} place our personal views above those of the majority or above the legislature or executive.

Seeing these kinds of misunderstandings was the genesis of the idea that judges might begin a process of personally changing these attitudes at their inception; that is, among our young citizens who are in the midst of their public education. The result was that on one day recently 26 federal and state judges visited in 21 Jefferson County high schools, taught 34 classes to over 1,000 students. It worked out so well that we hope to make it an annual event.

Service