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Cliff Taylor Introduction
Grand Forum
September 25, 2007
By Arend D. Lubbers

It must have been 1997, yet it might be 1998, I accepted an invitation to attend a breakfast meeting. I remember neither the time nor occasion. I do remember the speaker, Justice Cliff Taylor, of the Michigan Supreme Court. I doubt if I accepted the invitation to specifically hear Cliff Taylor speak. After listening to him that morning, I would have. I'm here because he is here, and obviously this large audience feels the way I do.

Cliff has little choice about accepting an invitation to speak to a Grand Valley audience. Lucille Taylor, his wife only has to say "Cliff, I think you should speak at Grand Valley," and he will find a time to do it. Lucille is Chair of the Board of Control at the university. Combine that with spousal influence, and it is a "done deal."

What has been so pleasing for us connected to the university is the way Lucille and Cliff have adopted the place since her appointment to the Board. You would think they were co-chairs of the Alumni Association, and charter members of all the booster clubs, the way they participate and show genuine interest; even though Cliff is a graduate of the University of Michigan and George Washington Law School in Washington, D.C.

My reason for being enthusiastic when I first heard Cliff speak was his clear judicial philosophy, his ability to relate it to the people's daily lives, and the humor interspersed with all the seriousness that comes with justice in a democracy. On that day he won my vote so long as he wants to remain on the Supreme Court. Though elections for Supreme Court Justices in Michigan are non-partisan, both parties become advocates for candidates they believe see life and the law as they do. Justice Taylor is more of a strict constructionist, and has associated himself with like-minded justices in their campaigns for election to the Supreme Court.

In 1997, Cliff was appointed to the Court by Governor John Engler to fill the unexpired term of Justice Dorothy Comstock Riley. In 1998, he was elected to fill the rest of her term. It was at the time of that race I was enticed by his speech to become his legal disciple. More important, John Engler didn't think it necessary to appoint a person with an Irish name to win a Supreme Court election.

Cliff served three years in the Navy, then became an assistant prosecuting attorney in Ingham County. He joined the firm of Denfield, Trimmer and Seelye, and eventually replaced the Seelye name with his own in the firm's title. During his 20 years of practice, his ratings on competence and character within his profession identified him as one of Michigan's best,

making him a natural for appointment to the Supreme Court when Justice Riley retired from that bench. Now, he has that extra pillow on his chair elevating him to Chief Justice. I now yield the podium to the boy from Flint, the man from Lansing, and the present Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court; the most Honorable Clifford W. Taylor.