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## CHAIR'S REPORT

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### HE COULD HAVE BEEN AN APPELLATE LAWYER. . . .

I recently read *The Boys in the Boat*, an inspiring true story by Daniel James Brown about the University of Washington's 1936 eight-oar crew team that won Olympic gold at Hitler's Berlin Olympics. Blending history, sport, and culture, Brown tells the tale of nine Depression-era, working class boys from the Pacific Northwest who overcome seemingly insurmountable personal hardships to master the mental and physical demands of collegiate rowing. After first conquering the elite teams of the East Coast, the boys burst onto the international scene and ended their collegiate careers by upsetting Hitler's vaunted German team in Berlin. Their story is compelling, but I found myself drawn to another character in the book—a visionary, eccentric British boatbuilder with the unforgettable name of George Yeoman Pocock.

Born in 1891, Pocock was the descendant of a long line of boatbuilders in England. From his father, he learned to carefully and meticulously hand-craft racing shells from pine, mahogany, and cedar. In 1910, he emigrated to the Pacific Northwest and took up boatbuilding along the shores of Lake Washington. He soon became a fixture in the loft of the University of Washington shell house, where he would impart his deep knowledge of the physics and biomechanics of rowing to scores of college oarsmen. In the meantime, orders for Pocock's finely-crafted shells poured in from nearly every collegiate rowing program across the country.

So what does George Yeoman Pocock have to do with the practice of appellate law, and what does appellate law have to do with Pocock? Well, consider the words Brown uses to describe Pocock and his craft:

- Pocock's shells were "unsurpassed for craftsmanship," so "elegant and

streamlined” that they commanded the same price as a brand-new GM LaSalle.

- “Pocock’s integrity, his craftsmanship, and above all else his honor were his lifeblood.”
- “He was well read in a variety of subjects—religion, literature, history, and philosophy . . . . The net effect was that for all his quiet humility the man’s wide-ranging knowledge and quiet eloquence commanded absolute respect.”
- Pocock’s “craftsmanship required thought, and thought required a quiet environment” in which he could achieve “more intimacy with the wood” that he shaped into racing shells.
- “Only when [a shell] fairly shimmered, when it seemed in its sleekness to be alive with the potential for speed, did Pocock pronounce the boat ready for use.”
- For Pocock, “the craft of building a boat was like religion. It wasn’t enough to master the technical details of it. You had to give yourself up to it spiritually; you had to surrender yourself absolutely to it. When you are done and walked away from the boat, you had to feel that you had left a piece of yourself behind in it forever, a bit of your heart.”

Can you now see some of the parallels between Pocock and those of us who are fortunate enough to dedicate our careers to the practice of appellate law? “Craftsmanship”

and “elegance”— aren’t those the words that we would choose to describe our briefs and the process of writing them? Shouldn’t we all strive for “integrity,” “honor,” “respect,” and a “quiet eloquence,” all of which make appellate lawyers the American legal profession’s equivalent of English barristers? And doesn’t Brown’s last passage capture the essence of what we do— surrender ourselves to the craft of written and oral advocacy, finishing each case with the feeling that we have left a piece of ourselves behind in it forever?

Like George Yeoman Pocock, we are fortunate to practice in a craft we love, one that requires much more than just a mastery of technical details. Sometimes it takes a person like Pocock— and the brilliance of a writer like Brown— to make us appreciate the craftsmanship, elegance, and quiet eloquence of what we strive for each and every day.

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