

Speech by Wright Dixon
to Wake County Bar
Assn. 12/14/94

CORNELIA MORRIS MCKIMMON TROTT

On September 6, 1911, Jim and Willa McKimmon had their first daughter, Cornelia, a pioneer as a female achiever in a man's world. She first exhibited one of her talents as an athlete when she began playing golf at the age of six. Later she would be a perennial champion for years. Her home course, Carolina here in Raleigh, has her as Club Champion for 10 years beginning

in 1952. She said it was more times than that before 1952. She also was City Champion for fifteen to twenty years. She once won the Tar Heels Ladies Championship in Pinehurst with a double-eagle on the eighteenth hole. She also was State Senior's Champion and had four holes-in-one during her career. She turned down local support for a pro career in golf as she had other things in mind.

She attended Murphy School here in Raleigh and then high school at the present Peace College, both being about two blocks from her home. While at Peace she won the school championship in tennis. At the age of fifteen her world changed when her father died, leaving her mother with five children to raise. Cornelia not only had to make her way in a man's world, but was faced with the genteel poverty that pervaded the nineteen thirties. After graduating from Peace, she attended Woman's College, now UNC Greensboro. It was said that she had wanted to be on the swimming team, but lacked enough money to buy a bathing suit. Upon graduation, and without money to pursue a legal career, she began teaching in Franklin, North Carolina. She then taught in Freemont, North Carolina and later was able to return home to teach in

Raleigh. Unwilling to give up on her goals, she began her legal education by reading law at night under a prominent lawyer, Mr. Wilbur Royster, here in Raleigh. Another student was Graham Foard "Buster" Trott, whom she later married in 1939, and from that marriage she had one son, William MacNider Trott, who practices here in Raleigh.

Upon passing the Bar Examination, she became the first female lawyer employed by the North Carolina Attorney General. During this period, she played on a girls basketball team here in Raleigh, scoring 40 points in one game. In 1948, while she was sitting on her Mother's porch on Blount Street minding her son, Billy Trott, an old acquaintance, Jim Poyner, stopped in his car and asked her if she would like to work with him in a title company on a part-time basis. She did and a new day in title-work came into being. Cornelia became the friend of young lawyers in North Carolina. Previously, Lawyers Title had been the only title insurance company in North Carolina. Well established, it required five years of title work before a lawyer could qualify to certify a title for insurance. To most young lawyers, in main World War Veterans, the new company meant a chance to compete.

In the years that followed, her expertise in real estate law increased. Matching that talent was that of an engaging business woman. Gracious, charming, and always interested in the welfare of others, she steadily increased business. Not given much to small talk, she got to the point quickly. Many a young lawyer with a title problem was given the solution by Cornelia and then a gentle reminder from her, "Now that we have solved this damn

problem, how about sending us some of your good title work."

Except one day a week, she never worked full time. Here she showed her executive ability. In a half a day, she did the work that took others a full day. The early concerns of employees of working for another woman quickly dissolved. Never tense or driven, she exhibited a personal interest in those working for her and delegated responsibility to them. They, in turn, found that going to work every morning with Cornelia was a pleasure.

In 1962, Lawyers Title recognized the inevitable and merged with Commercial Standard in North Carolina to handle a part of the State. Cornelia instilled her laid-back relaxed ways in the Lawyers Title operation and in 1964 Lawyers Title asked her to take over the whole State. Her domination in the market continued until 1973 when she retired from active participation. She remained as the Chairman of Lawyers Title of North Carolina and as a source of help and information until she died on August 18, 1994. Predeceased by her husband, she is survived by her son and four grandchildren: Hollister Wooten Trott (21), James McKimmon Trott (15), Elizabeth Yost Trott (8), and William MacNider Trott (5).

So, today we pay tribute to the memory of one who met adversity with courage, never lost sight of her goals, and gave joy and pleasure to her friends and associates. We were blessed by her presence, encouraged by her friendship and thoughtfulness, and saddened by her going.