

DEATH OF CHARLES ELMORE CROPLEY,
CLERK OF THE COURT.

SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1952.

Present: MR. CHIEF JUSTICE VINSON, MR. JUSTICE BLACK, MR. JUSTICE REED, MR. JUSTICE FRANKFURTER, MR. JUSTICE DOUGLAS, MR. JUSTICE JACKSON, MR. JUSTICE BURTON, MR. JUSTICE CLARK, and MR. JUSTICE MINTON.

THE CHIEF JUSTICE said:

"With deep personal sorrow the Court learned of the death of its Clerk, Charles Elmore Copley, on June 17, 1952.

"Born in 1894, Mr. Copley lived in Washington throughout his life. At the age of 13 he began his career with this Court as a page boy. For two years, during 1911 and 1912, he left the Court to work in the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian Institution. However, in 1913, he returned as an Assistant Clerk. On June 6, 1927, he was appointed Clerk. He served in this capacity until his death.

"Charles Elmore Copley loved and revered the Court. He brought to his office a degree of thoroughness and courteous dignity seldom found today. These qualities won for him the respect and friendship of the Court, its staff, and of lawyers and litigants throughout the Nation. On the occasion of his fortieth anniversary with the Court in 1948, the American Bar Association Journal praised his 'long and distinguished service, for which many lawyers have been unceasingly grateful from the time they first stepped timidly and hesitantly into the office of the Clerk of this great Court.'

"It was a part of Mr. Copley's duties to furnish the Court with annual reports which reviewed the affairs of

his office. Countless expressions in these reports reflect the full measure of his devotion, not just to his particular duties, but to the Court as an institution. He sometimes referred to his position as Clerk, not as his 'job,' but as his 'stewardship.' He spoke regularly of his 'inherent desire to preserve and perpetuate the traditions' of his office, of his respect and indebtedness to his associates for 'their loyal support in our common endeavor.' Even the various statistics, which he was called upon to recite to the Court, were phrased, not in the sterile language of the usual report, but in the language of one who cherishes a strong personal attachment to his duty. Thus, in commenting on the increased number of applications for membership to the Bar of the Court after 1945, Mr. Cropley wrote feelingly of the great number of lawyers who 'were done with the brutality of war,' who now sought the chance to serve 'in the Supreme legal forum where civilized process justly composes the conflicts of men.' On another occasion he wrote: 'The nearly forty years since I first came to the Court gleam with innumerable facets of memory—those are my cherished and enduring gifts from the Court.'

"Perhaps, among those memories, were the proceedings of the Court on Monday, June 6, 1927. Chief Justice Taft observed: 'The Court takes great pride in the history of the maintenance of the traditions of the Clerk's office and of the length of service of those who administered it.' And, in announcing Mr. Cropley's appointment as Clerk, the Chief Justice said: 'He has great familiarity with the duties of the office and carries with him to its headship the traditions that have secured such distinguished and useful service by . . . his predecessors, with the probability of a life of long usefulness.'

"Surely this expression of confidence has been fulfilled. With sorrow we must now mark the end of Mr. Cropley's 'stewardship,' but we may always take pride that he served so well, that he, himself, was always so proud to have opportunity to serve so well."