

June 12, 2013

Attorney General's Office employee memories of the Temple of Justice:

Jeanette Dieckman            I started work in the Temple in approximately 1962, so I have a lot of memories. The first was that it was a beautiful building, and I was always happy to work there. When I started working, I believe there were around 75 total employees in the office.

As for actual memories, I could go on indefinitely, but probably the most vivid was the earthquake sometime in the 70's. This was before the Nisqually quake. It happened around 8:30 a.m. I got under the door frame of one of the offices and rode it out. I watched a large crack go across the opposite wall while file cabinets and bookcases were swaying wildly. The glass doors on the bookcases kept opening and slamming shut and the hanging lights which were 3 or 4' long were swinging from side to side hitting the ceiling, and a few of the bottom panels flew out. At the moment the quake stopped there was a feeling of standing on air as if the floor had gone out from under me. I was on the second floor, and when we went out we saw that several of the large marble panels were loose, but I don't think that any of them fell. It was quite an experience, and when it was over the senior secretary grabbed my hand, said we're getting out of here, and took me to a bar for a drink (I probably shouldn't tell that, but after all these years who cares?).

I have many other fond, funny and lasting memories of the numerous people I worked with through the years. Also, there were some real characters who entered the door, including the man who would never take his hat off because his pet flea would get out, and the Evergreen student who would come by and show the latest outfit he had made, like his fur Tarzan one. He also would sometimes climb a tree along Capitol Blvd. to protest something or other. It was really an interesting place to work.

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Richard Heath            I began work as an assistant attorney general in 1969. For the first 10 years or so, my office was in the southeast corner of the basement of Temple of Justice. My office was small and crowded; it had a linoleum floor, a small window high on the wall, and a metal desk. One of my favorite memories of my time in the Temple of Justice was in 1977 or 1978 when Governor Ray sponsored a bill in the legislature to reduce the Attorney General's authority to that stated in the Constitution. Her goal was to allow agencies to hire private counsel to represent them. One of the Seattle television stations did a story on the impact of Governor Ray's proposed bill, and they used my office to show as an example of low cost Attorney General legal services, contrasting it with scenes from the offices of a large Seattle law firm. For many reasons, the bill did not pass, but I like to think my office played a small part as was one of the reasons.

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Edward E. Level I believe that I am the oldest surviving alumnus of the Attorney General's Office. I reported to Don' Eastvold's office in the Temple sometime in August, 1954, before moving to the Highways Division in 1954. I argued over thirty times before the Supremes in the Temple before leaving the A.G. office in 1964. I served under O'Connell as well as Eastvold. Edward E. Level

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William B. Collins I really love the place [Temple of Justice] and I've argued more cases there than anywhere else. I remember being in the reading room at 2:00 AM trying to find some magic case for my brief, listening to the building creak. I also remember the first time I ever saw the Temple. I was in my last quarter of law school and was working as an extern for the Federal trade Commission. One of the lawyers I was working with had some business in Olympia, and asked if I wanted to go along. I had never been to Olympia, so I went. After he did his business he gave me a little tour of the capital. That included going into the Temple and peering in to the Courtroom. It was amazing. At that time I never through I would actually have the opportunity to practice there. Wow. I also remember by first argument. I was so nervous that I forgot my notes, and Mike Madden had to run back to the GA building to get them for me.

I was also the first person to argue a case after the bench was remodeled from a straight bench to the curve that it has now. Justice Stafford noted that it was the first case after the remodel and asked me a to say a few words about it. After I did so, he said "at least you didn't say you hope the court isn't as wooden as the bench is."