

# The Golden Rule

by George W. Shanks

The law is the embodiment of society's collective wisdom and experience in the ethical treatment of its members. No precept is more fundamental than the golden rule. Various stated, it has been recognized by the world's great religions, philosophies, and philosophers over the four thousand years of recorded history. It bears repeating, in the words of Pittacus of Mytilene, one of the rule's earliest adherents: "Do not to your neighbor what you would take ill from him."

Acting as an advocate is always a balancing act between a client's legitimate objectives and an attorney's place in the universe. As soon as your client's representation takes you beyond the doors of your office, how you represent your client and how you behave yourself become factors in your professional persona. Your behavior will color your practice and your image held by colleagues, the courts, and the clients you will represent in the future, all for better or for worse. The more clients you have, the more time you practice, and the more contentious your causes, the more the golden rule needs to be your watchword.

The Senior Lawyers Conference has studied, discussed, debated, and pontificated over the perceived problems surrounding collegiality and professionalism that confront modern lawyers. We are no closer to a quick fix. But we can commend to our colleagues the suggestion that each day, before setting out on the challenges du jour, you reflect upon the soundness of the golden rule. Resolve that your efforts will be ennobling to the profession as well as beneficial to your causes.

This issue of *Virginia Lawyer* contains some of that collective wisdom and experience. Frank O. Brown Jr., the SLC's publications editor, has assembled a remembrance of Ken McFarlane Smith—the quintessential personification of the golden rule—written by Smith's good friend, Virginia State Bar President-elect Manuel A. Capsalis; articles by Jack Burtch, immediate past chair of the SLC, and Rob Walker; and Brown's own history of the SS *Quanza* and a Virginia lawyer's role in saving souls from persecution in war-torn Europe. The articles make worthwhile reading. May they enrich your practice and brighten your day.



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