



ON THE FRONT COVER

HIS HONOUR JUDGE WILLIAM DIEBOLT

By His Honour Judge Norman Collingwood

William J. Diebolt was sworn in as the Chief Judge of the Provincial Court of British Columbia on October 5, 1989. He ended his distinguished term, slightly over the statutory five-year period, on February 1, 1995 when Chief Judge Robert Metzger succeeded him.

Bill's term as Chief Judge was marked by significant, rapid and progressive changes to the Court. Sixty-one new judges were appointed, many of whom were women, giving the Court the highest percentage of female judges in Canada. Not surprisingly, another first in Canada was the establishment of a Gender Bias Committee, now called the Equality Committee and broadened in scope to include gender, race and related matters. Truly a model for others to follow.

Bill was the driving force behind a phenomenal number of new programmes including, *inter alia*, trial coordination and computerized trial scheduling, the revision of the *Small Claims Act* and increasing the jurisdiction from \$3,000 to \$10,000 together with the adoption of pre-trial mediation through settlement conferences, as well as the institution of criminal disclosure courts. His energy seemed boundless as he worked to strengthen the credibility, integrity and independence of the Court.

Yet, despite his heavy workload, he invariably found time for each individual judge, whom in every sense he treated as an equal, listening to problems and suggestions with concern and interest. He involved himself in a host of extra-curricular activities that he believed would foster a greater appreciation in the public mind for the Court, all the while maintaining his strong family commitment to his devoted wife, Ginny, and their six children, who range in age from 12 to 23 years.

Bill was born on Christmas Day, 1939. Much to the surprise of his mother, Helen Diebolt, he timed his arrival so that he was the first baby born that Christmas in Vancouver. It is not known if Mother Diebolt was pleased to appear on the front page of the *Vancouver Sun* with baby Billy, but those who should know say that Bill welcomed that early experience with the press. Mother continued to be a proud supporter of her son until her untimely death shortly after Bill became Chief Judge.

Bill attended high school in Armstrong and graduated in 1958, having served as student council president and valedictorian. He obtained a Bachelor of Laws from UBC in 1971 and was called to the Bar on May 15, 1972 after completing his articles with the late Ron Bray, then at MacLeod, Small and Bray in Vancouver. Prior to his appointment as a Provincial Court Judge on October 17, 1977, he was a partner at Rogers, Hunter and Company, now Fulton and Company in Kamloops. Initially, he sat in various Interior courts, but in 1981 he was appointed the Administrative Judge for

the Vancouver Criminal Division at 222 Main Street, a position he held for six years. He is also a past president of the Provincial Court Judges' Association of British Columbia. In his dim distant past, he completed three years of articling as a chartered accountant, worked as a marketing representative for Texaco Canada Ltd., and demonstrated (it is said) a considerable expertise as a used car salesman.

Bill continues to serve his Court and the people of British Columbia, sitting as an ordinary everyday judge in the North Fraser Judicial Region, primarily in Burnaby. May all his future roads be smooth.

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