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COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT

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BEFORE THE COMMISSION ON JUDICIAL CONDUCT  
OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

In Re the Matter of:	)	
	)	
Honorable Ralph H. Baldwin	)	CJC No. 98-2695-F-69
Lakewood Municipal Court	)	
9315 Gravelly Lake Drive SW	)	STIPULATION, ORDER OF
Suite 203	)	CENSURE, AND RESIGNATION
Lakewood, WA 98499	)	
	)	

The Commission on Judicial Conduct and the Honorable Ralph H. Baldwin, Judge of the Lakewood Municipal Court, do hereby stipulate and agree as provided for herein. This stipulation shall not become effective until approved by the Washington Commission on Judicial Conduct.

The Commission on Judicial Conduct is represented in these proceedings by its counsel, Curtis M. Janhunen, and the Honorable Ralph H. Baldwin is represented by his attorney, Kurt M. Bulmer.

STIPULATED FACTS

1. The Honorable Ralph H. Baldwin, Respondent herein was at all times discussed herein, a Judge of the Lakewood Municipal Court, Lakewood, Washington.

2. On February 20, 1998, Respondent presided over the second and final day of a jury trial, City of Lakewood v. Janine Marie Ploegman, CR-9620. Ms. Ploegman was charged with driving while under the influence.

3. While waiting for the jury to complete its deliberations, Respondent left the court premises. Respondent returned some minutes later with a twelve-pack of beer.

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1           4.    Upon his return, Respondent offered beer to the  
2 Assistant City Attorney, defense attorney, and court  
3 administrator.  When the administrator declined, Respondent  
4 called her a "wimp" or words to the effect.  Respondent then,  
5 together with the defense attorney and Assistant City Attorney,  
6 consumed beer on court premises, located in the Lakewood City  
7 Hall, in violation of RCW 66.44.100 and in violation of City of  
8 Lakewood personnel policy 500-10 prohibiting the possession or  
9 use of alcohol on City premises.

10           5.    Following the completion of the jury's deliberations  
11 and the acceptance of its verdict of guilty of DUI over .15,  
12 Respondent then invited the members of the jury and both  
13 counsel to join Respondent in the jury room to drink beer and  
14 discuss the case.  This invitation was made from the bench  
15 while still in his judicial robes, and in the presence of the  
16 defendant.  Respondent made remarks such as, "I know this is  
17 uncommon, and kind of funny following a DUI case.  I'll deny it  
18 if any of you repeat it," and "I'm not responsible for any  
19 drinking and driving."

20           6.    Three members of the jury did indeed join Respondent  
21 and the Assistant City Attorney in the jury room where  
22 Respondent, the Assistant City Attorney, and two of the jurors  
23 did consume beer.

24           7.    After the jury members left the building, Respondent  
25 instructed the court administrator and the Assistant City  
26 Attorney to assist Respondent in gathering up the beer cans.  
27 Respondent made remarks such as "bet you've never met a judge  
28 like me before," and "I don't play by the rules."

29           8.    Respondent then carried the beer cans from the  
30 building.  
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AGREEMENT

1. Based upon the foregoing stipulated facts, Respondent agrees that while serving in his capacity as Judge of the Lakewood Municipal Court, he did violate Canons 1, 2(A), 3(A)(1), 3(A)(2), 3(A)(3), 3(B)(1) and 3(B)(2) of the Code of Judicial Conduct.

**CANON 1**

**Judges Shall Uphold the Integrity and Independence of the Judiciary**

An independent and honorable judiciary is indispensable to justice in our society. Judges should participate in establishing, maintaining, and enforcing high standards of judicial conduct, and shall personally observe those standards so that the integrity and independence of the judiciary will be preserved. The provisions of this Code are to be construed and applied to further that objective.

**CANON 2**

**Judges Should Avoid Impropriety and the Appearance of Impropriety in All Their Activities**

A. Judges should respect and comply with the law and act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary.

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CANON 3

Judges Shall Perform the Duties of  
Their Office Impartially and Diligently

A. Adjudicative Responsibilities.

(1) Judges should be faithful to the law and maintain professional competence in it. Judges should be unswayed by partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism.

(2) Judges should maintain order and decorum in proceedings before them.

(3) Judges should be patient, dignified, and courteous to litigants, jurors, witnesses, lawyers, and others with whom judges deal in their official capacity, and should require similar conduct of lawyers, and of the staff, court officials, and others subject to their direction and control.

B. Administrative Responsibilities.

(1) Judges should diligently discharge their administrative responsibilities, maintain professional competence in judicial administration, and facilitate the performance of the administrative responsibilities of other judges and court officials.

(2) Judges should require their staff and court officials subject to their direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to them.

2. Respondent agrees that his conduct detrimentally affects the integrity of the judiciary and undermines public confidence in the administration of justice, and warrants the discipline of CENSURE and resignation from office, effective immediately as set forth in the resignation letter attached hereto.

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1           3. Respondent further agrees that he shall not seek nor  
2 hold any judicial office, nor perform any judicial duties in  
3 the future without approval from the Commission.

4           4. Respondent agrees that he may petition the Commission  
5 to restore his eligibility to serve as a judicial officer, and  
6 that as part of any such petition he shall submit such  
7 information as the Commission may request regarding his fitness  
8 to serve as a judicial officer.

9           DATED this 15<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1998.

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13 Ralph H. Baldwin  
Honorable Ralph H. Baldwin

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17 Kurt M. Bulmer WSB# 415559  
Counsel for Respondent

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21 BROWN LEWIS JANHUNEN &  
22 SPENCER  
23 Attorneys for Commission on  
24 Judicial Conduct

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28 By Curtis M. Janhunen  
29 CURTIS M. JANHUNEN, WSB# 4168  
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ORDER OF CENSURE AND ACCEPTANCE OF RESIGNATION

Based upon the above Stipulation and Agreement, the Commission on Judicial Conduct hereby orders, and Respondent is hereby CENSURED, for the above set forth violations of the Code of Judicial Conduct, and the Commission hereby accepts Respondent's resignation from office.

DATED this 5 day of June, 1998.

Margo J. Keller  
Margo Keller, Chair  
Commission on Judicial Conduct

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