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Photo by Maunette Loeks

*Federal Judge John Gerrard holds up a pamphlet at The Bob Chaloupka Trial Skills Seminar. The seminar, on Thursday and Friday, reviewed trial skills for attorneys and was founded in memory of late Scottsbluff attorney Robert (Bob) Chaloupka.*

## Law seminar focuses on ethics, decency

By MAUNETTE LOEKS  
 New Media Editor

A federal judge urged attorneys at a law seminar to practice law with ethics, professionalism and decency.

Judge John Gerrard presented at the Bob Chaloupka Trial Skills Seminar in Scottsbluff on Thursday. Gerrard, who is a judge for the U.S. District of Nebraska, spoke on ethics, integrating a series of clips from movies such as "The Rainmaker" and television series "Ally McBeal" to

illustrate his points.

There are two ways to practice law, Gerrard said, and he urged the attorneys to abide by a high standard when practicing it.

"It is really important to honor the law, to respect the law, and important to follow the law, but you should never worship the law," Gerrard said.

The code of ethics for attorneys isn't the highest standard, he said, but is a minimal standard "and all of you can do better than that."

"You are the leaders of the profession ... and in many ways, you are the guardians of what the public perceives lawyers to be."

During his presentation, Gerrard talked about lawyers' interactions with clients, with fellow attorneys and with judges. He urged attorneys to form relationships with other attorneys. Attorneys could also be ethical in their practices and aggressively represent their clients to help solve their problems.

Gerrard, who was appointed as a federal

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judge in 2012, said he tries to get out to Scottsbluff, North Platte or Valentine as his schedule allows. As an attorney, Gerrard practiced in Norfolk and he said his heart lies on the highways of Nebraska where he traveled as he practiced law. He also expressed his dedication to ensuring that federal cases continue to be tried in North Platte and encouraged area attorneys to request to have their cases tried

at the federal courthouse there.

“You have rights and I am asking you to exercise your rights. We are doing everything we can to keep the North Platte federal courthouse open,” he said. Even if the courthouse were to shut down, he said, federal officials are in negotiations to assure access to court facilities remains there.

It was the second year for the two-day seminar, founded by the late Bob

Chaloupka’s daughter Maren Chaloupka and Chaloupka’s law firm partners after his death in 2009.

When Gerrard was appointed to the bench, Chaloupka said, her father described the man as “one of the good guys” and a “one percenter” in that he was a smart, thoughtful and kind attorney and human being, she told the crowd.

She said she thought it was the first time that

a federal judge had pre-

sented at a law seminar in Scottsbluff. Prior to being appointed to the federal bench, Gerrard served for 18 years as a Nebraska Supreme Court judge.

The seminar is designed to bring attorneys together and give them trial skills that will allow them to practice as Chaloupka said she saw her father practice — with courage, creativity and kindness, giving peace and hope to his clients.