

## **THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY THAN PRISON**

Retired Judge Keith Burgett of Council Bluffs spoke to Club members about his experiences during 25 years on the bench. As judge of the 4<sup>th</sup> judicial district of Iowa, Burgett said his experiences have made him concerned about the way the judicial system and penal system is operating. The cost of litigation and operating prisons is consuming an appreciable part of the budget of state and local governments. The cost per inmate in Iowa prisons is \$24,000 per year. Furthermore 70% of prison inmates are there for drug related offenses. Burgett suggested that we really need to put the resources in better drug treatment programs. He ran a local drug court with a 75% success in getting addicts to stop drugs and become useful citizens. He alcohol, drug and gambling addictions are sickness that can be treated outside of prisons. Burgett said felons who want court appointed attorneys should prove they don't have the resources to hire someone. He asked to see their tax returns, but no one ever came back to him with the evidence. Most judges don't even try to get felons to buy their own attorney services, but appoint public attorneys at taxpayer expense.