Missouri Law Review

Volume 34
Issue 1 Winter 1969

Winter 1969

William H. Pittman

Michael D. Garrett

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr

Part of the Law Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr/vol34/iss1/7

This Front Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Missouri Law Review by an authorized editor of University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact bassettcw@missouri.edu.
WILLIAM H. PITTMAN

This edition of the Missouri Law Review is dedicated, with genuine affection and respect, to William H. Pittman, Professor of Law at the University of Missouri School of Law. At the end of this school year, Mr. Pittman will retire from teaching, having served as a member of the Law School faculty for a quarter of a century.

A native of Washington state, William Pittman received his A.B. degree from the University of Washington in Seattle, and graduated from the University of Idaho College of Law in 1929 with an LL.B. degree. After two years of what he describes as “meagre practice” in Latah County, Idaho, Mr. Pittman joined the faculty at the University of Idaho College of Law and served in that capacity until 1936, when he resigned to accept a position with the University of Kentucky School of Law in Lexington, Kentucky.

In 1935 and 1936, while on leave from the University of Idaho, Mr. Pittman attended Harvard Law School as a Research Fellow. It was here that he met Glenn Avann McCleary, who was later to bring him to the University of Missouri, first as a Visiting Professor of Law in 1942-43, and later as a full-time Professor of Law in 1945.

For nine years, from 1936 until 1945, William Pittman was a member of the University of Kentucky Law School faculty. During these years, Mr. Pittman practiced briefly with the law firm of Smith and Leary in Frankfort, Kentucky; he served as Assistant Deputy Director of the Office of Distribution, War Food Administration in Washington, D.C.; and for a time, acted as consultant to the Kentucky Statute Revision Commission.

In 1945, Mr. Pittman came to Columbia, Missouri, and assumed his professorial duties at the Law School. In 1966, he was
cited by the University as one of its most outstanding faculty members. In February of 1969, he was named Phil Sheridan Gibson Professor of Law. During his distinguished years of service as a member of the Law School faculty, Mr. Pittman has taught a variety of courses, including equity, negotiable instruments, real and personal property, trusts, agency, partnership, constitutional law, criminal law, administrative law, sales, quasi contracts, insurance and legislation. In more recent years he has given the greater portion of his time to courses in contracts, corporations and domestic relations.

There is no lengthy list of legal works and treatises which bear the Pittman name. Nor are there impressive quantities of articles and publications drafted by the Pittman hand. But to those who have sat in a Pittman class, and one senses to William Pittman himself, the absence of these credentials is of small concern. Far more important is the impact of the Pittman spirit. Of much greater consequence is the dynamism of the Pittman personality.

Respect and admiration are rare in human relations. Rarer still are true affection and esteem. Yet it is from these rarities of life that William H. Pittman has fashioned a lasting monument. Long after legal works and treatises are put aside and learned authors have been forgotten, “The Fox,” as he is affectionately called, will be remembered. He will be remembered by those who knew him: those who sat at his feet and weathered the force of his persistent and penetrating questions; those who became good lawyers because of his unyielding insistence on logical and careful thought.

In 1967, the student editor of a University of Missouri Law School publication spoke for many, when he wrote, as follows:

There is an Oriental proverb which says:

“If you want to plan for a year, plant rice;
If you want to plan for ten years, plant a tree;
If you want to plan for a life, educate a man.”

For nearly a generation, William H. Pittman has planned for many lives; he has educated many men. He has shown himself to be that
rarest of all commodities—a good teacher. With ever present insight and wit, he prods the reluctant, encourages the uncertain, devastates the haughty and destroys the indifferent. Through it all, men are made to think.

Beyond this, little can be said with certainty. The line which once separated the Pittman of reality from the Pittman of myth has long since been obscured. Perhaps, in truth, there was never such a line!

Marcus Aurelius once observed: “Men exist for the sake of one another. Teach them then or bear with them.” William Pittman has done both, with equal patience. For the sake of countless students, it is good that he has.

The Missouri Law Review salutes William H. Pittman, professor and teacher of law. On behalf of the countless students and the profession he has served, we give him our thanks. He will be missed.

MICHAEL D. GARRETT*

*Member of the Missouri Bar and former student of William H. Pittman.