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## In Memoriam: John Reed

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## IN MEMORIAM: JOHN W. REED

*Theodore J. St. Antoine\**

John Reed was the Fred Astaire of the law school world. There was a deeper kinship than prowess on the dance floor. There was the same clean line in gesture and speech, the same trimness of content and grace of expression, and the same understated empathy with all manner of people.

As a student I actually looked forward to Evidence classes with this master. The sessions could have been choreographed. John was constantly in motion, juggling one idea after another before our bedazzled gazes. Painlessly, even entertainingly, he let us in on some of the profession's most arcane doctrines: the true nature of hearsay; the distinctions between competency, materiality, and relevance; the best evidence rule. John's fame as a teacher led to visits at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Chicago, and NYU.

John Reed loomed so large as teacher that one could easily overlook his capacity for significant scholarship. Besides co-editing a leading casebook on civil procedure, John early in his career produced a 100-page, two-part article on compulsory joinder. Reading this finely wrought piece makes one wonder how much important scholarship was lost when John turned his energies toward directorship of continuing legal education at Michigan, deaning at two law schools, Colorado and Wayne, and assorted bar-related projects. He also chaired the famed University Musical Society and directed what may be Ann Arbor's best church choir. For decades he was chief administrator of the International Society of Barristers, all top trial lawyers.

John's occasional addresses are models of their kind. He usually opened with touches of humor. But these weren't throwaway jokes; they underscored his serious message. Listen to John expressing reservations about increasing specialization in the legal profession. He tells about the golf-playing gorilla who wins a \$100 bet for his owner by slamming a 450-yard drive straight down the fairway. To avoid embarrassment, the opponent concedes and he and the gorilla's owner head for the clubhouse. After a couple of drinks, the loser asks, "By the way, how does your gorilla putt?" The owner replies, "Just like he drives—450 yards!"

John's administrative assignment at the Law School was overseeing our student residence, the Lawyers Club. This led to his dealing with a major University-wide issue: curfews for female students and exclusion of men from women's dorms. John's committee recommended easing these restrictions. The University President was aghast. Parents wouldn't let their daughters come to such a licentious place. But John's soft, persuasive voice prevailed. The next semester set a record for applications to Michigan.

For all the extraordinary range of John's activities, the image I most treasure is of this lithe figure gliding smoothly about the dais, working his communicative magic, and holding in thrall an audience that could consist either of untested youngsters or combat-hardened veterans. In that context one wastes no effort speculating about John Reed's stature as a seminal thinker. It is enough to know that he was one of the supreme lawyer teachers of our time.

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\* James E. and Sarah A. Degan Professor of Law Emeritus, University of Michigan Law School. Portions of this tribute are adapted from a prior tribute to John Reed. Theodore J. St. Antoine, *John Reed and the High Style*, 85 MICH. L. REV. 1496 (1987).