

# Michigan Law Review

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Volume 83 | Issue 6

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1985

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The University of Michigan Law Faculty

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### Recommended Citation

The University of Michigan Law Faculty, *Marcus L. Plant 1911-1984*, 83 MICH. L. REV. 1459 (1985).

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol83/iss6/2>

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## **Marcus L. Plant**

### **1911-1984**

#### *Memorial Resolution by The University of Michigan Law Faculty Concerning Marcus L. Plant*

Marcus L. Plant, Professor Emeritus of Law at The University of Michigan, died at his home in Ann Arbor on July 15, 1984, at the age of seventy-two.

A native of Wisconsin, the son of a skilled laborer, Mark Plant earned baccalaureate and master's degrees from Lawrence College. He taught history and economics in Wisconsin high schools before attending The University of Michigan Law School, from which he graduated in 1938 first in his class. He came to Michigan's law faculty in 1946 as one of the group of able young lawyers recruited to teach the flood of veterans resuming their educations after World War II. That young mid-century faculty was the foundation on which the school's present reputation was built, and Mark was a central figure in it. He brought to the faculty a pragmatic perspective drawn from some eight years of practice in Milwaukee and New York and a brief turn in the Washington bureaucracy, but he brought also a deep concern that the law be fair and the legal profession humane.

No one took more seriously than he his role as a teacher. To be prepared, thorough, sound — these elementary obligations of a teacher he discharged as a matter of course, as generations of students will attest. He was also clear and understandable — qualities that made him greatly appreciated by students in the difficult, all-important first year. But beyond these qualities was another, less common: He knew his students individually. All of us are asked by our students for letters of recommendation, but Mark more than most, and he responded with unfailing generosity. Because of the large size of law school classes, the letters most of us write on behalf of our students are often rather impersonal. His letters about his students, in contrast, revealed personal knowledge of each student. He cared about them, one by one, and they responded warmly to him. The University and the Law School are the beneficiaries of the affection and goodwill Mark generated among more than thirty-five classes of our graduates.

Mark understood that an educational enterprise is corporate as well as individual and that the teacher must shoulder part of the administrative burdens. He carried at least his share of these in law

school and in the University, and, in addition, served with great distinction in the world of intercollegiate athletics. He was President of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, a member of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the U.S. Olympics Committee, and, for many years, Secretary of Michigan's Board in Control of Intercollegiate Athletics and the University's Faculty Representative to the Intercollegiate Conference, better known as the Big Ten.

In all settings, Mark was a useful and enjoyable colleague. Differences of opinion never became points of estrangement, and his gentlemanly response to disagreement encouraged free and creative discussions. He had a ready sense of humor, and he lightened many conversations and discussions with delightfully apt stories.

Withal, he did not neglect his responsibilities as scholar. He produced widely used texts in his fields of interest, all the while he was fulfilling his other responsibilities in and out of the law school. And he continued his scholarly work in retirement; indeed, at his death he was preparing a revised edition of one of his books. That scholarship and intellectual curiosity made his teaching imaginative and forward-looking. He accurately prophesied many of the developments in the law of medical practice, in employment relations, and in his primary field of torts; and as a consequence his students became forward-looking lawyers, who, unsurprised by change, are competent to practice in a constantly changing society.

In short, Mark Plant was the "compleat" teacher. Thorough scholar, careful expositor, caring counselor, congenial colleague — all of these he was. For his having been among us, we are the richer — his school, his students, his colleagues, his friends. We shall miss him. But we rejoice in a life well and usefully lived, a life that gave much to others.