

Michigan Law Review

Volume 86 | Issue 7

1988

William W. Bishop, Jr.

John H. Jackson
University of Michigan Law School

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr>



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

John H. Jackson, *William W. Bishop, Jr.*, 86 MICH. L. REV. 1558 (1988).

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol86/iss7/5>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by the Michigan Law Review at University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michigan Law Review by an authorized editor of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact mlaw.repository@umich.edu.

WILLIAM W. BISHOP, JR.

*John H. Jackson**

Our law faculty has been saddened twice within six months by the deaths of colleagues. These events can only serve to remind us that not only are the lives of individuals transitory, but institutions also can be deeply affected by the mortality of their members.

Four months ago we mourned the passing of Professor Wade McCree. Today we gather to memorialize the life of Professor Bill Bishop. However, in our case today we have the opportunity in our sadness to also express happiness and joy for Bill. He lived a full and long life, dying at the age of 81, in seeming full vigor and activity. As his devoted daughter Betty said to me, and we all share in these sentiments, Bill left us the way he wanted to — suddenly, but having lived well to the very end.

Although we can be happy for Bill, nevertheless we are forced to reflect a bit on the meaning of Bill's life to our law school. Bill spent more than fifty years of his life on this campus, as an undergraduate student, as a law student, as a research and teaching assistant, and as a faculty member.

Our gothic halls will seem emptier without Bill's gothic presence, for surely he represented the values of the architecture around him — stability, solidness, uncompromising excellence, attention to detail, and a bit "old-fashioned" in the laudatory sense of that phrase.

It is hard to believe that Bill had been retired for eleven years. He remained incredibly active — teaching part time every year, and regularly coming to his law school office to pursue his research interests, (often in a tie and coat even in mid-summer!).

For many years Bill Bishop has been a central academic figure of international law in the United States. After more than a decade of practical experience, including an eight-year period of service in the Legal Advisor's Office of the U.S. State Department, partly as Assistant Legal Advisor, Bill entered academic life, teaching at Pennsylvania and Columbia, then joining the University of Michigan faculty in 1948 for the remainder of his career. During much of this career he was the editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of Interna-*

* Hessel E. Yntema Professor of Law, University of Michigan. A.B. 1954, Princeton University; J.D. 1959, Michigan. — Ed.

tional Law, a position that gave him a worldwide prominence and influence rarely matched in his subject area. He delivered the prestigious general course on International Law at the Hague Academy and was a member of the Permanent Court of International Arbitration (which plays a key role in the selection of judges for the world court). From 1966 to 1976 he was honored as "Edwin DeWitt Dickinson University Professor of Law" at the University of Michigan.

Bill was a popular teacher, always filling his courses to capacity, and was revered as a professor in the "anti-Kingsfield" model, being one who cared about his students and who treated them with kindness and courtesy.

Bill's membership on our law faculty, dating from 1948, was very important to this school. His practical experience enabled him to avoid the many fallacies to which scholarship in international law unfortunately sometimes gravitates. A commonly expressed question of international law — whether it is in fact law at all — is essentially a theoretician's gambit. Those who have directly and personally experienced the effects of international law, whether serving in government or in other practical capacities, know that those effects are real, albeit quite different from the relatively cozy world of the domestic legal system of a powerful and stable nation. Students always have trouble grappling with those differences. Bill knew them well, and knew how to teach them.

Bill devoted much of his scholarship to teaching and leadership in the profession. His casebook for law students of international law — first published in 1949 — was a classic, and indeed for many years it held almost a monopoly position in the field. Characteristically it was a book not only for classroom work, but also designed to be an important research tool, with careful and elaborate notes which helped busy scholars and practitioners deal with a subject not well served by the usual legal research tools.

Bill's role as the editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of International Law* for almost a decade (from 1962 to 1970), enabled him to expand his role as a teacher and an advisor to the broadest possible world community. I think it is safe to say that there is no journal more prestigious and influential for the subject of international law. The happy byproduct of Bill's service was a greatly enhanced visibility and position for the University of Michigan Law School, a situation which even today plays a constructive role for our school. Bill played a major role in building the International Law program at the University of Michigan. It is our responsibility to see that this tradition is carried on.

So Bill's leaving us has its overtones of a milestone; as they say, "signals of the passing of an era." But it also poses to us a challenge. The future must give credit to the past, and we who carry on must see to it that will happen.