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## Laylin Knox James

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*This issue is dedicated to the memory of Laylin Knox James*

## LAYLIN KNOX JAMES

*Memorial Resolution by Law School Faculty Concerning  
Laylin Knox James*

LAYLIN KNOX JAMES, Professor Emeritus of the Law School, died at Alpena, Michigan, on November 29, 1967, at the age of 74. For thirty-three years prior to his retirement in 1962 he was a member of our faculty. His accomplishments as a teacher and scholar, his public service, and his personal attributes gained him the respect and affection of his professional colleagues and the community at large.

Laylin James was born at Siam, Ohio. He received his A.B. degree from The University of Michigan in the College of Literature, Science and the Arts in 1918. He was graduated with distinction and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. During the First World War he served as a second lieutenant in field artillery. Following his honorable discharge from the service he enrolled in the Law School but was compelled to suspend his law studies temporarily for financial reasons. For two years he taught in Lewis Institute (now Illinois Institute of Technology) in Chicago. He then resumed his law studies at Michigan and made an excellent academic record. He was elected to the Board of Editors of the *Michigan Law Review* and to the Order of the Coif. He received the J.D. degree in 1923.

For the next three years Laylin James was associated with the law firm of Cravath, Henderson and deGersdorff in New York City, where he had a unique opportunity to study and practice corporation law. In 1926 he joined the faculty of the law school of the University of Pittsburgh. In 1929 he was called to the law faculty of The University of Michigan where he remained until his retirement in 1962.

The years in which Professor James started his career in law teaching marked the height of a movement in American law schools to save time in the law curriculum by combining the courses in agency, partnership, and business corporations. Professor James agreed with this approach and in 1937 his book, *Cases and Materials on Business Associations*, was published. In evaluating it, Dean Wiley Rutledge of the College of Law of the State University of Iowa (afterward Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court) described his own view of the ideal course in this field and wrote, "Professor James' excellent volume approaches this ideal more nearly than any of the volumes or series heretofore published."<sup>1</sup> The book was well received and there was a second edition in 1949.

In his writing, teaching and other professional activities, Laylin James consistently manifested his absorption with the practical aspects of the law. He kept in close touch with his former associates in New York and frequently spent the summer working in the office there in order to keep abreast of current problems and ways of doing things. In his course in Corporate Organization the students worked with documents and materials drawn largely from the files of leading law offices and governmental agencies. In that course he made effective use of the "problem method" of instruction long before there was general recognition of the merits of that technique in law teaching.

Professor James was active in the State Bar of Michigan. Soon after his appointment to the faculty he was made a member of the Committee on Revision of the Corporation Code. When that committee reported successful completion of its work in the form of the 1931 General Corporation Act, the chairman paid special tribute to Professor James, who had drafted the Act, saying, "The Bar Associa-

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1. 26 Geo. L.J. 1109, 1113 (1938).

tion is indebted to him for a very fine piece of constructive craftsmanship."<sup>2</sup> He continued to serve on the Corporation Committee until his retirement. His counsel was repeatedly sought and was always available to officers administering the corporation laws and the state's securities laws.

In the classroom Laylin James was a vibrant and effective teacher. His manner was dynamic and forceful. He aroused and excited his students, offered and invited intellectual challenge, engaged in animated debate, and encouraged an attitude of healthy skepticism. Concurrently, there could always be sensed his respect and liking for the students and his sympathetic understanding of their problems. As a result, he was held in high regard by those who had been in his classes and there was seldom a reunion that did not find them calling on him and inviting him to their functions.

In community and public service, Laylin James was an active citizen and gave freely of his talents and time. He served for many years on the Board of Directors of the Ann Arbor Trust Company. He was a member of the Community Fund Board, the Selective Service Board, and the Executive Committee of the Civilian Defense Volunteer Office. For many years he was a member of the Ann Arbor Police Commission and from time to time served as chairman.

Personally, Laylin James was a responsive, companionable individual. He found easy rapport with people from all walks of life and had friends in all segments of the community. He was blessed with an excellent sense of humor. His conversation was lively and stimulating and although his comments occasionally contained barbs, he was never cynical or cruel. He was a vigorous outdoor man who loved fishing and hunting and physical activity. Upon his retirement, he and Mrs. James moved to their home near Grand Lake where these interests could be enjoyed.

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2. 11 MICH. STATE B.J. 35, 36 (1931-32).

The passing of Laylin Knox James closes the career of a distinguished figure in the history of the Michigan Law School. Those of us who knew him feel a deep sense of personal bereavement, although we take some consolation in reflecting on the full and useful life he led. The faculty of the Law School adopts this resolution to record its respect and affection for our departed colleague, and to extend our profound sympathy to his widow, Mrs. Jessie James, his son, Laylin K. James, Jr., and the other members of his family.

December 1967