

# Michigan Law Review

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Volume 82 | Issue 3

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1983

## L. Hart Wright

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### Recommended Citation

Allan F. Smith, *L. Hart Wright*, 82 MICH. L. REV. 413 (1983).

Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol82/iss3/7>

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## L. HART WRIGHT

*Allan F. Smith\**

It is not often that one knows a person whose self-discipline is complete and unwavering. Hart Wright was such a person. Whether he was preparing to teach a class, producing a public lecture, pursuing a medically-ordered regimen for health reasons, or getting ready for a game of golf, he would assuredly do all those things required for excellence of performance. The question of how much preparation was never at issue with Hart, for the driving internal force which governed his conduct dictated that it be complete in the fullest sense of that word. That self-discipline gave us one of the truly great teachers of law in this country. Those of us who watched his growth and his performance from 1946 until his untimely death this year were perennially rewarded with the evidence of stardom.

One of my decadal duties, some twenty years ago, was to meet with alumni groups from coast to coast, and during reunions at Ann Arbor. It was always certain that one of the first inquiries would be: How is L. Hart? And the speaker most sought after for class reunions was likely to be L. Hart Wright.

But it takes more than self-discipline to produce the person honored by this dedicatory issue. It takes wit, and wisdom, and warmth, and humaneness, and a sense of the joy of living, and a spirit of helpfulness, all of which Hart possessed in abundant measure. His personal files attest to countless hours of gratuitous professional service in aid of the Law School, the University and some of its constituent agencies, or governmental agencies. One can find him concerned with such diverse matters as taking steps to insure favorable residency status for a testator planning a law school bequest, or working with the relationship between the *Michigan Daily* and the University so that the *Daily's* propensity for endorsing political candidates would not jeopardize the University's status to receive tax deductible gifts, or advising state legislators concerning the basic elements of a "value added" tax which he had studied in depth in Europe. The thoroughness of his analysis was always readily observable. It is common knowledge that Hart's expertise in the administration of tax laws was responsible for his being selected by the

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Internal Revenue Service to guide the preparation of materials which could be used by the agency in the training of its employees.

In retrospect, of course, it is easy to see why he was called upon for these many services. He understood tax policies. He understood tax administration. He understood the comparative values of alternative systems of taxation, and his keen insights brought him quickly to the essence of any problem with which he was presented. His counsel was simply invaluable.

It is easy to get carried away with Hart's devotion to teaching and his professional skills. But those of us who worked with him throughout his career remember more his humanity. We remember the standards which he set for himself in terms of humaneness, in terms of social morality or social obligation, and in terms of his own responsibility for participation. It is in this regard that I think Hart found much of the strength that gave such meaning to his life. He loved people and hated human suffering. He wanted our social institutions to be concerned with the enhancement of the quality of life for all. He wanted our political machinery to function toward the same end. In the early days of our continuing struggle for desegregation in the public schools of America, he and I spent many an hour discussing the needs, the objectives, the potential remedial steps, the barriers and the means of surmounting them. I was struck then, and even more in retrospect, with his deep commitment to equality of human opportunity, and his deep intolerance of those forces which operate to impede the achievement of that equality.

I shall remember, too, that Hart was not a mere observer of the social scene. He was a participant. Despite his overwhelming commitment to legal education (and that was surely great), he found time to be active politically, and active in the affairs of his community. His efforts were a model for those who would seek to mold a better, more humane society. He is missed by the world of legal education.