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Professor Alfred Buffin McEwen

Thomas P. Lewis
University of Kentucky

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Professor Alfred Buffin McEwen

The College of Law suffered a tragic loss this past summer by the untimely death of Professor Alfred Buffin McEwen who was killed by lightning on June 22.

Professor McEwen was a native Virginian, educated at the University of Virginia. After receiving the B.S. and M.S. degrees there, and before studying law, he was Bayley-Tiffany Instructor in English. He later took an LL.B. degree at the same university and entered the practice of law in Richmond, Virginia. During World War II, Professor McEwen served in the U. S. Navy as a lieutenant on combat duty in the Pacific. After the war, he returned to teaching, first on the law faculty at his alma mater, and then at Mercer University. In 1948, Professor McEwen joined the University of Kentucky Law faculty.

Professor McEwen enjoyed a position of understanding and respect with his students and colleagues that was singular in quality. An appreciation of that position and, as a result, a full realization of the invaluable contribution he was able to make to a professional school demands a knowledge of his character and personality that could be gained only through close acquaintance with him.

Professor McEwen's principal academic interest was in the field of procedure. He was a fundamentalist whose rare grasp of the whole field of civil procedure made him greatly impatient with the easy conclusion that modern legal procedure should abandon historical foundations. He could demonstrate eloquently but unpretentiously that his first love, common law pleading, was one of the primary foundations for legal analysis. He was a sound lawyer and extremely capable teacher, but these qualities were merely the foundation of his great stature among his students and colleagues. Perhaps the most basic of his traits was that, in all aspects of his life, he was down-to-earth—a practical man of plain, but never prosaic, language with an abundance of common sense.

Mr. Mac, as he was known to his students, was a man with a warm and friendly personality, but a man who was regarded by all as highly individual. Affable and easygoing, Mr. Mac created in the classroom an atmosphere of dignified informality that was conducive to full and free discussion, but in which there was no time or room for nonsense. The ability of a real scholar was only faintly camouflaged by his cigar-smoking, rough-and-ready countenance.

Outside the classroom, both his students and colleagues marvelled at the scope of Professor McEwen's talents. The diversity of his interests alone was unusual, but the degree of success that he insisted upon and achieved in fulfilling each interest was almost unbelievable. He seemed to practice the view (to twist a phrase) that a thing worth doing well was worth doing. Whether he was golfing, hunting, fishing, photographing, or flying, he demonstrated the unmistakable knowledge and technique of the expert.

Thus, Professor McEwen was admired and respected for many reasons. He was an extraordinary man whose friendship was highly prized by all who held it; among these many people his memory will be lasting. And it is to that memory that the students and faculty wish to dedicate this issue of the Kentucky Law Journal.

T. P. LEWIS

Faculty Editor;

Former Student of Professor McEwen