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William J. Harbison

*Ward DeWitt, Jr.**

Those close to him knew Bill Harbison for much more than the great legal scholar that he was. For almost twenty years I had the good fortune to practice law with him and was privileged to be his friend for over forty years. He was, as everyone knows, an outstanding lawyer and judge, but perhaps many do not know the non-legal side of Bill Harbison. In no particular order, Bill was a churchman, a sports enthusiast, a gardener, a historian, a fisherman, a lover of literature, and above all a devoted family man. For many years he was active at Belmont Methodist Church in Nashville, where he taught a Sunday School class. Although I do not believe he was ever a participant, he was an avid follower of major sports—in particular the fortunes of Vanderbilt's football and basketball teams. He loved to fish and in many springs he would go to Kentucky Lake and fish for crappie. He kept a boat on Old Hickory Lake and enjoyed hours of fishing there with his family and friends. Before he moved to the steep hillside in the Lealand section, he was a vegetable gardener, and annually raised a beautiful vegetable garden, strawberries being one of his main crops. He served as president of the Tennessee Historical Society and was well-versed in Tennessee history, as well as world history. For years he was a member of Nashville's Shakespeare Club—a group of men who met monthly to read and discuss one of the bard's plays. He belonged to the Old Oak Club, another group that meets monthly to hear a paper read by one of the club's members. His papers were always interesting, well-written, and well-presented.

Bill Harbison spent many hours with his family, consisting of his wife, Mary Lib, his two children, Bill and Mary Alice, and his grandchildren. They frequently enjoyed family outings together.

In short, Bill Harbison was, indeed, much more than an outstanding lawyer and jurist. He was interesting, modest almost to a fault, thoughtful, considerate, and entertaining. Many of his legal accomplishments are in the law books, but perhaps some of the qualities related here are those which many of us will remember longer. He was a man for all seasons, a man who truly stopped and smelled

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the roses. It is hard to believe he is gone; we will all miss him tremendously.