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John W. Wade and the Development of the Vanderbilt Law School

Professional recognition and honor had come to John Webster Wade before he joined the faculty of Vanderbilt Law School in 1947. He had earned four degrees, including a doctorate in law (S.J.D.) from Harvard. His legal scholarship had been demonstrated through a published article in the *Harvard Law Review* as well as through other legal writings. He was an experienced legal editor and legal educator, with service on the law faculties of the University of Mississippi and the University of Texas. As a law teacher, he had risen from assistant to full professor within a four-year period. As a lawyer among his peers, he had been elected President of the Junior Bar Section of the Mississippi State Bar Association. There was an additional dimension, difficult to express briefly, except to those for whom such words as "Fourth Marine Division," "Saipan," and "Iwo Jima" are expressive enough in themselves.

John W. Wade made a decided imprint upon the Vanderbilt Law School in the years before he became Dean in 1952. His contributions to the development of the institution were impressive, not only as a skillful "case-method" teacher in the classroom, but also as Faculty Editor for volumes two through five of the *Vanderbilt Law Review* at a time when this position entailed responsibilities for all phases of the publication greatly in excess of those imposed upon the Faculty Adviser in later years. Without question he was the person most responsible for the firm and early establishment of the *Vanderbilt Law Review* as a nationally recognized major legal publication. The reputation of the *Review*, in turn, constituted a major component in the advancement of the School within the state and throughout the region and nation.

The dramatic development and broad acceptance of the *Review* under John Wade's tutelage as Faculty Editor can be documented statistically to some extent by referring to *Shepard's Law Review Citations*. The citator shows that courts, law reviews, and other legal publications made published references to material in volumes three, four, and five of the *Vanderbilt Law Review* well in excess of the number of references to any other comparable legal publication in the area from

Texas through Virginia for those same years.¹ Some of those law reviews had been publishing for 25 years or more.

The development and advancement of legal writing and publications programs at the Vanderbilt Law School continued to be a major concern of John Wade after he became Dean. At least three distinct aspects of this concern can be observed. He recognized fully the educational values of law-review type research and writing and led the School in efforts to develop these educational values for all students. He particularly noted that the *Law Review* provided a means for being of service to legal practitioners and, thus, for relating the School strongly to the practicing legal profession. His Foreword to the *Vanderbilt Law Review's* first *Annual Survey of Tennessee Law*² illustrates this aspect. Dean Wade was never unmindful of the continuing need to improve the substance of law and the functioning of legal institutions. He sought to channel the School's publications into meeting these needs through objective reporting and constructive, critical comment. In the Foreword to the first issue of the *Race Relations Law Reporter*, which began publication in 1956, he wrote:

The Vanderbilt University School of Law is undertaking the publication of the *Race Relations Law Reporter* in the belief that constructive developments in this field, as in others, should be based on accurate and complete information regarding authoritative legal materials. Regardless of differences in points of view there is widespread recognition among lawyers, educators and others of the need for a systematic compilation of primary materials in this rapidly developing field of law. The *Race Relations Law Reporter* is undertaking to provide these materials on a professional basis.³

The results of his efforts in the area of legal publications are self-evident. As Dean Wade ends his term as administrator, the Law School has three publications of professional quality: The *Race Relations Law Survey*; the *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, which originated as the *Vanderbilt International* in 1968; and the *Vanderbilt Law Review*, which begins its twenty-fifth volume in 1972.

1. As to publications within this Texas through Virginia area, the *Law Review Cimator* shows more than 200 published references by courts and law reviews to volume 3 of the *Vanderbilt Law Review*, compared numerically to 112 references to volume 28 of another review, 85 references to volume 36 of another, and 45 references to volume 24 of another. The *Cimator* shows some 260 published references to volume 5 of the *Vanderbilt Law Review*, in comparison to 168 references to volume 30 of another review, 138 references to volume 38 of another review, and 110 to volume 26 of a third. Many of the comparisons are similarly flattering to the *Vanderbilt Law Review* under Faculty Editor Wade when checks are made of references to law journals published by leading universities in other areas of the country. SHEPARD'S LAW REVIEW CITATIONS 448-49 (1968).

2. Wade, *Foreword, Annual Survey of Tennessee Law*, 6 VAND. L. REV. 971 (1953).

3. Wade, *By Way of Introduction* . . . , 1 RACE REL. L. REP. 1 (1956).

When John Wade became Dean in 1952, the Law School was housed in the top floors of Kirkland Hall—without benefit of an elevator. The full-time faculty consisted of eight professors, including the Dean. During the regular year a total of 37 courses was offered, some of which were taught by the eight lecturers on the part-time faculty. The Law Library, housed in what at one time had been the University Chapel, contained approximately 40,000 volumes. When the influx of World War II veterans had ended by the fall of 1952, the enrollment total for the Law School was 128. This total enrollment figure can be compared with 316 in 1962 and 483 in 1971. Important aspects of the development of the Law School under Dean Wade are suggested by some comparisons between the first-year classes entering in 1953, 1962, and 1971:

	1953	1962	1971
Entering class	31	115	156
Entrants with degrees	18	98	155
States represented	11	26	35
Entrants from Tennessee	17	47	39
Colleges represented	12	62	75
Entrants from Vanderbilt	15	28	21

The upward curve in the average score of the entering class on the National Law School Admission Test carries its own indicia of institutional development. There was a 50 percent increase in the percentile level of this average between 1959 and 1963, and for the class entering in the fall of 1971, the average stands at the 90th percentile level—an increase of 100 percent over the 1959 percentile level. It should be added that during this period, the Admissions Committee never utilized the Law School Admission Test in a mechanical fashion to the exclusion of other relevant criteria, or sought to inflate the average score of the entering class as an end in itself.

Other significant numerical indicators of the development of the Vanderbilt Law School between 1952 and 1972 can be observed. There are presently 22 full-time and 15 part-time members of the Vanderbilt Law Faculty. The Law Library has more than 100,000 volumes and has been pronounced by experts to be one of the best of its size in the entire country. The instructional program of the school as shown in the current catalog shows that 68 courses and 22 seminars are offered.

As Dean, John Wade has never sought to dramatize change for its own sake. But change, in fact, has been a constant factor, both as a challenge and an opportunity in the ongoing growth of the Law School. A comparison of the 1952-53 catalog with that for the current year graphically indicates Dean Wade's response to problems of change. Some categorical "then and now" statements will show how much dramatic change and improvement has occurred at the Law School under his deanship. The *Race Relations Law Survey*, *The Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law*, *The Reporter* (for law alumni), the student paper, *Dicta*, the Environmental Law Society, International Law Society, Labor Relations Society, Law Students Civil Rights Research Council, and the Legal Aid Society did not exist in 1952. The present organization and program of the Vanderbilt Law Alumni and the Placement Service have been established since 1952. In 1952 there was no program of clinical legal education; there was no intensive first-year legal writing program comparable to that presently in effect; there was no comparable college visitation and recruitment program; there was no international law program; there was no collection of research materials on race relations law; there was no Urban and Regional Development Center; and there was no distinguished Committee of Visitors for the Law School. While scholarships and loan funds for law students were almost nonexistent in 1952, the current catalog devotes almost four pages to information under these headings. The Vanderbilt Law School was a good law school when John Wade became Dean, but it has been manifestly changed, strengthened, and improved during his administration.

Before it moved into its present quarters in 1962, the Vanderbilt Law School had never been housed in its own building. It was characteristic of Dean Wade that in spite of the inadequacy of the facilities, he gave first priority to the development of legal scholarship and the instructional programs of the school. He also emphasized the recruitment of a strong faculty and the strengthening of ties with lawyers, judges, and professional associations before treating the need for a building as a matter of major importance. When the time was opportune, however, he threw himself into the struggle both to secure funds for a building and to ensure adequate, well-planned facilities in the structure. Every step along the way, every plan and, in fact, every building detail received Dean Wade's personal attention, to the extent that his health was greatly endangered.

The dedication of the new building in April 1963, utilized "Stability and Change Through Law" as a theme. Relating this theme to "Legal Education," Dean Wade, in dedicating the building, said:

We want to dedicate it to the cause of better legal education, to the producing of lawyers who will play their part in the affairs of the world of their times—local, national and international. We want to dedicate it also to the utilization of the whole school for the growth of law to meet adequately the needs of this rapidly changing world, while still retaining a proper sense of continuity.⁴

John Wade must have similarly dedicated himself when he became Dean of the Vanderbilt Law School in 1952. His fidelity to such dedication is evident.

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4. Wade, *Legal Education and the Demands for Stability and Change Through Law*, 17 VAND. L. REV. 155, 167 (1963).

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