

1-1972

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Recommended Citation

Reber Boulton, John W. Wade: An Appreciation, 25 *Vanderbilt Law Review* 24 (1972)
Available at: <https://scholarship.law.vanderbilt.edu/vlr/vol25/iss1/5>

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John W. Wade: An Appreciation

This appreciation of John W. Wade is offered on behalf of the alumni of the Vanderbilt School of Law, who have profited immeasurably from his tenure as Dean over the past twenty years. In a very special way—not necessarily analogous to any other entity in the academic world—the alumni of a law school are inextricably bound to the name, reputation, and stature of the institution from which they earned their degree. While it becomes relatively unimportant who was Dean while they were in school, the identity of the dean responsible for the law school's current reputation and future plans assumes primary significance.

It is in this context that the 2450 alumni of the Vanderbilt School of Law are indebted to John Wade and grateful to him for the very real increase in their professional standing that has occurred during his tenure as Dean. When John Wade was appointed Dean in 1952, the Vanderbilt School of Law was a modest, regionally oriented institution with an enrollment of 128 students whose classes met on the upper floors of Kirkland Hall. It has since progressed to become a leading national center for legal education with a current enrollment of 483 students representing 40 states and many of the most prestigious undergraduate institutions in the United States. Classes are now held in its own building, conceived and built during John Wade's administration. Moreover, the school's development is further highlighted by the fact that the student body, by its very numbers, has outgrown these relatively new quarters, creating a crying need for added facilities.

Without going back to the year of his advent as Dean when the placement of law graduates was largely a catch-as-catch-can proposition, but starting with the academic year 1965-66, there were approximately 35 law firms, government agencies, or other entities that sent representatives to the Law School to interview candidates and to make offers for legal opportunities. During the 1971-72 academic year, there were over 100 such interviewers, a number of whom represented some of the most prestigious law firms in the United States. This record of achievement speaks eloquently of the end work product of the Vanderbilt School of Law—our alumni. These newer alumni, whose excellence has increased steadily under John Wade's leadership, are casting a shining reflection upon all Vanderbilt Law Alumni.

To attribute all of the foregoing achievements to one man would be an oversimplification. To say that it was mere coincidence or acci-

dent, however, would be patently erroneous. Of course, scholarship is essential, but a good dean must possess much broader talents. The job requires a unique scope of intelligence to learn from the past, to understand and deal with the problems of the present, to plan for the progress of the future, and to direct each succeeding phase of this future progress. In John Wade these talents are combined with an amiable manner and a pleasing personality, which have endeared him to all alumni.

As new leadership comes to the Vanderbilt School of Law upon John Wade's voluntary retirement to return to a full-time role of scholar-teacher, it can be assumed that the Law School will make new and greater strides into its assured future as a nationally important, rather than a regionally oriented institution. An auspicious beginning for this progress would not have been possible at this point in time without these twenty years of John Wade's administration as Dean.

For the alumni, this is a sincere expression of appreciation for John Wade's contribution to all of us as lawyers and for the betterment of our professional reputations. Each year we have been able to say, with more pride, "I am an alumnus of the Vanderbilt School of Law."

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