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Professor David R. Mason

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IN MEMORIAM

David R. Mason

1901-1988

Professor Emeritus David R. Mason, eighty-seven, died at his Missoula home December 24, 1988. His death ended a unique and outstanding career in Montana legal education and law reform.

Professor Mason was a faculty member at the University of Montana Law School for forty-one years, from 1927 to 1968. During that time he taught, on one occasion or another, every course offered in the law school's curriculum, and was, at the same time, continuously active in movements to reform and modernize Montana law. In addition, he served as a special assistant to the United States Attorney General, as Chief Trial Attorney of the War Division of the United States Department of Justice, and as a member of the board of the National Council of Humanities by appointment of President Lyndon Johnson.

David Mason's absences from the University of Montana Law School were always as brief as he could make them, although he received many invitations to move to larger institutions. During a visiting professorship at New York University Law School, he was pressed to remain, because its Dean was certain that, working in such a large commercial center, Professor Mason would soon be recognized as a national authority on the then newly-adopted Uniform Commercial Code. David Mason chose to return to the University of Montana.

Although he taught a wide variety of courses, Professor Mason is best remembered in Montana for his long identification with Civil Procedure. He was the principal architect of the Montana Rules of Civil and Appellate Procedure and devised a system, still in constant use, for referring questions of Montana law from the federal to the Montana courts to ensure uniformity of interpretation.

David Mason made an indelible impression on each of the more than one thousand students who passed through his classes. He is the one teacher every one of them remembers with a vividness that time has never diminished. His knowledge of his subjects was so broad and exact, his reasoning so clear and precise, and his teaching methods so crisp and distinctive that for graduates of even fifty years ago, specific incidents in his classroom are still fresh in memory. Students' reactions to his rigorous demands for complete preparation and clarity of analysis ranged all the way from intimidation to exhilaration, but the final impression he left in

their minds was always deep, lasting, and bright.

Former students and other friends of Professor Mason have established two memorials, the David and Helen Mason Scholarship, to be given annually to a promising law student, and the David Mason Civil Procedure Award for an outstanding student essay in the field of Civil Procedure.

—William F. Crowley

Editors Note: The Montana Legal community also remains indebted to Professor Mason for his service as Faculty Advisor to the *Montana Law Review* and his many contributions to legal scholarship published in this *Review*. For a bibliography of Professor Mason's *Montana Law Review* articles please see the Cumulative Index in this issue.