

1987

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Recommended Citation

Lee C. Bollinger, *Wade H. McCree, Jr.*, 86 MICH. L. REV. 221 (1987).

Available at: https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/4137

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WADE H. MCCREE, JR.

*Lee C. Bollinger**

Wade McCree was a member of the Michigan Law School faculty for six years. He came to us not as a young and inexperienced person but as a distinguished jurist and public official. He was the Lewis M. Simes Professor of Law. He taught courses on constitutional litigation, the legal profession, and constitutional law.

Now these are the biographical details of Wade McCree's time with the Law School. But what images remain and will remain upon our parting? What is the spirit that Professor McCree added to our institution, to us as students and as colleagues?

I have talked with students in the past and very recently about what they have taken away from their association with Professor McCree, and what they say strikes me as very perceptive of the qualities of the man we as colleagues saw. Pericles described Athens as an education to Greece; Professor Wade McCree was an education to the University of Michigan Law School.

There was first his remarkable kindness. Student after student will testify to the personal interest Professor McCree took in their academic work and future careers. A gentle suggestion here, always followed by another suggestion there, was the stuff that made Professor McCree an intimate advisor and mentor for so many. He is known as the only professor who *always* kept his door open, which I now understand as a metaphor. I know personally of this quality, for there can hardly have been a time when upon meeting Wade in the hall or over coffee he did not have some friendly praise or regards to pass along from people I knew.

That suggests another remarkable quality of Professor McCree, his extraordinary memory. I have heard students claim with unshakable conviction that Professor McCree had a photographic memory. There was no other way, they will say, that he could have remembered so many ideas and arguments of so many student papers, as he would gently set about his task of offering insightful criticisms; and, to give only one other example, there was no other way he could have remembered so many of Shakespeare's lines, which students say he

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would occasionally proceed to check from the Shakespeare volumes he always kept on his office bookshelf.

Thinking of Wade McCree's extraordinary memory and his ability to help people leads one to his most striking gift, and that was his gift of storytelling. How many of us at the Law School have been entertained, amused, and bedazzled by Wade's bottomless cask of vintage stories? Everyone, as far as I can tell. But this is where, I think, perhaps we can see better than others why Wade McCree was so successful in every area of the law, as lawyer, as judge, as public servant, and as professor. To anyone outside the law Professor McCree may seem to have been given merely the gift of anecdote. But inside the law we know well that the time-honored tradition of storytelling is one of the most effective means of communicating knowledge and principles. Wade's mind worked naturally in this tradition. As students began a course from Professor McCree, they would enjoy the anecdotes but may have wondered at their function in a serious course. After awhile, however, they would suddenly realize how much they had learned from the Professor's seemingly simple stories.

My guess is that Wade, being the patient man he was, with the sense of humor he possessed, thoroughly enjoyed his ability to impart knowledge while others thought they were merely enjoying themselves. He liked a little innocent deception. And if I had to guess, I would say that for all of us the deception continues to this moment and beyond; it will be a good while before we come to appreciate all the knowledge and wisdom he has left within our grasp.