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## In Memoriam: Professor James W. Jeans, Sr.

William R. Wilson

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IN MEMORIAM  
PROFESSOR JAMES W. JEANS, SR.

*The Honorable William R. Wilson Jr.*<sup>†</sup>

James W. Jeans, Sr. was a man of deep religious conviction. He knew what many of us hope for. Yet he “walked humbly with the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> His life and his work in his beloved profession set a high standard for all of us.

Jim was one of those rare souls who had been brushed with celestial fire. A brilliant, curious mind coupled with a heavy dose of common sense, and a strong work ethic made him the consummate trial lawyer and teacher.

Jim had X-ray vision when looking at a pile of jumbled facts. He could quickly reduce a complicated situation to its unadulterated essence. In his presentation of a case there was no wasted motion. Jurors, of course, appreciated this, and his style was convincing (which is crucial to a trial lawyer).

Jim Jeans was the finest teacher of trial advocacy I ever knew. Teaching is an art as well as a science, as is the trying of a lawsuit. For reasons that I can’t completely articulate, Jim had “the touch,” as hundreds, nay thousands, of his students will aver.

The term “renaissance scholar” is overused, but, when referring to James W. Jeans, Sr., it is entirely apt. He was a man with universal interests—a “polymath” in the word of scholars. Law, politics, farming, religion—you name it, and he knew about it. He was a delightful conversationalist and raconteur. He had the soul of a poet.

When I think of my dear friend Jim Jeans, I invariably think of Cicero’s words about a lawyer of his era:

So just and virtuous a man that he seems to be a lawyer by nature,  
not by education.<sup>2</sup>

Jim was lucky, too. His lovely, loving and beloved wife, Sheryle, is proof positive of this. Dust off your Bible (whichever version you prefer), open it to Proverbs, and the other books that proclaim the value of a good wife, and you will think the Almighty had Sheryle in mind when those words were written.

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<sup>†</sup> United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Arkansas. Judge Wilson knew the late Professor Jeans, well and favorably, for nearly four decades. They taught numerous trial advocacy programs together over the years.

1. *Micah* 6:8.

2. M. TULLIUS CICERO, *THE ORATIONS OF MARCUS TULLIUS CICERO* 78 (C.D. Yonge, ed., B.A. London, trans. 1856), available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Cic.+Caec.+76>.

In closing let me quote a goodbye to a cavalryman killed at Gettysburg:  
. . . faithful friend, great heart, hale and farewell.<sup>3</sup>

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3. 2 SHELBY FOOTE, *THE CIVIL WAR: A NARRATIVE* 574 (1963).