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Horace Stern - 1878-1969

Harold Gill Reuschlein

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HORACE STERN

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On April fourteenth last, Horace Stern died. Indeed it may be truly said that every citizen of the Commonwealth lost a friend. But Villanova Law School and all who have taught and studied in this Law School have lost a particularly devoted friend.

For sixty-seven years he graced his profession. For eighteen of those years he practiced law, and in 1903 formed a partnership with Morris Wolf which continued until his appointment to the Court of Common Pleas by Governor Sproul in 1920. In 1936 he became an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. From 1952 to 1956 he served as the beloved Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

Chief Justice Stern touched the law in many ways and left the law, its fostering institutions, those who practice its art, and the people who live under the law, the better for his touching. Dedicated scholar, devoted family man, loyal citizen and exemplary judge, he was, from an early date, destined for distinction at the Bar and upon the Bench.

He knew the companionship of the law in so many ways. For almost four decades he sat as a judge in the courts of this Commonwealth, and for more than a score of years he served upon the highest judicial tribunal of the Commonwealth. What Alexander Dallas wrote of Chief Justice McKeon in 1790 may be said in truth of Chief Justice Stern: "For history, which may applaud without suspicion of flattery, must hereafter do justice to your merits." Horace Stern's opinions on the high court have proved to be models of the judge's art revealing integrity of soul and intellect, clarity of thought and an English style beautiful in its simplicity and directness.

He was devoted to the training of young lawyers. His interest in legal education was genuine. In his thinking, there were few

matters in life of more moment than the work of the law schools. His primary loyalty was to his Alma Mater, the University of Pennsylvania which he truly loved. That was as it should be. But he shared his interest in the training of young men for the law with us at Villanova — to our great profit. He was a valued member of the Board of Consultors to this School of Law. When I launched the School of Law in 1953, Chief Justice Stern gave generously of his time to counsel with me. His advice was always sound and our initial success was due in great part to his unselfish aid. When the first class graduated from the School of Law at Villanova in 1956, Chief Justice Stern “graduated” with them, for at that very same commencement he received from Villanova the degree Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*. In 1963 one of the Student Law Clubs at the School was given his name.

But Chief Justice Stern’s claim to the abiding affection of all the people who ever knew him rests upon his complete commitment to the doctrine that all men are sons of God and therefore brothers. He would be no part of a privileged caste. His love for all mankind was genuine. He was a compassionate judge. For him, the guiding principle was the injunction so beautifully put in Exodus: “One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.”

*Harold Gill Reuschlein**

* Dean, Villanova University School of Law.