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IN MEMORIAM*

HARRIET SPILLER DAGGETT

1891 - 1966

On this 8th day of October, 1966, as this Board pauses with sadness to honor the memory of Harriet Spiller Daggett, late Professor Emeritus, and to note the magnitude of her contributions to the work of the University and its Law School, it is appropriate that there should be spread on the minutes the Board's continued recognition of a simple yet fundamental fact — that the true strength of a University is in its Faculty. In the careers of dedicated scholarly teachers, among whom Mrs. Daggett was pre-eminent, there is inspiration and abundant cause for gratitude. They blaze the way to learning for those of youth and talent who seek a broadened horizon through knowledge acquired in painstaking study. They point their students to goals, perhaps only dimly perceived at first, but soon to become reality in their students' achievements. They illumine the subjects of which they treat. They pass on their learning and the fruits of their research to others of scholarly bent, so that what they have done may be carried to further heights and to new applications in the service of society. They make the University stronger by having passed this way. To them the debt of students and the community of scholars cannot be adequately requited, but it is altogether fitting that the indebtedness be publicly and appropriately acknowledged.

We make this acknowledgment today of Dr. Harriet Daggett. During thirty-five years of brilliant service as a member of the active Faculty, from 1926 to 1961, Harriet S. Daggett became a legend in the University community, indissolubly a part of the vitality and traditions of the Law School. She exemplified in every manner unusual vision and ability in the law. Her scholarly writings and her teaching in the fields in which she was a pioneer have placed the legal profession, whether on the bench, in the law schools, or in active practice, greatly in her debt. The law was made stronger through her keenness of perception, her advocacy of change, and her ability at exposition.

*Resolution of the Board of Supervisors in memory of Mrs. Harriet Spiller Daggett, Professor Emeritus of Law, who died on July 22, 1966.

Her passing on July 22, 1966, five years after her retirement, was a great loss to her profession and one mourned by the large number of graduates who were her students.

Harriet Spiller was born in Springfield, Livingston Parish, Louisiana, August 5, 1891. Following graduation from Louisiana State Normal in 1909, she first pursued her inclination to work in education by teaching mathematics and Latin at the Jennings High School. There she married DeVan Damon Daggett. Of this happy union, which lasted for forty-one years until the passing of her husband in 1955, two devoted sons were born: DeVan Damon Daggett, Jr., presently Director of the Louisiana Legislative Council and Professor of Law at Loyola University in New Orleans, and John D. Daggett, also associated with the Legislative Council. Both sons have followed the calling of the law as did their mother.

Dr. Daggett began her legal career only well after her marriage. A rice crop failure caused the family to move to Baton Rouge where she undertook the formidable task of rearing her family while studying at the University. She received the A.B. degree in Government in 1923, the A.M. in the same field in 1925, and the Bachelor of Laws degree in 1926. She served as an Instructor in Government while in Law School.

Mrs. Daggett's superior record as a law student caused Dean Robert Lee Tullis to recommend her appointment as Instructor in Law following her admission to the Bar in 1926. She was one of the first women to be appointed to the law faculty of a major university. In five years she had won a full professorship and had spent one of those years at the Yale Law School from which she received her doctorate (J.S.D.) in 1929.

To the work of the Law School she brought tremendous energy and enthusiasm. She was often referred to as the best "man" on the Faculty. There was much research and writing to be done, and she plunged into those tasks with prolific results. Her first book on community property is still considered the basic authoritative statement of the community property law of Louisiana. She was animated with a zeal to improve the community property law, and her forward-looking ideas had marked effect in shaping the course of development. Her research into laws affecting child welfare and her Essays on Family Law showed her keen consciousness of social problems in these areas

and pointed the way to legislative reforms. The range of her interests was broad: conflict of laws, mineral rights, Louisiana chattel mortgages and security rights, successions and donations, and virtually every subject treated in the Louisiana Civil Code — in addition to an abiding deep interest in public law.

The extensive bibliography on file in the President's office attests the remarkable versatility of her mind. She was more than a narrator of past events. She was not satisfied unless she could bring fresh insight to legal problems awaiting solution, and she did this with great effectiveness.

Typical of her pioneering work was her early perception of the need for developing the law of oil and gas in Louisiana. She introduced a course in Mineral Rights into the curriculum. One of her former students, now a partner in a leading firm specializing in oil and gas law, stated in a letter to Mrs. Daggett at her retirement: "Recently at a class reunion several of us concluded that nothing has had a greater influence on our careers than your first course in Mineral Rights." That influence continues in many directions. It is reflected in the annual Institute of Mineral Law, now in its 13th year, of which she was the major architect. It is seen in the Law School's present program in oil and gas law, with a special chair devoted to the subject — largely in recognition of Mrs. Daggett's eminence in mineral law. It is found in her treatise "Mineral Rights in Louisiana," still regarded as indispensable to the lawyer or judge who may have a problem in this field.

Mrs. Daggett had an engaging wit and inimitable presence as a speaker. She was in constant demand for lectures, and the calls came from sources far beyond the borders of Louisiana. Deserved honors were heaped upon her. She received the Distinguished Service Citation of the School of Social Welfare. A special issue of the Oil and Gas Reporter of the Southwest Legal Foundation was dedicated to her in recognition of service as a reporter for that publication. She was honored for her distinguished service as a member and Chairman of the Louisiana Library Commission. Her work for establishment of a Family Court in East Baton Rouge received national recognition. The Louisiana State Law Institute which she admirably served as wartime Director conferred honorary lifetime membership upon her. The Alumni of the Law School perpetuated her memory

with a beautiful portrait which adorns the foyer of the Law Building as an inspiration to the present and future generations of law students.

Harriet Daggett loved the law, the Law School and her students. Affectionately the students called her "Ma" Daggett. She responded by acknowledging them collectively as her "sons in law." Shortly before her retirement the Chief Justice of Louisiana stated that Professor Daggett could turn to the status of retirement

"with the knowledge that she has more than mastered the work that came to her hands and that, through it, she has enriched our legal and judicial literature, broadened our knowledge of the underlying concepts in the many and varied fields of the law in which she has so ably written, and left the force of her personality as an enduring part of the very atmosphere of the school itself."

It has been said that the rewards of a life of teaching include the sight of a professor surrounded by groups of students, both young and old, but that this reward comes only to those hearts are true and warm. Such a reward, by virtue of the warmth of her personality and her love for people, was often to be seen in groups where Dr. Daggett discussed law with others.

When death claimed Dr. Daggett on Friday, July 22, 1966, an appraisal of her career could reveal tasks achieved of such variety and significance as to daunt the ordinary mortal. But Mrs. Daggett was an extraordinary person. She found time for work, for her family and for her many friends. Her views were sought by judges and lawyers and she gave unstintingly to every such demand. Her courage during her long illness was remarkable to behold. So keen was her sense of humor that she made herself a target of her jokes almost up to the final call. In answering that call, Harriet Daggett has joined a new community of scholars celestial and, no doubt, she is still busily engaged in learning and in teaching. Nothing else would fit the unusual personality of one who enriched Louisiana State University and the law she loved during all the time we were privileged to have her in our midst.