

## PROFESSOR WRIGHT STUDENT TRIBUTES

### FOREWORD\*

In Spring 2024, Professor Richard George Wright announced his retirement from the IU McKinney School of Law. After forty-eight years of teaching, his retirement was well earned, but his announcement brought deep sadness to McKinney's student body, particularly the second-year students who could not fathom graduating from McKinney without Professor Wright's presence. After numerous pleas from students, Professor Wright's golden heart showed through, and he agreed to remain at McKinney (if only to teach one course per semester for the next three years). However, his partial retirement marked the end of his remarkable twenty-three-year tenure as advisor to the *Indiana Law Review*.

As if an eternal presence, Professor Wright's connection with the *Indiana Law Review* dates back over forty years to his own law student days as a member and, later, the Editor-in-Chief of Volume Fifteen.

In response to his announcements, multiple professors proposed that the *Indiana Law Review* publish a tribute to honor Professor Wright's long-time service and tremendous contributions to the legal community, IU McKinney, and the *Indiana Law Review*. Proposals ranged from a *Festschrift* to a traditional tribute. However, each met the same roadblock—Professor Wright himself. He initially “forbade” the *Indiana Law Review* from publishing a tribute until his full retirement. Even when he gave in, he declined a *Festschrift* because “[I]’m not affiliated with any school of thought. Purely Individualist.”

The tribute plans remained frozen until Professor Frank Sullivan, Jr. suggested a unique idea: a collection of short tributes written by Professor Wright's former and current students, sharing their personal stories and memories of their most cherished professor. This concept resonated and fittingly set the stage for a tribute as individualistic and impactful as the professor it celebrates.

Thank you, Professor Wright.

**SETH ENGDAHL<sup>1</sup>**

“Trust your Uncle George. . .”

When I walked into Constitutional Law for the first time in the Fall of 2023, I did not know what to expect from Professor Wright. My only impression of the man came from the stream of accolades listed on IU McKinney's website next to a photo of him looking suspiciously at the camera. “This guy,” I thought, “Looks like a nerd. I like nerds.”

Professor Wright walked into class without any notes or computer and began writing the cases we would be discussing on the whiteboard. And then he began to lecture. “The goal of every Professor is for the semester to be your

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\* The *Indiana Law Review* would like to sincerely thank Professor Sullivan for his support and ideas for this tribute. Further, thank you to the former and current students for writing tributes for this piece. This tribute would not have been possible without all of you.

1. J.D. Candidate 2026, Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law; B.A. 2011, Purdue University—West Lafayette, Indiana.

masterpiece. . .” Thus began a semester of learning Constitutional Law with the aid of analogies to Lord of the Rings and Star Trek, effortless quotations of Western philosophers, the occasional reference to jazz music, and the constant reminder of Professor Wright’s love of chocolate and Coke Zero. To this day, whenever I read or hear references to the U.S. Supreme Court’s levels of scrutiny, I still think of Professor Wright’s hatred of bees and the numerous methods he would use to irradicate them. Using a cannon to kill a bee (and anything else in the vicinity)? Well, that would be permitted under rational basis review. Using a precise poison that only targets bees with no collateral damage? Well, that would be okay under strict scrutiny.

Sadly, midway through the semester, Professor Wright informed his students and McKinney’s faculty that his wife, Mary Theresa, was near death. Accompanying this information was a lengthy, deep, introspective reflection on life and love—full of references to philosophers, religions, and, yes, Lord of the Rings. I remember reading it and being incredibly moved, thinking of my own wife and family. Nevertheless, Professor Wright continued teaching, explaining that—and I am paraphrasing—teaching is what he loved to do, and it kept him away from self-pity. Indeed, had I not been told that Professor Wright was facing such personal tragedy, I would not have suspected anything was wrong—he came to class each day, espoused his dry wit, and never canceled or cut class short.

At the end of the semester, I vividly recall flipping through Erwin Chemerinsky’s treatise on Constitutional Law in preparation for the final exam and remembering the details of cases based on Professor Wright’s descriptions. Does government involvement in a topic “give you the willies?” Well, then, there is probably a privacy-based substantive due process issue.

As he transitions from teaching future lawyers to retirement, Professor Wright can rest assured that his students will easily remember Constitutional principles due to his witty, colorful analogies and sense of humor. May his retirement be filled with evenings watching Star Trek, drinking Coke Zero, and eating chocolate.

#### RACHEL SCHERER JELLEN<sup>2</sup>

It is hard to summarize the impact that Professor Wright has had in my life, most pivotally during my law school career, and when starting out as a lawyer. But for Professor Wright, I am truly at a loss as to what kind of lawyer, if any, that I might be right now. I am forty-three years old, and I have been, by and large, happily practicing law in California (my home state) for roughly seventeen years now. I kid you not; during that entire time, Professor Wright

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2. Rachel Scherer Jellen, also known as Rachel Anne Scherer, graduated *cum laude* from IU McKinney School of Law in 2007. She served as the Executive Managing Editor of the Indiana Health Law Review during the 2006–2007 school year, and her most proud and meaningful accomplishment at IU McKinney School of Law was being a research assistant to Professor Wright from 2005–2007. She is a member of the California State Bar and went on to practice in the areas of mental health law, disability civil rights, estate planning, probate, trust, and tax law.

has been glued to the back of my brain nearly every day since graduating from IU McKinney School of Law. It is hard to explain precisely how, why, or when this happened. All I can offer is that Professor Wright is quite simply a legendary teacher who transcends the boundaries of his own classroom in all the most meaningful ways.

Professor Wright's analysis of the law is not just from within any case book—his thinking and thought-provoking questions go beyond the book, beyond the classroom, and touch all subject matters, philosophies, and perspectives, both current and historical. You might literally find yourself digesting the words of Plato, John Stuart Mill, or Martin Luther King Jr. while talking with Professor Wright. Then, somehow, without skipping a beat, you find yourself in the presence of a totally normal everyday human being who happens to enjoy the Yankees, good jazz, and even Star Trek.

Having been a law student in all of his classes: Constitutional Law, Jurisprudence, Administrative Law, and the First Amendment, and when reflecting on these cherished law school days as his student, I almost want to say that being in any of his classes is akin to sitting down for a beloved dinner conversation with your dearest family and friends on important and meaningful topics that somehow do backward flips and summersaults over themes such as morality, goodness, justice, and truth. There is a unique creativity and love of learning and life that shines through in the way that Professor Wright teaches. He is a great storyteller, and so being in his classroom is truly like being on the edge of your seat at a great performance.

And his contributions to the legal community at large, with his countless scholarly articles and professional speeches all over the world, are equally legendary. Professor Wright is truly brilliant and creative but uniquely humble and easy to relate to and understand. Having worked as a student assistant to Professor Wright during my second and third years of law school, I poured through many of his law review articles, always in deep admiration for the way he shined a light on the truth while pushing the movement of the law in the direction of what is right and good with his scholarship.

It is truly one of my greatest joys to call Professor Wright a Mentor in this journey of life and law. You are with me forever, RGW, and I know your influence has similarly permeated so many others like me and the world at large to make it a better place. Like all the greats, you will never really retire, RGW. Your presence goes beyond time and space and is truly infinite. Slainte RGW!

—Your friend and student,  
Rachel Scherer Jellen.

### ASHLEY PAYNTER<sup>3</sup>

“Kombucha and baby aspirin.” That was what was in Professor Wright's coffee mug that afternoon, or that is what he told us before launching into a

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3. E. Ashley Paynter is a trial lawyer at Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP. She graduated from the IU McKinney School of Law in 2010. All opinions expressed in this piece are her own. In all likelihood, she's currently drinking Diet Coke and grenadine.

lecture on *Wickard v. Filburn* and the breadth and scope of the Commerce Clause. As a political science and religious studies major, Constitutional Law was what I had looked most forward to in my first year of law school. And after a grueling first semester, it was finally happening. But we were not talking about the hot political issues of the day—free speech or abortion or the Establishment Clause. No, those things were not part of the first-year curriculum. Instead, this larger-than-life professor—a real-life Doc Brown—was standing in front of our class talking about how Congress could properly invoke its power to regulate interstate commerce by aggregating individual, arguably trivial, actions when they have a “substantial” impact on commerce. I sighed and pulled out my laptop, scrambling to catch Professor Wright’s insights on the cases at issue that day so I could dump them into my outline later.

What I did not understand at the time was that this decidedly unusual but charming man would shape the way that I think about being a lawyer. The juxtaposition of his daily pronouncements that his mug was full of some absurd combination of beverages and near-weekly references to “our greatest and most profoundly evil Justice,”<sup>4</sup> with hours of lectures on the driest but most fundamental parts of our Constitution, demonstrated a truth that I would later come to fully embrace—if I do not find myself laughing most days while engaged in the practice of law, I am not doing it right.

It is no secret that lawyers, as a group, are prone to mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.<sup>5</sup> The pressure to obtain results for our clients, our colleagues, and ourselves is immense. It is all too easy to allow it to force the fun out of the work. But, Professor Wright’s approach to teaching the law set me on a path to understanding that just because something is serious does not mean that it must be dour. And, for that, I am not sure that I will ever be able to thank him enough.

#### DANIEL PULLIAM<sup>6</sup>

Professor Wright’s wisdom and guidance served the *Indiana Law Review*’s leadership well through his years of wisdom in addressing ethical challenges. As the academic advisor, he saw such quandaries as opportunities to teach and instill values for future challenges.

Professor Wright also brought his academic prowess to the pages of the *Law Review*. In handwritten script, Professor Wright’s written contributions rose above the practical challenges of harmonizing caselaw or structuring statutes. His review of the moral and philosophical applications of the law on society

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4. Oliver Wendell Holmes, for the uninitiated.

5. PATRICK R. KRILL ET AL., STRESSED, LONELY, AND OVERCOMMITTED: PREDICTORS OF LAWYER SUICIDE RISK, *Healthcare (Basel)* (Feb. 2023).

6. Daniel Pulliam is a partner in the business litigation group at Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP. B.A. 2004, *cum laude*, Butler University, Indianapolis; J.D. 2010, *magna cum laude*, Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law. He is also a former Editor-in-Chief of the *Indiana Law Review* and *The Butler Collegian* and a former law clerk for Judge John Daniel Tinder on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

went beyond the typical law review essay by asking and answering the questions of why society cares about human rights and morality.

**TRIBUTE TO UNCLE GEORGE**  
**BREA L. MCDUGAL<sup>7</sup>**

Professor Wright, better known to me as “Uncle George,” was the highlight of my experience as a law student. To state the obvious, Professor Wright is exceptionally brilliant and a wonderful professor. I know that goes without saying. I have learned so much in his classroom. From his professorship, I have gained a wealth of knowledge and a priceless one at that. Sitting in the front row of his classes is one of my favorite places to be, particularly in my 3L year, as I am seated and surrounded by the unofficial “Uncle George Fan Club,” who have followed him around, course by course, since our 1L Constitutional Law class. 1L is hard, or at least it was for me, particularly as a first-generation law student with a weight of imposter syndrome and a lot of anxiety. I was frequently overwhelmed and genuinely afraid, and I was questioned several times if I was in the right place or if I was just too young, too unprepared, or too “different” to be a law student. I often wondered if I was smart enough to be in our law school’s classrooms, if I was worthy of being there at all, and certainly worried if I would “make it.” I did not feel that way, ever, in Professor Wright’s classroom. I knew I was in the right seat.

Professor Wright exudes a lesson on character, a bright-line rule per se, that has lived in the halls of our law school, wherever he wanders (drinking soda and eating Oreos), thanks to him—that it matters very little how smart you are if you are not just as kind, that your heart matters as much as your brain does, and that you should always, without a doubt, use it. Professor Wright is kind—not just to the Editor-in-Chief of Law Review but also to said editor’s fun little sidekick and to all the “kids” in our row. He has valued my personality and friendship with my peers as much as he has any grade I have ever received. In fact, I would bet he values it a lot more. He is warm, friendly, and open. He is funny, unique, and fantastic at what he does. He is one of, if not the, bright light of our school. He views his students as people. He talks to us, and we know he cares, not just about our intellect, but about our growth, if we are okay. Professor Wright is an expert at many things, and I could list them all. However, this tribute would then become very long, so of all the things I think Professor Wright deserves to be remembered for, it is how he made people feel like they deserved to be here, to be a law student, to have a seat and a laugh, too. And that has made, for me, all the difference.

Thank you, Professor “Uncle George” Wright, for not just all the fantastic, challenging things you’ve taught me about Constitutional Law, the First Amendment, and Administrative Law, but for giving me the confidence to know I belong, for making unique and fun people just as cool as editors (who are also

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7. J.D. Candidate 2025, Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law; B.A. 2022, Indiana University–Bloomington, Indiana.

great), for showing that kindness is brilliance and that lawyers can laugh. I consider myself lucky to be in one of the last groups he will teach. I am saddened for all the incoming students who will genuinely miss out on a once-in-a-lifetime academic and personal experience in getting to know and be taught by our own Professor Wright.

Professor Wright, you are a difference-maker in the world, and I owe a lot to you in my journey. I am really quite thankful for you. And without any official endorsement, I know I speak for many of the “Uncle George” fan club members. Thanks for letting us into all your classes and making us smarter with a smile.

–With the utmost gratitude,  
Brea L. McDougal

***“Drive Safely, and Goodnight”***  
**SHELBY MOHR<sup>8</sup>**

When I moved into my apartment, I had bold aspirations to decorate the walls of my apartment. But, as work and law review duties picked up, the hanging of the whiteboard and posters fell to the wayside. However, I did manage to hang one thing—the recommendation letter Professor Wright (“Uncle George”) wrote for me this summer. Although I am sure Uncle George wrote this letter in less than ten minutes and thought nothing else of it, this letter immediately impacted me. The letter represents the three most important things I learned in law school, the life lessons Uncle George taught me.

The first lesson is to always find the joy and humor in life. In the letter, when talking about my transferrable skills and assets, Uncle George included a quip about my enjoyment of crossword puzzles. At first read, the comment made me laugh. Upon reflection, I realized it embodied one of Uncle George’s best attributes—never to forget to have fun and laugh. He brings humor into everything he does—especially into classes with his outlandish jokes about cases or teaching lessons with two puppets, aptly named “Duck and Panda.” The joy he brings to others is palpable. And by doing so, he encourages others to act the same way. He reminds us that although the law is important and can be stressful, joy and humor are how you make it through life.

The next important life lesson he taught me is to always believe in yourself. The first time I read the letter, I cried. I have never felt so supported, and his writing took me aback. It was not only special because they came from a mentor I admire deeply, but it reminded me to view myself and my abilities the way he does. Imposter syndrome is, unfortunately, a very real thing. It has always been something I have struggled with, undoubtedly increasing during law school. I always think I should be doing more, and often joke that I wound up where I am as a “practical joke gone too far.” However, Professor Wright has a way of noticing these feelings and telling you precisely what you need to hear to make those thoughts go away. He believes that all his students will do great things and

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8. J.D. Candidate 2025, Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law; B.A. 2022, Butler University. Shelby is the current Editor-in-Chief of the Indiana Law Review.

that we must believe that we can. I will forever be thankful to Uncle George for his support. The letter was genuinely transformational in helping me realize that I *can* do whatever I put my mind to.

The last and most admirable lesson Uncle George taught me is to be generous. When I asked him if he would write the letter, he told me it would be “his honor” and returned it within twenty-four hours. He was doing me a huge favor; however, he viewed it as an honor for him. His generosity is endless, and I cannot even recall all the things Professor Wright has given or done for me over the past three years. If I needed a book for a project or law review, he would give me the book, tell me to keep it, and highlight pages he thought I would enjoy. He gave me a Minnesota Twins hat after I expressed disdain for his gifting of Yankees hats to other students (sorry, Professor Wright, I will never like the Yankees). Other gifts include stress balls, seven Tide To-Go pens, a detailed flow chart outlining my future steps to reach my goals, and the most special, a vintage mirror belonging to his late wife. Professor Wright is the most generous person I know. He gives and gives, often knowing what people need before they do. This will be forever the most important lesson he taught me, and one of my goals in life is to be as generous, if even possible, as Professor George.

Uncle George taught me a lot in my three years. However, the lessons I will likely remember are not those about the Commerce Clause, the First Amendment, or *Chevron* deference; they will be life lessons. He has never said these things out loud; rather, he displays them daily. His recommendation letter for me will always serve as a reminder of these lessons. I plan to hang it on my office wall one day, as a reminder to always approach life like Uncle George: with humor, confidence, and generosity. Uncle George, your impact on IU McKinney and its students has been tremendous, and your retirement is beyond deserved. I will forever be thankful for the time spent with you, Duck, and Panda. Thank you for everything, and enjoy all of the Coke Zero-flavored Oreos your heart desires. I will end this tribute akin to how you abruptly end each class, “Drive safely, and have a good retirement.”

### KONSTANTINA NOËL<sup>9</sup>

I went to a Phish show recently, and the band said, “What an incredible thing, that we are all here together. We are here, right now. Think of the odds. That’s special.”

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9. Konstantina (Tina) Noël graduated from McKinney in 2022, *magna cum laude*. Konstantina was a note development editor on the Indiana Law Review Volume 55 Editorial Board, and she has fond memories of learning jurisprudence with Professor Wright. After law school, Konstantina joined Faegre Drinker Biddle & Reath as an associate attorney in the Products Liability and Mass Tort group where she worked as a defense litigator. Konstantina recently left the firm to spend time with her beautiful nine-month-old daughter, Stella. In her free time, Konstantina works part-time as an academic tutor and enjoys hiking and exploring nature with Stella, her turbo-nerd husband, Mike, and their oh-so-extraverted Labrador retriever, Annie.

We go through our lives alone, our paths intermingling, but nobody's path the same. You are one of one, entirely unique. Your eyes and ears are yours, and nobody else's.

Paradoxically, we are also sharing in this moment. Our uniqueness is intermingled, and we share one string in common right here, right now—the celebration of a great human.

Aurelius says to stop talking about what the good man is like and just be one.

That's R. George Wright.

He is an empath who sees straight through life's ugly and beautiful nuances. He is a modern-day philosopher. He knows what his students need and cares enough to make them think and question, in a time when so few continue to question.

He is a selfless person, a gift-giver. Every time I see him, he never shows up empty-handed. Funny story—he once gave me a car key battery; you know, the weird flat battery thing that goes in car keys that the dealership charges like \$150 for that you can actually get at Ace Hardware? Yeah. That thing. He pulled it out of his pocket and said, “You might be able to use this.” Well, strangely enough, my key died the next day! It was hilarious and, ironically, perfect timing. (I am still convinced he is some kind of wizard in disguise from an alternate universe).

Maybe he gave us that serotonin boost we needed so desperately in the middle of the day with his witty or hilarious emails. Maybe he challenged us when we needed it. Maybe he gave us good advice or a great lecture. Maybe he did not tell us what we wanted to hear, but we are better for it now.

We are all lucky to have crossed paths with Professor Wright. We are here, right now, putting our love for this great person into words, so take a pause to celebrate—George (as he always reminds me, as we share a middle name). From one George to another, I am so happy we were here on earth at the same time. Think of the odds. That's special.

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#### EVANGELYN RICHTER<sup>10</sup>

I have taken two classes with Professor Wright and am so glad I have. His method of using silly hypotheticals to explain complex legal concepts has helped me to understand the material without feeling daunted by it. I also appreciate that his teaching style is to generally lecture and tell us what he feels we need to know while allowing for questions should they arise. His generally unconventional style has helped me, and others find the fun in the course material during law school.

Teaching methodology aside, Professor Wright is very interesting to talk to. From classical music to his childhood radio station to his lovely lecture puppets

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10. Evangelyn Richter, J.D. Candidate 2026, Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law.



Duck & Panda, Professor Wright always shares an interesting perspective, story, or sentiment. He exemplifies that while the law itself may be dry at times, its practitioners are often just the opposite: interesting, intelligent, and illustrious.

#### EMILY SLATEN<sup>11</sup>

No one who meets Professor Wright forgets him, and I certainly never will. His unusual combination of unarrogant brilliance and ability to connect with others makes him one of the most memorable figures in my time at IU McKinney and my legal career.

Albert Einstein once said, “The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination,”<sup>12</sup> and that is perhaps no better portrayed than in an interaction with Professor Wright. His quirky sense of humor and wit leave most ordinary people stumped and then deeply enlightened. Whether in the halls or in class, his obscure references and analogies shed light on topics in a way that simple studying never could. For years, he has shared his authentic, creative self with his students and colleagues and, in doing so, provoked thoughts and conversations that would not have otherwise happened. We can only thank Professor Wright for that gift.

But it is not just his brilliance that sets him apart. In fact, where other brilliant people might falter, he excels. He makes himself available and builds up others in a way few people are willing to do, certainly not lawyers. He makes a daunting environment feel less scary just by being present. And his varied interests beyond the law assure others that there are many paths to a fulfilling life. Beyond anything learned in class are these great examples of how to treat other people.

For the future students who never have the chance to meet and know Professor Wright, I can only hope that his absence will be filled by someone half as brilliant, engaging, and thoughtful. Best wishes for a wonderful retirement, Professor Wright.

#### ALEXIS STEINRAUF<sup>13</sup>

It is difficult to summarize in a few paragraphs all of the ways in which Professor Wright is so wonderful, but I will try. I started as a first-year at IU McKinney shortly before Professor Wright joined the staff. I remember being daunted by the workload, the subject matter, and, mostly, the uncertainty about

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11. Emily Slaten graduated from IU McKinney School of Law in 2010. Upon graduation, she clerked for the Honorable Frank Sullivan, Jr. on the Indiana Supreme Court. She currently resides in St. Louis, Missouri with her husband and three young sons.

12. *The Socratic Method*, <https://www.socratic-method.com/quote-meanings-interpretations/albert-einstein-the-true-sign-of-intelligence-is-not-knowledge-but-imagination> (last visited Oct. 29, 2024) [<https://perma.cc/P45S-2KTP>].

13. Alexis Steinrauf, J.D. Indiana University Robert H. McKinney School of Law 2002; Bates College 1996; Park-Tudor 1992. Alexis currently practices family law as a solo practitioner and is semi-retired.

the future. Professor Wright was a highlight of law school for me and my fellow classmates for sure. He is an amazing professor and an equally amazing human being. He was immediately popular and well-liked. He can talk or write about anything or nothing, and it is somehow always interesting and entertaining. His sense of humor is unlike anyone else's, and there is not a single person who does not find him funny. He always has a humorous quip to make you see the lighter side of life. It is a gift that he shares generously with everyone, not just in the classroom.

He is also incredibly generous with his time. In my second year of law school, my father died suddenly. Professor Wright provided unwavering emotional support through my time in law school as well as after graduation. At the time, I did not even realize how much I needed that support. I spent countless hours in his office when I was sure he had a million other things he needed to do. He always had time for me.

When I opened my own office as an attorney, Professor Wright gave me a small statue for my desk, that I now keep at home, as I stopped renting office space years ago. He was there when I was married thirteen years ago. I have an email file titled "RGW," containing hundreds of emails dating back to as early as 2005. This correspondence represents a cumulative, constant, and confirming presence in my life that I am so grateful. I feel so fortunate that he joined the faculty of IU McKinney, and I know that his impact on my education, legal career, and life has been immense.

**SAINT GEORGE AND THE DRAGON**  
**MIA TAPELLA<sup>14</sup>**

Law school is a battle against legendary beasts. Students need a champion, a sage warrior, to provide not only guidance but also support and encouragement. I feel fortunate to have found this in Professor R. George Wright. The first time I spoke up in Wright's class was when he asked the group of primarily 24-year-olds, "Does anyone know why people were protesting Dow Chemical during the Vietnam War?" After a few beats of quiet, I offered: "Napalm." Wright smiled, "You must be a nontraditional student." And so began one of my favorite and most treasured friendships from my time in law school. No one else in the world could make me excited to go to an Administrative Law lecture.

Whenever I felt tried by the challenges of my legal education, which was a lot, I went to Professor Wright's office hours. With minimal effort, you could coax him into a truly impressive and entirely improvised lecture about almost anything. The man's wit is sharper than that of a class clown a fourth of his age, and he is as "hip" with the current discourse as the same. His intellect is towering and brings eloquence to all he does, but in an inviting rather than intimidating way. His lectures, both formal and impromptu, are lyrical and those of a

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14. Mia Tapella, J.D. McKinney School of Law 2024. Mia joined the Indiana Bar in 2024 and is an associate attorney with Plews Shadley Racher & Braun.

storyteller; sometimes, his First Amendment class reminded me of the art and film seminars I took in undergrad.

Inspiration can be hard to come by when you have had four hours of sleep and a 50-page brief due, but I always walked away from my conversations with Professor Wright feeling a renewed sense of connection to where I was and the work I was doing. He shone a beautiful ray of perspective on even his darkest times. Like a masterful artist, and perhaps a knight in shining armor, Professor Wright offered a place of peace and support for battle-worn students. His wisdom will be dearly missed by McKinney's future warriors.



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### KATHLEEN THOMAS

I first met Professor Wright, a.k.a. Uncle George, during the spring semester of 2014, when he taught Constitutional Law. Since it was hard for me to type or take notes, I would take pictures of the whiteboard. Sometimes, Uncle George would pose like Vanna White. He knew I shared the pictures with other classmates and wanted to show off as only Uncle George could.

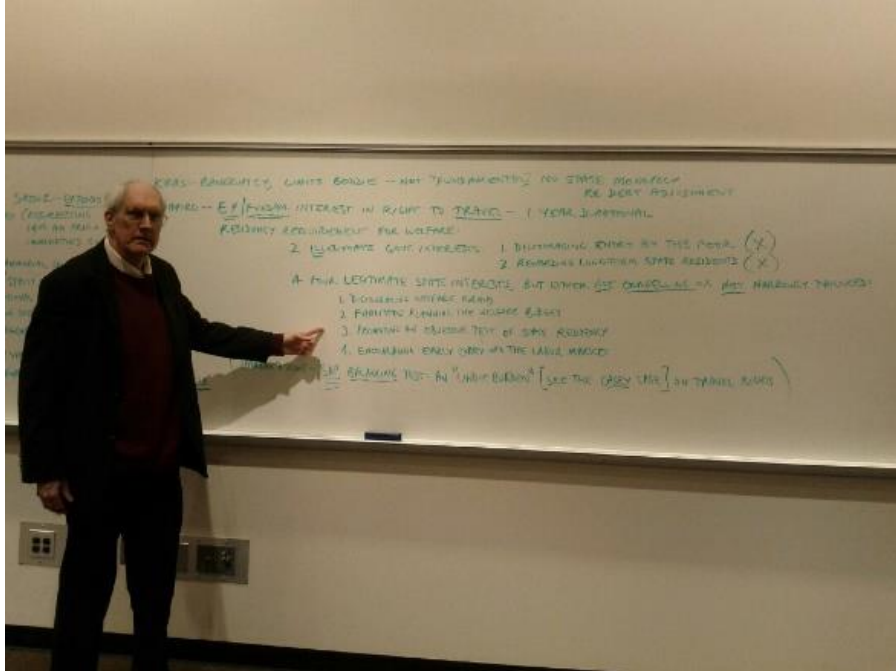
Uncle George is, above all, a good person. After I completed two semesters at McKinney School of Law, my Multiple Sclerosis (MS) was getting really bad, making it hard to walk and drive. I did not continue school, but Uncle George kept emailing and staying in contact, so I had something to do or look

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15. Wright gave me a postcard with "his portrait" on it. Raphael, *St. George and the Dragon*, c. 1506, oil on panel, 28.5 x 21.5cm, National Gallery of Art, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.28.html>.

forward to. We became email buddies, even sharing a little funny meme or comic strip that he could share, and I could comment on.

The bottom line is that what Professor Wright lacks in fashion sense, he makes up for in brains, wit, and heart.



Professor R. George Wright

#### NATALIE WICHERN<sup>16</sup>

Professor Wright, with his firsthand experience as both a law review student and former Editor-in-Chief of the *Indiana Law Review*, was a great Faculty Advisor. He was helpful and provided guidance, yet ensured that we would solve our own problems and grow as leaders. He was the first to celebrate our successes, offering praise that was often scarce in the world of law school. Most importantly, his door was always open for a friendly chat, creating an atmosphere of approachability and encouragement. Put simply, Professor Wright has left an indelible mark on ILR. As the Faculty Advisor, he helped shape the journal into a respected platform for legal scholarship and helped the student managers of ILR to develop as leaders. As one of those student managers, I owe him great gratitude.

As he steps into retirement, the legacy he leaves behind will undoubtedly endure. Under his guidance, ILR not only upheld rigorous academic standards

16. Natalie Wichern, J.D. McKinney School of Law 2023, *Indiana Law Review* Editor-in-Chief, Vol. 57.

but also emerged as a vital resource for practitioners and scholars alike, particularly through its “survey issue,” which showcases insightful articles from respected practitioners on recent Indiana legal developments.<sup>17</sup> And, of course, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the numerous scholarly contributions he made, bolstering the academic reputation of both ILR and McKinney as a whole.<sup>18</sup> So, while his retirement is a loss, it is certainly well-earned, and congratulations are in order. I have no doubt, however, that this is not the conclusion of his influence. Rather, it heralds a new chapter where he will continue to mentor and provoke meaningful discourse within the legal community and beyond. Thank you, Professor Wright, for your contributions, mentorship, and friendship—cheers to the journey ahead!

### MONICA WRIGHT<sup>19</sup>

There is no joy like walking into Professor Wright’s office and hearing, “Hey, Champ! Have a seat.”

Professor Wright lifts up everyone around him. I am consistently impressed by the compassion he shows for his students and how he goes above and beyond for them. His classes are interesting, his use of duck and panda is inspiring, and he brings in attorneys to help his students understand the real-world implications of his teaching. It is so clear that he wants his students to understand and grow in his classroom.

Since I started at McKinney, he has encouraged me to think about my long-term career goals and encourages me every day to deepen my relationships with the students here. His emails always put a smile on my face, and I am incredibly blessed to be known as his granddaughter in the law school. He remembers the smallest details about my life, and always asks about me. He is a shining example of a compassionate, wonderful man.

Professor Wright has truly made working at IU McKinney, unlike any other job I have had. Although I have had formal mentors before, my relationship with Professor Wright surpasses that of a mentor and a mentee. He is a great mentor, of course, but also a fantastic friend.

Professor Wright is unlike any professor I have ever encountered. He is the kindest, most thoughtful, and all-around best guy. I feel especially lucky to know him.

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17. See, e.g., *Indiana Law Review, Recent Issues, Volume 57, No. 4*, IU ROBERT H. MCKINNEY SCH. OF LAW, <https://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/practice/law-reviews/ilr/contents.html?Vol=57%2C4> (last visited Oct. 24, 2024) [<https://perma.cc/PB7L-TT4R>].

18. See *Faculty & Staff Profile, R. George Wright*, IU ROBERT H. MCKINNEY SCH. OF LAW, <https://mckinneylaw.iu.edu/faculty-staff/profile.html?id=54> (last visited Oct. 24, 2024) [<https://perma.cc/KRU5-NQ9F>]; *R. George Wright Profile*, SSRN, [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/cf\\_dev/AbsByAuth.cfm?per\\_id=444289](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/cf_dev/AbsByAuth.cfm?per_id=444289) (last visited Oct. 24, 2024) [<https://perma.cc/5RU6-QGDP>].

19. Monica Wright, J.D.; Director of Academic Advising, Robert H. McKinney School of Law; George Wright’s (adopted) Granddaughter.