

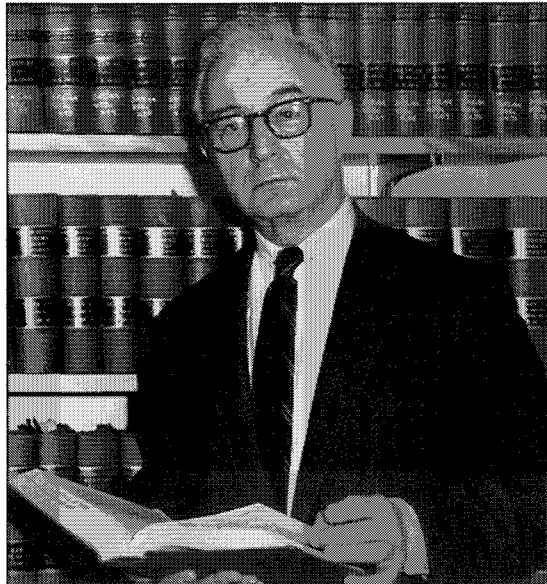
# Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin—Madison on the Death of Emeritus Professor Abner Brodie

---

Emeritus Professor Abner Brodie died on April 9, 1993, at the age of 87. In the 26 years of his tenure at Wisconsin, he served as the backbone of the Law School's constitutional and labor law curriculum. He ranked among the nation's premier experts in labor law. His broad experience, however, allowed him, when called upon, to teach the broadest range of subjects.

Abner Brodie was born in 1905 in New York City. After three years at New York University he entered the New Jersey Law School (now Rutgers) and received his law degree in 1930. For nine years he practiced law in Newark, New Jersey, and entered government service in Washington, first in the Labor Department, then with the OPA. Abner never faltered in his loyalty to President Franklin Roosevelt and the American Civil Liberties Union. In 1942 he married Agnes Cope Foote of Cambridge, Massachusetts. She and their daughter, Polly, survive.

The Army drafted Abner after Pearl Harbor, and he received a commission in the Judge Advocate General's Corps in Atlanta, Georgia. After the war, and service in the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C., and a few years of practice in Newark and Detroit, he came to Madison in 1949 under a research grant from the Carnegie Corporation. He studied industrial pension plans and joined the regular law faculty in 1950. He received promotion to full professor rank in 1958. For several years he also served as chief arbitrator for General Motors and the Unit-



ed Automobile Workers Union, a difficult but honored position. In this and other extensive service as a labor referee he held a reputation for fairness and objectivity.

Few colleagues excelled Abner's skill in the lawyer's craft; none could handle them any better than he. His questions slashed through statutory and doctrinal underbrush; his writing reflected precision in thought, and grace in expression. His formidable presence as a judge of student arguments terrified but enlightened. The *Daily Cardinal* once suggested that Abner Brodie's classroom performance made him our version of Professor Kingsfield (from "The Paper Chase"). His students, as they matured, came to appreciate and love him for his vision, for the warmth of his friendship, and for his passion for justice.

Outside the classroom Abner abandoned neutrality. He made it a particular

hobby to puncture Presidential prevarications and pardons. He'd sit before his TV set making immediate and telling responses to President Nixon, and we doubt not that Agnes felt prompted to point out, "But Abner, he can't hear you."

His colleagues heard Abner with invariable respect and affection. Like his hero, Justice Brandeis, beneath an iron control lay a fiery nature, indignation at injustice, and anger at pretense. His colleagues recognized him as a great man to have at one's side. In 1975 he received the coveted Wisconsin Law Alumni Faculty Award.

His quiet University service included a large role in fashioning the first edition of our faculty rules and procedures; he served Wisconsin's Supreme Court in a study of state appellate procedures and practices; and he co-edited a pioneering textbook on labor law.

After retiring in 1976 he taught for two years as Visiting Professor at the McGeorge Law School in Sacramento, California. On his return to Madison, he continued to work as a private labor arbitrator for several years.

Abner's life exemplifies that of a top-notch lawyer, a first-class teacher, a devoted public servant, and a first-rate human being.

## MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Gordon B. Baldwin  
Arlen Christenson, Chair  
James E. Jones, Jr.  
Samuel Mermin