

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
FOR
ALFRED THOMPSON ADAMS, JR.

Some would say Alf Adams was a conservative, traditional member of the bar. Others, that he was unique, creative, about as individualistic as they come. Both would be right.

Alfred Thompson Adams, Jr. died May 21st, 2013, a little short of his 86th birthday. He and his first wife Peggy had raised five children: daughters Jencie, Karin, Peggy and Sue and a son Alfred III, who among them had gifted him with 20 grandchildren.

When he retired in 2002 Alf had practiced law 50 years. Along the way he had traveled abroad, had crafted furniture in his woodworking shop, run for congress, managed political campaigns, hunted and fished, tried his hand at oil painting, kept bees and bottled honey. He had designed, built, surveyed, bought, sold, rented out and appraised real estate. He was a long time deacon and elder in this historic Downtown Presbyterian Church.

Alf absorbed the work ethic and strong values of his numerous Adams and Howell forebears. For generations they peopled pulpits, merchant houses and public offices in this community. There was R.B.C. Howell, a pioneer Baptist preacher in 1831, and Alf's great-grandfather, Morton B. Howell, a Yale-trained lawyer, who was mayor of Nashville in the 1870s, among many notables.

Older Nashville lawyers remember Alf's father, Chancellor Alfred Adams, for his habit of buying peanuts in the Arcade and passing them out to lawyers on the sidewalk. If he collared a young lawyer near a bookstore, he would steer him inside to suggest a book about history or the outdoors.

After high school at MBA Alf enlisted in the Navy as World War II was ending, then returned to enter Vanderbilt. He first studied engineering, then law. He was graduated from law school and was elected to the legislature in 1952, and married Peggy in 1954.

Why did Alf become a lawyer, rather than an engineer? We never heard him say. He did tell about an early venture with a fellow engineering student, building a structure with a concrete floor. After an expensive load of concrete was poured, they

watched helplessly as the forms gave way and the wet concrete morphed into a formless mess. Some of us wondered whether that might have made him think about following his father's calling.

Alf and his law partner Mac Glasgow were among a group of mostly young lawyers who in the early 1960s decided to build, occupy and own their own office building just off the public square. The Court Square Building was completed in 1965. The Glasgow and Adams law firm practiced there about 30 years.

Alf tried lawsuits, wrote wills and contracts, counseled the young and old, especially the sick, counseled businesses and lobbied the legislature for the insurance industry. His charitable efforts and pro bono legal work were centered in the Nashville Union Rescue Mission, where feeding and housing the homeless were more to his style than the charity balls of the glitterari.

Associates who worked at Glasgow and Adams distinguished themselves in the profession. Among them are George Paine of our bankruptcy bench and Jim Swiggart, the first judge of our Sixth Circuit Court, whose career we honor in this service today; Ritchie Pigue, Mike Philbin, Gino Marchetti, the late Jack Thompson and the late Dick Taylor.

After the Glasgow and Adams firm closed, Alf co-founded the firm of Adams and Whiteacre with his contemporary Jack Whiteacre, and before he retired, nurtured still another crop of young associates.

About three years after Peggy's death, Alf moved to Grundy County, population less than 500. There he settled in one of the log houses he had built in the historic upscale resort community Beersheba Springs, which was Incorporated in 1839. Generations of Adamses and Howells had taken to their homes there in the cool hills to escape summer heat. Alf continued to enjoy the nearby natural wonders of the Savage Gulf he had known since childhood.

Despite three heart bypass surgeries Alf weathered over the years he continued an active life. In 2003 he married his second wife Patricia, who survives. He grew a Santa Claus beard, continued to build log homes, indulged his occasional taste for snuff and chewing tobacco, led the singing in the local Methodist Church, grew corn and fruit trees and a vegetable garden. When weather kept him inside, he made coonskin caps and snakeskin belts, or from his well-stocked shelves savored favorite works of history, literature and poetry. He led the Republican Executive Committee of

Grundy County, and served on the election commission. He was the unofficial mayor of Beersheba Springs.

We missed him. His friends Connie Summers, Ward DeWitt and I were among those who trekked to the mountain to visit from time to time. Alf was a raconteur but Connie learned that a visit would likely involve more than talk. He found himself helping Alf feed sugar to his bees, pick apples, or saw planks from cherry trees Alf had salvaged from the path of a new highway. On one trip about 20 of Alf's relatives made an impromptu visit. Alf hauled fish from the freezer and he and Pat managed a delightful dinner for all.

In June, in this sanctuary, Alf's full life was celebrated with joyous recollections of his children and grandchildren. To his grandchildren, Alf would send a check on their birthdays, along with a letter. Not a letter *from* Alf to the grandchild, but a letter *to* Alf *from* the grandchild.

Dear Poppy:

Thank you for the \$20. I will be frugal and save some of the money. At school I promise to work hard to get good grades. I will read my Bible. I will mind my behavior and will try to please my parents.


It ended with a line for the grandchild's signature and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. It must have made Alf smile to know that *each year* a parent would see that the letter was dutifully considered by the grandchild, signed and mailed back.

Alf was a noble member of our profession. But he was much, much more. Some might have described him as a Renaissance Man. Maybe his friend Ward DeWitt put it best. Ward said: *If ever there was a man who lived up to the old sobriquet "a Man for all Seasons," it was Alf Adams.*

Now, be it resolved that these remembrances be entered on the minutes of the court


Douglas M. Fisher


Chancellor


Ward Dewitt Jr.
November 21, 2013