

## **Maynard Pirsig, 95, oldest law school teacher in U.S., dies // Former 'U' dean, William Mitchell professor taught law longest in U.S.**

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Staff Writer

Maynard Pirsig, former dean of the University of Minnesota Law School and professor at the William Mitchell College of Law in St. Paul, died Wednesday at his home in New Brighton. He was 95.

Chief Justice A.M. (Sandy) Keith of the Minnesota Supreme Court said Pirsig was a truly great figure in Minnesota's legal history.

"He had an important and immense effect in so many areas of our law - legal education, court procedures and judicial administration, just to name a few," he said.

Pirsig, who lived most of his life in Minneapolis, joined the university's Law School faculty in 1933 and was dean from 1948 to 1955. He retired from the university in 1970, but taught at William Mitchell until 1993. It was widely believed that he taught longer than any other law professor in the United States and was the oldest regular teacher at any U.S. law school.

He taught courses on pleading, ethics, judicial administration and criminal law, and introduced the first course of personnel training in correctional institutions at the university. In 1942 he was temporarily appointed to the state

Supreme Court by Gov. Harold Stassen. He served for only a few months, but wrote more than a dozen opinions, several of which later became important legal precedents.

Robert Stein, former dean of the Law School and now executive director of the American Bar Association, said Pirsig was an unpretentious man concerned about the welfare of others. Stein's successor as dean, E. Thomas Sullivan, said Pirsig left a legacy of hiring gifted faculty members who later went on to national distinction.

In 1963, Pirsig helped draft a bill to revise the state's criminal code. Although some officials believed that it was too lenient and hampered law enforcement, it was passed two years later. He was a member of the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws and drafted several pieces of legislation later adopted by many states, including the Uniform Arbitration Act in 1955 and the Uniform Juvenile Court Act in 1986.

He was a member of the Minnesota Supreme Court's Commission on Juvenile Courts and secretary of the Minnesota Judicial Council and helped develop the state's county and juvenile court systems. He received an honorary doctorate from William Mitchell and the University of Minnesota's Outstanding Achievement Award. William Mitchell

established an annual distinguished lecturer series in his honor in 1987.

Pirsig was born near Elmore, Minn. He was an attorney and director of the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis for six years until he was hired by the University of Minnesota. He studied for several years in England and at Harvard University.

Randall Tietjen, a lawyer with Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi in Minneapolis and one of Pirsig's former students, said he loved to hear him talk about the past. They collaborated on one of Pirsig's last law review articles.

"Maynard had an absolute and abiding love for the law," he said. "Even in his retirement and near the end of his life, we always talked about the law and he always wanted to hear about my cases."

Pirsig is survived by a son, Robert, who wrote the popular 1970s book "Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance"; a daughter, Wanda Wolf, of New Brighton; two brothers, Howard of Utica, Ohio, and Elmer, of Kiester, Minn., and a sister, Evelyn Wilcox, of Fairmont, Minn.

A memorial service will be held later. Memorials to the Fund for the Legal Aid Society, 430 1st Av. N., No. 300, Minneapolis 55401-1780 are suggested.