

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

CHESTER GARFIELD VERNIER (1881 – 1949)

Chester Garfield Vernier, Emeritus Professor of Law, died on March 5, 1949. Professor Vernier was born in Ansonia, Ohio, on January 19, 1881. He received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Butler College in 1904 and the degrees of Bachelor of philosophy in 1904 and Juris Doctor, cum laude, in 1907 from the University of Chicago -- the latter with one of the highest scholastic averages in the history of the school. The following year he served as Instructor in Law at the University of Indiana, followed by one year as Professor of Law at the University of Nebraska, two years as Professor at Indiana and six years at the University of Illinois. He joined the Stanford faculty as Professor of Law in 1917 and served continuously until his retirement in 1946.

Professor Vernier was a scholar of first rank and attained distinction in three fields -- criminal law and criminology, commercial law, and family law. His research was characterized by great thoroughness and attention to detail. He never expressed a professional opinion without first exploring every avenue of information. Coupled with this attribute was a fine sense of discrimination and sound practical judgment. As a consequence his opinion carried weight and he was instrumental in bringing about numerous reforms in the fields in which he was expert. Thus several of his recommendations, made some years ago, regarding the criminal law of California, were enacted into law. In this same field he was one of the founders of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology and Associate Editor of its Journal for more than twenty years.

In the commercial law field his work related to negotiable instruments and sales of goods. In the former he contributed to the revision of the uniform act codifying the law.

His greatest contribution, however, was in the field of family law. In 1912 he published his casebook on Marriage and Divorce, and between 1931 and 1938 wrote a six-volume treatise on American Family Laws which is the definitive work on the subject. The thoroughness of his research is exemplified in this study. It has been the subject of a great many reviews by other scholars and none finds any basis upon which to question his statements as to the law. His constructive suggestions for improvement in the law are steadily being adopted in one state after another. His work on this subject lead to his being invited to become a charter member of the National Conference on Family Relations.

In addition to the writings mentioned above, he found time to contribute articles and many notes to various law reviews and other professional publications.

As a teacher, Professor Vernier was exacting. He was respected by his students for his scholarship, and admired for his personal qualities. He was held in similar esteem

by his colleagues. He was a friendly, gregarious man who thoroughly enjoyed the relaxation of games such as tennis, golf, bridge and billiards, in all of which he had proficiency. Although he usually had well defined views governing personal conduct and professional problems, he was invariably fair minded and objective in all matters and never insisted upon imposing his views upon others. Within his faculty group, when decisions went against his ideas he loyally cooperated in working out the action of the majority. Those who worked closely with him over the years developed a high regard for him professionally and a deep affection for him personally.

He served the University in various capacities. Thus he was for five years a member of the Committee on Admissions, and for ten years Chairman of the Committee on Scholarship.

He is survived by his wife Hazel Anderson Vernier, whom he married in 1909; a son Robert L. Vernier, an engineer now in Bahrein, Arabia; two daughters, Mrs. Jack Holwerda of Stanford and Mrs. Frederic Norman of Los Altos; and three grandsons.

The Academic Council by this resolution expresses its sorrow in the loss of a respected scholar and teacher, and extends its sympathy to the members of his family. This resolution shall be entered in the records of the Council and a copy shall be sent to the family of Professor Vernier and to the Board of Trustees of the University.

George E. Osborne
Edward K. Strong
Marion R. Kirkwood