

2019

## Professor William J. Bridge

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### Recommended Citation

Jennifer M. Collins, *Professor William J. Bridge*, 72 SMU L. REV. 3 (2019)  
<https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol72/iss1/2>

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# PROFESSOR WILLIAM J. BRIDGE

*Jennifer M. Collins\**

IT is my great privilege today to introduce this tribute issue to the legendary Professor Bill Bridge. Professor Bridge earned both his undergraduate and J.D. degrees from Georgetown University. A member of Phi Beta Kappa and the *Georgetown Law Journal* as a law student, Professor Bridge was assistant dean and adjunct professor at Georgetown when he accepted the Jervy Fellowship in Foreign Law from Columbia University in 1976. Fluent in French, he studied at the Faculties of Letters and of Law at the University of Caen, France, in 1970 to 1971, and at the French Court of Cassation, the French Council of State, and the French Center for Comparative Law in 1977 to 1978.

Professor Bridge joined the faculty at SMU in 1977 and began teaching in 1978 after his fellowship in France. In his almost forty years at SMU, he served as president of the Faculty Senate, advisor to the Barristers, director of the Law School's Oxford Summer Program, chair of more law school and university committees than he would care to remember, and as a very wise advisor to the dean. He is the unofficial law school historian, with an almost photographic memory about former students, colleagues, and important moments in the life of the law school. More important, he served as the heart and soul of the institution. If a faculty colleague or student fell ill, Bill would be the first one to arrive at the hospital, and would continue to ensure that person was well taken care of after discharge. He made sure retired colleagues and their spouses were still fully part of the law school community, and took the time to make sure every member of our community felt valued and included. Words are wholly inadequate to express how much we value and appreciate Professor Bridge in return.

During his time here, Professor Bridge taught criminal law, advanced criminal law, evidence, professional responsibility, comparative law, juvenile law, legal research and writing, lawyering, law and literature, problems of proof, and lawyer as reader and writer. Our computerized records only go back to the year 2000, so we have had to do some extrapolating, but we estimate that Professor Bridge has taught more than 9000 students during his career at SMU. One former student captured what makes Professor Bridge so special. She wrote:

In the stressful transition that was becoming a 1L, Professor Bridge's Criminal Law class was the first class that confirmed to me I had

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\* Judge James Noel Dean and Professor of Law at SMU Dedman School of Law.

chosen the correct career. Practicing criminal law, I am reminded over and over again of the truth that holds more value in my life now than I could ever had imagined. “If it isn’t on the record, IT DIDN’T HAPPEN.” Professor Bridge’s legacy will live on in our minds and work for decades to come. It was an honor to be taught by him.<sup>1</sup>

I hope you will enjoy this very special tribute issue. We are profoundly grateful for Professor Bridge’s remarkable career at SMU, and hope that the breadth of contributions will give you some sense of this truly extraordinary man.

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1. *Professor Bill Bridge Retires*, SMU DEDMAN SCH. OF L. (June 22, 2017), <https://www.smu.edu/Law/News-Events/2017/June/ProfessorBillBridgeRetires>.