

12-17-2008

Oldest University of Dayton Graduate Dies, Leaves School a Priceless, Written Legacy

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"Oldest University of Dayton Graduate Dies, Leaves School a Priceless, Written Legacy" (2008). *News Releases*. 9419.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/9419

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlange1@udayton.edu.



Dec. 17, 2008
Contact: Teri Rizvi
rizvi@udayton.edu
937-229-3241

NEWS RELEASE

OLDEST UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON GRADUATE DIES, LEAVES SCHOOL A PRICELESS, WRITTEN LEGACY

DAYTON, Ohio — Mary Brennan Payne never considered herself a trailblazer.

But consider the facts. When she died earlier this month at the age of 101, the University of Dayton lost not only its oldest graduate but also one of the first three women to graduate from the School of Law. She graduated in 1930.

Today's law students tap out notes on laptops. Her handwritten and typed notes fill three leather-bound books, four inches deep and nearly 900 pages apiece. They're on permanent display in the Zimmerman Law Library as an enduring tribute to the law school's early history. Notes from a 1929 class are so meticulously typed in red and black ink and protectively bound in leather that today's students could still use them to pass a real estate course.

In Equity Lecture II on Sept. 28, 1928, she learned the maxims of equity, including "No wrong without a remedy" and "Equity aids the vigilant."

While she never practiced law after she married in 1930, she did pass the bar, ranking in the top quarter in the state. She performed pro bono legal work, particularly for women who had been abandoned by their spouses, according to Lisa Kloppenberg, dean of the School of Law.

"She was highly intelligent, well read and highly engaged in the world," Kloppenberg said. "So many descriptions come to mind when I think of her — independent, very smart, adventurous, a devout Catholic, an avid reader, a lively person. We've lost a pioneer."

Payne graduated from Steele High School in Dayton and went on to study English and political science — and play basketball — at Villa Maria outside Philadelphia. She then worked for the law offices of Craighead, Cowden, Smith and Schnacke in downtown Dayton, taking a summer sabbatical to study English and political science at the University of California at Los Angeles. At UD, she studied law at night and worked at the law firm during the day.

-over-

It was at the office that she perfected the shorthand and typing skills that would help her create those beautiful books of notes. "I took notes in shorthand and then I went back to the office and transcribed them," she said in a 2005 *Dayton Lawyer* magazine article. "I went at noon almost every day to the library to copy the notes for myself. I liked typing. I would always make two or three copies and I would hand the boys a copy of my notes. One boy said I had helped him get through law school."

Those notes also helped her become one of the best in the class. Besides the books of notes, Payne donated to UD books she received as prizes for her excellent work, including a 1910 second edition of *Black's Law Dictionary* and a 1925 copy of Frederick Hicks' *Famous American Jury Speeches*.

In 2008, the School of Law awarded her the inaugural Mary Brennan Payne Award. At the time, Kloppenberg reflected on her first meeting with the spry woman. "I listened with fascination to her stories of when she drove the family car at age 12 to her tales of being a pioneer in the legal world to advocacy on behalf of those without voice. I found her truly inspiring," she said.

Payne died on Wednesday, Dec. 10. Her survivors include three daughters, two sons, 20 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren.

-30-

For media interviews, contact **Lisa Kloppenberg** at 937-229-3795.