

ARTICLES

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF DEAN LEWIS H. TRIBBLE

James E. Tribble*

INTRODUCTION

I preface this Article about my father and his affiliation with Stetson University College of Law by disclosing that his career as a professor and dean began well before my birth and ended in 1939, when I was five years old. Family papers and memorabilia substantiate oral family traditions of Dean Tribble's challenges, accomplishments, and disappointments while at Stetson. My conversations over the years with prominent lawyers and judges who studied law under my father provided further insight. These sources dictate that my account will be largely anecdotal and subjective, with more emphasis on Dean Tribble's human and professional qualities than on the arcane politics of academia.

The Tribble family placed high priority on service through education, and Dean Tribble's efforts ensured that, despite searing family tragedy, his younger siblings would be able to obtain college educations and enter careers of service. The same determination was reflected in his efforts to impart to his Stetson students not only the necessary legal knowledge for competent counsel, but also the integrity he deemed implicit in the conduct of every officer of the court. The milieu in which Dean Tribble lived — so different from our own — and his family history intertwine with his career at Stetson at nearly every turn of my story. I hope to demonstrate how the flavor of his times, his steadfast devotion to the welfare of his family, and his honorable conduct defined the life and character of Dean Tribble.

* ©James E. Tribble, 2000. All rights reserved. Florida Bar Certified Appellate Lawyer. B.A., Wake Forest University, 1955; J.D. (replacing LL.B.), Stetson University College of Law, 1957. This Article, including the factual assertions, is derived in large part from Tribble family letters, cards, telegraphs, photographs, and various other family papers on file with the Author.

*BIRTH, FAMILY HERITAGE, AND EARLY YEARS IN
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VIRGINIA (1891–1909)*

Lewis Herndon Tribble was born May 7, 1891, the second of nine children — four sons and five daughters — of Henry Wise and Estelle Carlton (Rawlings) Tribble. Although he was born in Jackson, Tennessee, his family roots, both paternal and maternal, had been implanted firmly in the soil of Virginia since the seventeenth century. Lewis always claimed Virginia as his native state, discounting the inconvenient fact of his physical birth in Tennessee, where his father served his first full-time pastorate as a Baptist minister.

Henry Wise Tribble set a precedent in his family and an example for his progeny by pursuing a broad formal education to prepare himself for his chosen role in life. He graduated from Richmond College (now the University of Richmond) in 1884 and obtained his doctorate degree in 1888 from the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In the same year, he married Estelle Carlton Rawlings of Albemarle County and began his seven-year ministry in Jackson, Tennessee, where he and Estelle had their first three children — Stella (1889), Lewis (1891), and Bess (1893).

In 1895 the family returned to Virginia when the Charlottesville Baptist Church called Henry Wise Tribble to become its pastor at a salary of sixty dollars a month. Two years later, he took on the added responsibility (and remuneration) of the presidency of Rawlings Institute, a female academy named to honor his wife's uncle, Richard Herndon Rawlings, a well-to-do lawyer, educator, and entrepreneur, who had acquired the school from its private owner and donated it to the Baptist General Association of Virginia. During their fourteen years in Charlottesville, six more children were born to the Tribbles — Henry (1896), Mary Belle (1899), Harold (1899), Gladys (born 1902; died of scarlet fever in 1904), Charles (1904), and Muriel (1906). In addition to his duties as church pastor and president of the Institute, Henry Wise Tribble was a leader in community affairs. He served on Charlottesville's town council, was active in civic, fraternal, and temperance organizations, and was frequently called on to conduct chapel services at the University of Virginia.

Lewis and his siblings were raised in an authoritarian but loving home in Charlottesville, surrounded by the proud spirit of Virginia Patriots of old and the cultural advantages of the University of Virginia. Summer vacations were filled with delights such as

train trips to visit grandparents and other relatives in the nearby valley of Virginia. Special favorites were Grandfather Zachary Rawlings, who had a general store and water-driven mill in Vesuvius, and the farm of Great Uncle Benjamin Rawlings of Raphine, a colorful local hero of the Confederacy's Army of Northern Virginia.¹

When Lewis was 11, his parents enrolled him in the Rawlings Institute, the only male in a student body of about 150 young ladies. This distinctive status was agreeable to Lewis, and his education progressed well, for a time, under the tutelage of the school's excellent faculty. However, as Lewis made his way through adolescence, it soon became obvious that his natural development and increasing interest in the opposite sex were becoming unacceptable distractions from his studies and those of his classmates. Henry Wise Tribble's decisive solution to the impending problem was swift and effective; Lewis was packed off to the Mount Hermon School for Boys, an academy in rural Massachusetts, near Northfield, Massachusetts and the New Hampshire and Vermont borders.²

THE MOUNT HERMON SCHOOL YEARS (1907–1909)

Mount Hermon was founded in 1881 by the leading world-wide evangelist of his day, the renowned Dwight L. Moody, whom Henry Wise Tribble held in highest esteem. By the time Lewis applied in 1907, it was a well-endowed 4-year school with an excellent faculty, staff of 35, and an enrollment of 469. Its stated aim was "to furnish a thorough Christian training to young men of earnest purpose but small means."³ Fees for tuition and board were kept low (\$50 per term in 1907–1908) by the school's ownership and operation of a large dairy herd and farm, where the students had to work. As the cover sheet to Lewis's application form forcefully stated, "*Lazy boys are not desired.*"⁴ The school's rigorous academic curriculum, coupled

1. Byrd Barnette Tribble, *Benjamin Cason Rawlings: First Virginia Volunteer for the South* i–ii (1st ed., Butternut & Blue 1995).

2. Letter from Ida Hammond to Henry F. Cutler, *Mount Hermon School* 1 (Aug. 12, 1907) (copy on file with Northfield Mt. Hermon Sch. Archives). The Author is indebted to the Dolben Library of the Northfield Mount Hermon School and its archivist, Peter H. Weis, for supplying copies of pertinent documents and granting permission to use excerpts from them in this Article.

3. *Catalogue of Mount Hermon School 1907–1908*, at 20 (copy on file with Northfield Mt. Hermon Sch. Archives).

4. *Application for Admissions to Mount Hermon School 1907* (emphasis in original) (copy on file with Northfield Mt. Hermon Sch. Archives).

with the required labor on the farm, consumed much of Lewis's time, but he also worked in the school and hotel dining rooms and kitchens during vacations to help with his expenses.⁵ With its rigid standards and discipline, the Spartan environment gave him maturity and independence, which helped prepare him for some hard knocks to come.

It is from the Mount Hermon archives that we have the earliest evidence of Lewis's intention to make the law his career. In 1907 and again in 1908, he was required to complete a short questionnaire about his past employment and future intentions. Both times, Lewis entered lawyer or preacher in answer to the question about his choice of a future profession or occupation. There is no other indication that Lewis ever seriously aspired to the ministry, so it may be that he added the "or preacher" to please the Mount Hermon faculty or his father, who hoped he would follow that path.⁶

EARLY LAKE CITY YEARS AND COLUMBIA COLLEGE (1909–1913)

While Lewis was studying and working at Mount Hermon, events were transpiring that would bring the Henry Wise Tribble family to Florida. Because of a rift between the Florida Baptist State Convention and Stetson University's second president, the brilliant but autocratic Lincoln Hulley, the Convention began to shift its support to Columbia College, a new competing Baptist school in Lake City, Florida. When Columbia College's first president resigned in 1909, the trustees began a search for a suitable replacement who was qualified as an educator, theologian, administrator, and effective fundraiser. Their choice was Henry Wise Tribble, based largely on his record at Rawlings Institute and his church ministries. He accepted the offer, which included an annual salary of \$2,400 and a house on the campus. He saw

5. *Id.*; Letter from J. Roy Geiger, Tribble Family Friend, to Stetson U. College of L., *Employment Request* 1 (n.d.) (copy on file with Author) [hereinafter Geiger Letter]; Letter from Henry Wise Tribble, Father of Lewis H. Tribble, to Mr. Dickerson, *Financial Difficulties* 1 (Dec. 12, 1970) (copy on file with Author).

6. *Earnings and Career Questionnaire* (1908) (copy on file with Author); *Earnings and Career Questionnaire* (1907) (copy on file with Author); Letter from Henry Wise Tribble, Father of Lewis H. Tribble, to Henry F. Cutler, *Father's Wishes* 1 (Aug. 29, 1907) (copy on file with Author).

advancing the cause of education in a religious environment as a challenge to which he could devote his full talents and energy.⁷

In July 1909 Henry Wise Tribble arrived in Lake City to begin his presidency. Lewis, then age eighteen, returned to Charlottesville, Virginia, from Mount Hermon in time to help the rest of the family prepare for the move to Florida the following September. The train trip to Lake City took the better part of two days. The traveling party consisted of Tribble's mother Estelle, her eight children ranging in age from three (Muriel) to twenty (Stella), and three domestic servants. To economize, they traveled by coach and packed enough food for the entire trip in a large laundry basket covered with a tablecloth. It was all Lewis and his fourteen-year-old brother Henry could do to haul it aboard.⁸

When the train finally delivered the Tribbles to their destination on a sultry summer day, a large part of Lake City's citizenry turned out to witness the event. The whole family, servants, luggage, trunks, and household goods were loaded aboard a primitive horse-drawn bus, which proceeded slowly down the small town's main street toward the campus and the new family home. Among the curious crowd lining the street were two young sisters, Helen and Nelle Futch, daughters of a prominent Lake City family. It was then that Helen and Nelle had their first look at their future husbands, Henry and Harold Tribble, respectively.

The Henry Wise Tribble family quickly adapted to their new environment. The townspeople, Baptist leaders, and congregations throughout the State welcomed them warmly, equating their arrival with a promising future for Columbia College and Lake City. Henry Wise Tribble integrated his vigorous fundraising message into the sermons he delivered Sunday after Sunday in pulpits throughout Florida. Lewis and Stella did their parts by enrolling in Columbia College, thus adding to its burgeoning student body. Several of their siblings followed suit as they came of age, helping to boost enrollment to about 220 by 1911.⁹

7. Gilbert L. Lycan, *Stetson University: The First 100 Years 196* (Centennial ed., Stetson U. Press 1983).

8. Harold W. Tribble, *Reflections on the Tribble Family* 3 (1977); *Local Paragraphs*, 26 *Citizen-Rptr.* (Lake City) 5 (Sept. 24, 1909). The Author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Nancy Keith Wheaton of Lake City, who has made available to him her prodigious transcribed compilation of every article in the *Citizen-Reporter* between June 1, 1909, and June 30, 1912, which mentioned either Columbia College or the Henry Wise Tribble family. This impressive work has been a valuable resource in preparing this Article.

9. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 197.

The determined optimism about the school's future came to an early and sudden end with the tragic death of its esteemed president while in the line of duty. Henry Wise Tribble's missions often took him to churches in remote Florida settlements. His preaching destination on a fateful February afternoon in 1912 was such a place — the small sawmill town of Rodman, southwest of Palatka. Because the only access to the town was by a rail spur, Henry Wise Tribble traveled with a work crew via a gasoline-powered automobile modified to run on rails. As dusk came on, the driver did not see an unlighted logging train halted ahead on the same track. In the ensuing collision, a log extending from a flatcar penetrated the automobile, breaking Henry Wise Tribble's leg. Because no medical facility was within reach, he and another injured passenger were taken to the nearby home of H.S. Cummings, the well-to-do owner of the sawmill and a devoted friend and supporter of Henry Wise Tribble and Columbia College. A medical doctor was quickly summoned to treat the injury, but heart complications ensued. Henry Wise Tribble died at dawn on February 6, 1912, in his fifty-first year, in the presence of his wife, Estelle, his son, Lewis, and the other children.¹⁰

As word spread, newspapers across the South praised Henry Wise Tribble's life work and mourned his passing.¹¹ But the spiritual consolation of kind words could not alleviate the material stress in which the surviving widow and eight children (all minors except Stella) suddenly found themselves. Their only residence was the president's home, which belonged to the College; their only regular income had been Henry Wise Tribble's salary, which was no more. The tragic year of 1912 deepened in November when the youngest child, Muriel, contracted diphtheria and died just two weeks after her sixth birthday.¹² The twice-grief-stricken Henry Wise Tribble family could only survive as a unit by the hard work and strong will of its remaining members, but survive it did and more.

Columbia College did what it could for the bereaved family, but that was little, given the loss of its chief fundraiser. The family was allowed to stay in the president's home until it was able to liquidate

10. *Death of Mr. Tribble*, 29 Citizen-Rptr. (Lake City) 5 (Feb. 9, 1912).

11. *Dr. H.W. Tribble Died at Rodman from Injuries*, 47 Fla. Times-Union (Jacksonville) 15 (Feb. 7, 1912); *A Great Leader Has Fallen: Dr. Henry Wise Tribble President of Columbia College, Lake City, Meets Tragic Death at Rodman: The State in Mourning, and Columbus in Tears*, 7 Golden Age (Atlanta) 1, 5 (Feb. 13, 1912).

12. *Little Muriel Tribble — Suddenly Called away She Was Sick Only Three Days*, 30 Citizen-Rptr. (Lake City) 3 (Dec. 6, 1912).

enough assets in Henry Wise Tribble's meager estate to buy a modest home in Lake City, and Estelle was hired at a small salary as an instructor at the College, which also waived tuition for the children who had enrolled.¹³

Lewis completed his final semester at Columbia College and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in May 1912. Soon thereafter, he got a job at Pineapple Orange Company, a 500-acre orange grove in Citra, Florida, a few miles north of Ocala. In August 1912 he wrote to the principal of Mount Hermon School on his new employer's letterhead. The main purpose of the letter was to request more time to pay the tuition of his younger brother, Henry, who had followed him at Mount Hermon. In the same letter, Lewis told his former principal that because of his father's recent death he "had to quit [his] plan of studying law and go to work to help educate the rest of the family." In what must be viewed as an attempt to put the best face on his seemingly thwarted legal ambitions, Lewis told of the "fine position" he had at the grove, with prospects of becoming manager "[i]f [he made] good." In what can now be confirmed as a more genuine expression of his optimism, he declared that his newly adopted State of Florida was "the best country in the world." He held this opinion all of his life and never had any desire to move elsewhere.¹⁴

Lewis's career in the citrus business turned out to be but a brief digression. Within little more than a year, he achieved his long-held goal of attending law school. The turnabout can best be explained as the product of Estelle's drive and fierce determination that despite all odds, every one of her children would have the education he or she wanted. Estelle inspired the children and with Lewis's help made the most of every dime of Henry Wise Tribble's small estate. As a result of this family solidarity, all seven children completed college, and five of them became teachers at some point in their careers. In addition to Lewis, two other sons went on to obtain post-graduate degrees leading to distinguished careers in learned professions — Harold, a theologian-educator, became the president of Wake Forest University (1950–1967) and Charles, one of DeLand's leading physicians, served for a time as the city's mayor.¹⁵

13. Tribble, *supra* n. 8, at 5.

14. Letter from Lewis H. Tribble, Employee, Pineapple Orange Co., to Henry F. Cutler, *Employment Prospects* 1 (Aug. 22, 1912) (copy on file with Northfield Mt. Hermon Sch.).

15. *Who's Who in America 1964–1965* vol. 33, 2029 (A.N. Marquis 1965); Barb Shepherd, *DeLand Marks Doctor's Day with Tribute*, 68 *DeLand Sun News* 2 (Mar. 30, 1982).

*STUDENT YEARS AT STETSON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
OF LAW (1913–1915)*

The family's greatly reduced circumstances after Henry Wise Tribble's death meant that Lewis would have to earn his keep if he was to study law at Stetson University College of Law, his school of choice. To this end, an obliging family friend, J. Roy Geiger, wrote to Stetson on his behalf. Mr. Geiger recommended Lewis as a "splendid prospective student," bright and ambitious, with "a good foundation" as a result of his schooling at Mount Hermon and Columbia College. This high praise was followed by the dire warning that "[h]is mother will have to send him to [the University of] Florida . . . unless he can get some sort of work to do there at Stetson." The letter-writer must have assumed (with probable justification) that anyone connected with Stetson would surely agree that shunting such a promising prospect off to Gainesville would be a shameful waste of talent.

The job that Mr. Geiger suggested could hardly be classified as a proposal for feather-bedding — "[Lewis] would do particularly good work in the dining room. He waited on the tabl[e]s every yea[r] he was in school at [Mount] Hermon, and proved to be so useful that they kept him up there during the summer to work in the hotel at Northfield." The letter also included the prescient observation that Lewis "is the sort of a fellow who is a credit to a school, while a student, and who will be a credit to it after he graduates."¹⁶ Mr. Geiger's intervention had its desired effect; Lewis was admitted to Stetson University College of Law in Fall 1913 and became virtually self-supporting by waiting tables.

The text alongside Lewis's portrait photo in the 1915 Stetson yearbook gives his nickname as "Ike," the origin of which is unknown. However, the tag stuck and many family members and his oldest friends usually called him by that name. The yearbook synopsis of extracurricular activities shows that Ike did not devote all of his time and energy to his studies or paying job. He played left end on the sixteen-man varsity football squad in 1914 and forward for the basketball team in 1914–1915. The yearbook tagline describes Ike as a "Shakespeare in our midst," referring to his performances in college plays and membership in the Green Room Club, Stetson's dramatics society. Lewis was also a member of Phi

16. Geiger Letter, *supra* n. 5, at 1.

Kappa Delta, a local social fraternity later merged into Delta Sigma Phi. His activities were not all unrelated to the law; he was active in the Kent Club, a parliamentarian, debating, and oratorical society, Moot Court, and the Phi Alpha Delta legal fraternity, of which he was a charter member at Stetson.¹⁷

When Lewis enrolled, the two-year law course at Stetson was taught by a faculty of three. Richmond A. Rasco was dean. President Lincoln Hulley had hired him as a law professor in 1909, shortly after the University of Florida had enticed Stetson's first law dean, Albert J. Farrah, to start a law school in Gainesville. Rasco, a "keen, innovative, popular, and successful"¹⁸ teacher, was soon named dean. It was he who brought the casebook method to Stetson and started its first Moot Court program.¹⁹

According to the yearbook, the law class with which Lewis graduated, consisted of "[t]wenty men and one fair woman,"²⁰ and was the largest in the school's fifteen-year history. The lone woman, Annie Joe Law of Brooksville, Florida, was the fourth of her gender to receive a law degree from Stetson.²¹ She later became county attorney for Hernando County.²² The future professor and dean of Stetson University College of Law was but one of several members of his graduating class who would go on to distinguish themselves in the law and related fields. Other notables in the class of 1915 were A.O. Kanner, an original appointee and chief judge of the Second District Court of Appeal of Florida; Elwyn C. Thomas, justice of the Supreme Court of Florida from 1938–1969, who also served several terms as chief justice; and David Sholtz, Florida's twenty-sixth governor (1933–1937).²³

EARLY PRACTICE OF LAW IN LAKE CITY (1915–1918)

Once Lewis received his LL.B. degree, he was automatically admitted to practice in all Florida courts under what was commonly called the "diploma privilege," a device designed to encourage aspiring Florida lawyers to attend one of Florida's two law schools.

17. *Oshihiyi* vol. 8, 62 (1915) (Stetson's yearbook).

18. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 179.

19. *Id.*

20. *Oshihiyi*, *supra* n. 17, at 57.

21. *Id.* at 57, 59.

22. *They Tell Me That*, 20 Fla. L.J. 53 (Jan. 1946).

23. Allen Morris, *The Florida Handbook 1951–1952*, at 109 (Peninsular Publ'g. Co. 1952); *Oshihiyi*, *supra* n. 17, at 57.

Lewis's Certificate of Admission, dated June 10, 1915, was, according to custom, personally signed by the chief justice, the four other justices, and the clerk of the Supreme Court of Florida.

A handwritten note by Lewis's widow preserves for posterity the tale of his first litigated case after being admitted to the bar — a *pro se* claim involving a turkey. When Lewis's mother Estelle learned that he could not come home to Lake City for Thanksgiving in 1914, she roasted a large turkey, which she shipped to him by rail in a box wrapped in brown paper secured with string. Lewis and the friends he had invited to share the feast met the train at the DeLand station and claimed the package. When they later opened it in Lewis's room, they were devastated to find nothing but a turkey carcass stripped clean of meat. Only the turkey's bones and gizzard remained. Unknown persons with access to the bird during transit had obviously found its aroma irresistible, opened the box, devoured the contents, and carefully re-wrapped the package to conceal their crime.

The railroad denied Lewis's ensuing demand for satisfaction, because it held his signed receipt for the sealed package. Lewis countered with the argument that the culprits, whose misdeeds were imputable to the railroad, had resealed the package after raiding it, thus deceiving him into believing that its contents were still intact. Lewis claimed that the deception made the signed receipt void for fraud. When the railroad still adamantly refused to pay, Lewis bided his time until the next summer when he obtained his license to practice. He then prepared his declaration (as a civil complaint was then known under common law pleading) and brought the recalcitrant railroad to the bar of Florida justice. He soon prevailed, thus savoring his first litigated victory, despite his clear violation of the time-worn maxim that the lawyer who represents himself has a fool for a client.

After being admitted to the Bar, the novice lawyer returned to the family home in Lake City and resumed his role as the man of the house. The small local firm of Palmer & Palmer hired him as an associate, which enabled him to resume contributing to household expenses and the education of his five younger siblings. Not much is known about the scope of Lewis's practice in Lake City, though it was probably typical of that found in most small town practices of the day. There was almost no specialization; each lawyer was expected to acquire proficiency in any matter for any client who might walk through the door. As the newest lawyer in the small firm, Lewis would likely have been assigned the most mundane civil

and criminal cases. Much of his time would have been devoted to drafting a wide variety of formalistic and exacting legal documents — common law pleadings, negotiable instruments, wills, deeds of trust, and conveyances of interests in land. The monetary rewards were small, but Lewis's few years of private practice gave him valuable insight into the practical aspects of the subjects his future students would have to learn to ready themselves for their legal careers.

*BRITAIN AND FRANCE DURING AND AFTER THE
GREAT WAR (1918–1919)*

Lewis's incipient career as a practicing lawyer was soon interrupted by world events. President Woodrow Wilson was narrowly re-elected in 1916, with the slogan, "He kept us out of war."²⁴ But German U-boat attacks on the United States merchant fleet soon forced him to confront the reality that America would not be secure so long as the Great War continued or if Germany emerged the victor. In April 1917 Congress, at President Wilson's painful urging, declared war on Germany, and America began wartime mobilization.²⁵ It came as no great surprise to Lewis when he received his induction notice from the Columbia County Selective Service Board in January 1918. A few weeks later, he reported for duty as a private soldier in the United States Army Signal Corps. He was twenty-six years old.

The first of many strokes of good fortune to befall Lewis during the war came from his encounter at Camp Sevier, South Carolina, with fellow Floridian Captain W.L. Carbine. Captain Carbine happened to be an ardent suitor of Lewis's lovely and multi-talented older sister, Stella. Despite their difference in rank, Lewis and the captain became close friends. Although the comradeship was genuine, it was probably helped along by certain mutual benefits to the parties. With Lewis nearby, the captain could be sure that he would at least stay in touch with his beloved Stella and perhaps even further his cause by letting her know that he would be looking out for her younger brother as they faced the perils of war together.

For Lewis's part, the advantages of a lowly private having an officer as a patron were obvious, as exemplified by a postcard he

24. *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* 558 (Robert Famighetti ed., World Almanac Bks. 1999).

25. *Id.*

wrote to Stella, then in Lake City, from Camp Sevier on February 21, 1918 — “I expect to be transferred to the Capt[ain]’s company tomorrow.” Captain Carbine’s command was part of the United States Signal Corps’s Aviation Section, the forerunner of the United States Army Air Corps, but the unit’s name suggests that its mission was a bit less romantic than other aspects of early military aviation. Lewis remained assigned to the Second Aviation Construction (Bricklaying) Company until after the war. Lewis’s card to Stella went on to report, “[I w]as over to the Capt[ain]’s shack tonight. He seemed very pleased because of the fact that he had received two letters from you in one day. He surely is good to me.” On the same card, written at Camp Sevier, Lewis expressed his satisfaction and excitement at news of his early departure for Europe — “All the fellows in my detachment envy m[y] good fortune in getting across in such a hurry. I believe I hold the rec[ord].”²⁶

Private Tribble did not have long to wait for the fulfillment of his wish for an early overseas assignment. Within days, he and his fellows from Camp Sevier were ordered aboard a troop train bound to a port of embarkation on Long Island, New York.

In mid-March 1918 they boarded the RMS *Baltic*, a transatlantic liner of Britain’s White Star Line, pressed into service as a troop and officer transport. Lewis’s crossing to Southampton was probably his most hazardous wartime experience, but not because of enemy action. The deadly Spanish influenza epidemic that began its spread throughout America in early 1918 did not spare the troops aboard the *Baltic*.²⁷ Two unfortunate soldiers who bunked on either side of Private Tribble in the crowded hold of “E” deck contracted the virus, died within days, and were quickly buried at sea.

The Second Aviation Construction Detachment was first stationed, for about six months, in the English Cotswolds near the village of Middle Wallop. A photograph taken in the surrounding English countryside allows a glimpse into the camaraderie of the unlikely duo, Captain Carbine and Sergeant Tribble, who had by then risen rapidly, although not surprisingly, to that rank under the leadership of his benevolent captain. The sergeant sits astride an army motorcycle, grinning broadly, his overseas cap perched at a rakish angle above his high forehead. He leans slightly forward, his

26. Postcard from Lewis H. Tribble, Priv., U.S. Signal Corps, to Stella Tribble, His Sister, *Army News* 1 (Feb. 21, 1918) (copy on file with Author).

27. Robert H. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917–1921*, at 187 (Harper & Row 1985).

hands firmly gripping the handlebar with an air of eager expectancy. To his left in a gleaming sidecar sits his square-jawed commander, resplendent in polished Sam Browne belt and captains' bars, hands calmly folded, his eyes fixed on the left horizon with a visionary gaze. Lewis's short note on the back of the photo reads, "Ready for a [forty] mile per hour spin."²⁸ The Cotswolds were ideal for touring about by motorcycle and sidecar and were also only a short train ride from the sights and night life of London. In mid-1918 Sergeant Tribble's unit was transferred northward to a post near Liverpool, which proved convenient for visits to the north of England and Scotland as often as his military duties allowed.

Sergeant Tribble and his unit were among the fortunate minority of American troops not quickly deployed on the battlefields of France when they arrived overseas. Less than five months after the United States committed its soldiers and marines in force, the four-year stalemate of dreadful trench warfare ended with a rollback of the Germans at Meuse-Argonne and the November eleventh armistice.²⁹

Sergeant Tribble joined in the great celebration of war's end, but his more vivid memories were of Christmas a few weeks later. His sister Stella had recently arrived in Britain with the American Red Cross unit she had joined early in 1918, and they arranged to meet in London for the holiday. Their Virginian cousin, Captain Emery Rawlings (son of Benjamin Rawlings) of the Army Medical Service Corps, joined them. The three were privileged to be among the throngs to witness the grandest display of British royal pageantry since the beginning of the War — the triumphant arrival of President Wilson, welcomed by King George V and Queen Mary. As the colorful procession approached, the predominant chant from the British was "God Save the King." To give their small group's cheer more of an American flavor, Stella, Lewis, and Emery came up with "God Save the King; President Wilson can take care of himself," which they repeated lustily as the royal and presidential carriages rolled by.

The sudden armistice found the United States military with neither plans nor ships to bring its troops home promptly for demobilization. A modest precursor of the post-World War II G.I. Bill of Rights gave those men and officers selected for voluntary

28. Handwritten Note by Lewis H. Tribble on back of photograph (1918) (copy on file with Author).

29. Ferrell, *supra* n. 27, at 170.

educational programs something useful to do while they waited for transportation home. For 150,000 enlisted men with limited education, the American Expeditionary Force established post schools to teach vocational and other courses aimed at improving opportunities for civilian employment after discharge. Sergeant Tribble was among some 9,500 commissioned and non-commissioned officers with more advanced civilian schooling to whom a grateful France opened the doors of its universities. Selected French, British, and American professors taught Sergeant Tribble college-level courses.³⁰ Sergeant Tribble attended the University of Rennes in Brittany, France, satisfactorily completing four-month courses in the language, literature, and history of France; civil procedure; and international law. He received his graduation certificate on June 30, 1919, and on that same day boarded a train bound for the port of Brest. Shortly before midnight, Lewis embarked on the ship that would take him home to America.

PRACTICE OF LAW IN LAKE CITY RESUMED (1919–1922)

After being honorably discharged from the army on July 18, 1919, Lewis returned to his family in Lake City, but the demise of Columbia College during Lewis's absence must have dampened the joyful reunion. The school never recovered after the tragic loss of Henry Wise Tribble and fell deeply in debt as financial support chronically lagged behind expenses. The Great War hastened the end; the military draft so depleted male enrollment that the Fall 1918 semester was cancelled, and the trustees officially ended the school's existence in July 1919.³¹

When Lewis returned as the family's only resident wage earner, he opened his own law office and became involved in community activities during his two and one-half years as a sole practitioner in Lake City. He joined the Florida National Guard (in which he attained the rank of first lieutenant), the American Legion, and the Lake City Masonic Lodge. In 1920 Lewis was appointed as the city attorney of Lake City, probably on the recommendation of his friend

30. *150,000 in A.E.F. Enroll for Work in Post Schools: Over 9,500 Men Planning to Take Foreign University Courses*, 2 Stars & Stripes (off. newsp. of A.E.F., France) 1, 3 (Feb. 21, 1919); *Return of A.E.F. Is Almost Wholly Question of Ships: Warning against Exaggerated Hopes Given by Chief of S.O.S.*, 2 Stars & Stripes (off. newsp. of A.E.F., France) 1, 3 (Feb. 21, 1919).

31. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 199.

and predecessor, Roy Chapman, a 1908 graduate of Stetson University College of Law.

After holding that position for two years, Lewis accepted an offer from President Hulley to join the faculty of Stetson University College of Law, replacing his former dean, the able Richmond A. Rasco.³²

*THE STETSON YEARS AS PROFESSOR OF LAW
AND DEAN (1922–1939)*

President Hulley and Dean Rasco had long been at odds over which of them would control the law school's policies and day-to-day operations. The rift widened in 1921 when President Hulley reduced Dean Rasco's status from dean to professor. After teaching one more year at Stetson, Dean Rasco resigned to accept a position on the law faculty of the University of Florida. As Dean Rasco's replacement, Lewis effectively became dean, but President Hulley, true to his autocratic nature, declined to bestow that title on him until years later. Lewis arranged for the sale of the Lake City house and moved to DeLand with his mother and those siblings still living at home. The family bought and settled into a two-story Queen Anne style home on West Minnesota Avenue, four blocks from the law school. Young Charles enrolled in Stetson as a freshman undergraduate the same month his older brother joined the law faculty.³³

Another freshman that year was seventeen-year-old Hillis Carmean, recently arrived from Marion, Indiana, with her father and mother, George and Ida, who settled in Tampa. Upon meeting his petite and vivacious classmate, Charles immediately set his sights on winning her affection. But when he brought her home to meet his family, his older brother's approval of Charles's choice exceeded that expected of him; Lewis, too, succumbed to the charms of the beautiful Hillis. Fortunately for family unity, the rivalry remained a good-natured one, with Lewis eventually emerging as the successful suitor.

Lewis has been described as "a successful teacher" whose mild gentlemanly manner "was sometimes contrasted with [that of] the exuberant Rasco."³⁴ Like Dean Rasco, Lewis had to function under the aegis of Stetson's illustrious but imperious president, Lincoln

32. *Id.* at 243; *Who's Who in America 1964–1965*, *supra* n. 15, at 2029.

33. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 243.

34. *Id.*

Hulley. Tribble's strategy of using his natural cordiality to deal with the supremely self-confident President Hulley proved more successful than that of Rasco, who had adamantly insisted on running the law school free from President Hulley's interference. Despite their many disagreements, Lewis earned and retained President Hulley's high esteem until the end of Hulley's twenty-nine-year presidency.

Not long after Lewis joined the faculty came one of those rare happenings that pass into school and family lore. One day just after examination grades had been released, Professor Tribble noticed a car parked in front of his home on West Minnesota Avenue as he pulled into the driveway. He recognized the two occupants as law students to whom he had given low grades on their exams. When Lewis alighted from his car, they emerged from theirs, obviously drunk and looking for trouble. As they advanced on their professor with threats of grave bodily harm, Lewis sensed that this was a situation he might not be able to handle alone. He loudly called for his much younger brother Charles, then a wiry Stetson football player, who luckily was watching from the house. Charles dashed down the front steps and without breaking stride landed a hard blow to the face of the lead assailant, who dropped to the ground, bleeding profusely from the nose, which ended the fight. The man left standing helped his buddy to his feet, whereupon the disheartened pair retreated to their car, drove off, and were never seen again at Stetson.

During the early years of Lewis's de facto administration as dean, he and President Hulley worked together to enhance Stetson's prestige. In 1923 Stetson became a three-year law school instead of two, as it had been from its inception. The following year, admission standards were raised, requiring law school applicants to have completed at least one year of college, instead of just high school. In 1926 the requirement was raised to two years of college. During the summers, Lewis improved his own professional credentials by attending Yale University School of Law, working toward his Master of Laws degree, which he obtained in 1926.³⁵ In addition to his full work schedule, which included preparing new courses to fill out the curriculum of a three-year law school, family matters also claimed much of Lewis's time and attention.

35. *Id.*; *Who's Who in America 1964-1965*, *supra* n. 15, at 2020. In June 1927 Lewis H. Tribble also received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Stetson University pursuant to a practice inaugurated by President Hulley to award selected Columbia College graduates comparable degrees from Stetson in recognition of the de facto merger of the two schools in 1919. Lyan, *supra* n. 7, at 199.

His mother, Estelle, suffered from chronic progressive heart disease that so sapped the strength of the once vital and energetic homemaker that she needed almost constant care by the mid-1920s. She died of heart failure on June 30, 1926, and was buried in Lake City alongside Henry Wise Tribble. Earlier that same month, young Charles had received his undergraduate degree from Stetson. Thus, Estelle lived just long enough to see the fulfillment of her vow that all seven of her surviving children should have a college education, notwithstanding the untimely death of their father.

Hillis Carmean also graduated in June 1926. By then, Charles's courtship had waned, and her romance with Lewis had flowered. The pair became a favorite item of campus speculation. Professor Tribble was a popular figure on campus; the 1927 yearbook was dedicated to him with a glowing tribute to his leadership and service to Stetson.³⁶ To keep a watchful eye on her favored suitor, Hillis did not return to her parents' home in Tampa after she graduated. Instead, she accepted a teaching position at one of DeLand's public schools and boarded at the home of a Stetson friend. By this time, Lewis, having been freed of most of his domestic obligations following Estelle's death and Charles's graduation, was able to devote more time and energy to the law school's long-sought goal of the American Bar Association (ABA) accreditation and membership in the American Association of Law Schools (AALS). His efforts often required him to attend meetings of these organizations and their committees in distant parts of the country.

While attending one such meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado, in late June 1927, Lewis suddenly proposed marriage to Hillis — still in Florida — by telegram. The proposal and wedding plans were unconventional, especially for that day. Telegrams between Lewis and Hillis confirmed that her parents were agreeable to the match and that Hillis would travel by train to Colorado Springs, arriving early on the morning of July first. Lewis would meet her, and they would proceed to a Methodist church (Hillis's denomination at that time), where Lewis had made arrangements for a modest wedding ceremony. Interspersed among the flurry of telegrams were two letters from Lewis, one by special delivery and one by air mail, in which he pledged his undying devotion and praised the qualities that made her his chosen bride-to-be. To be sure that her consent to marry him would be fully informed, he briefly explained his financial situation and career choices.

36. *Oshihiyi* vol. 20, 7–8 (1927) (Stetson's yearbook).

My salary is \$3,300.00 per year or \$275.00 per month — that is \$300 more than any of the others are getting. If you don't think we can live on that and save something for a rainy day besides — then you had best change your mind and not make the attempt because I would rather teach law than do anything else — except be a judge — also I want to live in Florida. I have had offers of [\$4,000.00 and] better at other places but want to remain in Florida. I tell you this so if you don't think the prospect pleasant you can back out before it is too late.³⁷

The quickly arranged wedding went according to plan, followed by a wedding breakfast at the Antlers Hotel hosted by the best man, a well-to-do friend who wintered in DeLand. Lewis's tight budget did not allow for a photographer at the church, so the only pictorial record of the wedding day was taken at Seven Falls, a popular Colorado Springs scenic attraction. The tourist photo shows the happy bride and groom, Hillis in her stylish hat of the flapper era demurely tilted over one eye, Lewis in shirtsleeves with bow tie askew, each mounted on a small docile donkey, with the falls in the background cascading down the canyon walls.

As the new couple's formal wedding announcements began arriving in DeLand to set tongues clacking about the popular law school professor and his much younger bride, the Tribbles set out on an extended tour of the American West by rail and bus. When President Hulley received the announcement, he must have been concerned for the peace of mind of the bride's parents after such a non-traditional proposal and wedding. He thoughtfully sent them a handwritten note reassuring them about their new son-in-law.

37. Letter from Lewis H. Tribble, Dean, Stetson U. College of L., to Hillis Carmean, His Future Wife, *Financial Prospects* 2–3 (June 25, 1927) (copy on file with Author).

My Dear Mr. and Mrs. Carmean:

Please give my best wishes to Mr. and Mrs. Tribble. They are choice young people, very worthy in every way. It will interest you, I hope, to know that Prof[essor] Tribble has the unbounded admiration of all who know him for integrity and honor.

Yours Truly,

/s/
Lincoln Hulley³⁸

After returning to DeLand and settling his bride into the homeplace on West Minnesota Avenue, Professor Tribble resumed his earnest quest for the elusive ABA accreditation and membership in the AALS. Two main obstacles, which Tribble had little direct power to overcome, stood in the way. First, Stetson's administration could not or would not spend what was needed to upgrade the law school's facilities and faculty to meet the standards of the ABA and AALS. Second, President Hulley was so intent on retaining personal control of the law school that only reluctantly and after much delay did he comply with ABA and AALS demands that the law school be headed by a dean, with both the title and authority usually conferred on one holding that office. The ABA's 1928 Inspection Committee for Stetson "suggested that the president exercised 'too much personal control over [the] Law School and its administration'"³⁹ and declined to withdraw its objections on the strength of assurances that Professor Tribble "was actually carrying out the duties of a dean."⁴⁰ President Hulley finally relented. In October 1929 he gave Professor Tribble the title of acting dean, making him "the responsible head of the Law School."⁴¹ The following year, Professor Tribble received the actual title of dean.⁴²

As a result of this change and President Hulley's promised compliance with other standards, such as increased budgets for

38. Letter from Lincoln Hulley, Former Pres., Stetson U., to Mr. & Mrs. George Carmean, Parents of Lewis H. Tribble's Wife, Hillis, *Wedding Wishes* 1 (July 29, 1927) (copy on file with Author).

39. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 245.

40. *Id.*

41. *Id.*

42. *Id.*

faculty salaries and the law library, the ABA placed Stetson on its list of approved law schools in 1930, and the AALS granted it membership the next year. Both actions were conditioned on the school's maintaining the prescribed standards, as confirmed by annual inspection. The law school's standing with these organizations would remain precarious for years to come, especially after the onset of the Great Depression.

Florida's economic stress began well before the stock market crash in 1929. The devastating hurricane of 1926 brought an end to the Florida land boom and depressed property values throughout the State.⁴³ In Summer 1929 Dean and Mrs. Tribble were visiting relatives in Virginia when they got word that their bank in DeLand had failed, wiping out their small cash reserves; they were left with only the travelers checks they had with them. Within months after their return to DeLand, the stock market crash greatly reduced the value and dividends of the few investments left in Estelle's small estate.

The economic stress of the depression deepened for both the Tribble family and Stetson before it improved. In September 1932 Dean Tribble and other Stetson University employees received a short note signed by President Hulley. It said that effective immediately their salaries would be reduced by one-fourth because of the school's greatly diminished revenue. Expenditures by both the school and its employees had to be reduced to bare necessities. Dean Tribble began walking to work and had his home telephone removed for a time to conserve on gasoline and utility bills.⁴⁴

For the Tribble family, Stetson University College of Law, and the University as a whole, the decade of the 1930s was probably the most stressful and challenging in their collective experiences. These years saw momentous changes for all three, some positive, others negative and fraught with crisis. Despite hard economic times, the decade began well enough for the Tribbles and the law school. Lewis was honored with the title of dean to correspond with the duties he had performed since joining the faculty. He and Hillis were gladdened by the birth of their first child, Nancy Carlton, in 1930, followed by James Emery in 1933. In 1931–1932 the law school finally gained the official recognition for which it had striven for so

43. *Id.* at 252.

44. A comparison of Dean Tribble's 1932 and 1933 tax returns shows that his salary had already been reduced by about twenty percent. *But see id.* at 256–257 (explaining that salaries were not cut as drastically as President Hulley had proposed).

long. In 1933 Stetson hired another faculty member, Paul E. Raymond, a promising young lawyer with impressive academic credentials, including two degrees from Harvard — a Master of Laws and a Doctorate of Juridical Science.⁴⁵

On the other hand, the law school and its dean struggled throughout this time to comply with ABA and AALS mandates for continued accreditation and membership. The task would not have been so hard had money been available to upgrade the faculty and library to the required levels, but those funds simply did not exist nor could they be raised in the midst of the Great Depression. The crisis deepened with the death of Stetson's long-time president, Lincoln Hulley, in 1934. Even in hard times, President Hulley had usually been able to find a well-to-do patron willing to help the University meet some pressing financial need.⁴⁶

Dean Tribble apparently recognized deficiencies in the teaching abilities of some of his law faculty and intended to replace them when the time was right. Dean Tribble stated as much in a 1934 letter that induced Professor Raymond to return to Stetson's faculty after he had accepted an offer to teach at the University of Oregon School of Law, because he was frustrated with Stetson's slow pace toward improvement.⁴⁷ Dean Tribble's plan for meeting the ABA and AALS's ongoing expectations for improvement called for patience on all sides. He and the administration were able to persuade those entities to delay compliance with their mandates because of the school's undeniable financial hardship.⁴⁸ Dean Tribble was committed to upgrading the law school's faculty and facilities, but wanted to do so incrementally as the necessary money became available. He was by nature averse to precipitous action, especially in the face of financial uncertainty. Unfortunately for Dean Tribble's future at Stetson, others in authority did not agree with his Fabian strategy.

In August 1934 William Sims Allen, former vice president and chairman of Baylor University's School of Education, succeeded the late President Hulley as president of Stetson. President Allen "found the College of Law in a deplorable condition" when he arrived.⁴⁹ Factors Allen cited to support his harsh criticism were that "no student since the school was founded had ever been dropped for deficient scholarship" and "[s]trong students in Florida were going

45. *Id.* at 301.

46. *Id.* at 256.

47. *Id.* at 301.

48. *Id.* at 296.

49. *Id.* at 295.

to other schools.”⁵⁰ Professor Raymond agreed. “[H]e was shocked [in 1933] by the pitifully low condition of the Law School, especially by the weaknesses in the faculty and the generally known fact that no student ever flunked.”⁵¹ Early in 1937 President Allen called Dean Tribble into his office and told him that after investigation he was convinced that the law school could be improved only by replacing Professors Jacob Carpenter, Jennis Futch, and Henry Jacobs. According to a letter President Allen wrote to the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) in April 1937, Dean Tribble had agreed that the three were poor teachers and should be replaced, but said he had not recommended their dismissal earlier because of personal friendship. President Allen said in the letter that he thought Dean Tribble’s admission “proved his ‘inefficiency as a dean,’ though he knew [Dean] Tribble was a good teacher.”⁵²

Although President Allen’s unilateral account does not purport to cover everything discussed during his meeting with Dean Tribble, there is no reason to doubt the essential accuracy of his brief description of Dean Tribble’s response to the charge that the teaching skills of some of the law faculty were substandard. According to Professor Raymond, Dean Tribble said as much in his 1934 letter urging Professor Raymond to return to Stetson.⁵³ It would be consistent with the facts and Dean Tribble’s character for him to have disclosed his personal friendship with the three professors; he had a well-deserved reputation for candor and affability. Also, the dean’s sympathetic nature and his own struggles during the ongoing depression would have led him to confess his reluctance to summarily fire substandard professors with bleak prospects of finding other employment in those hard economic times. But the record shows that Dean Tribble’s priorities did not coincide with those of President Allen.

In March and April 1938 President Allen notified the three professors that Stetson would not renew their contracts. The following month, he removed Dean Tribble as dean and named Professor Raymond as his replacement.⁵⁴ Dean Tribble remained on as a professor and taught one more year. Although Lewis no longer held the office of dean, most of his past and future friends, col-

50. *Id.*

51. *Id.* at 301.

52. *Id.* at 296.

53. *Id.* at 301.

54. Paul E. Raymond, “A Labor of Love”: A Final Interview with Dean Paul E. Raymond, 30 *Stetson L. Rev.* 57 (2000).

leagues, and co-workers honored him by addressing him as “dean” for the rest of his life. This Article follows their precedent. Many casual acquaintances in future years were surprised to later learn that Dean Tribble’s given name was not “Dean,” but Lewis.

The three professors who had been fired did not go quietly. They appealed to the AAUP and AALS, whose rules of tenure required that professors be given a year’s notice before termination. A prolonged and bitter controversy ensued, with rancorous hearings hampered by intransigence on all sides. Only after the AALS temporarily suspended the law school’s membership pending compliance with its ruling that the professors were each entitled to a year’s salary did the administration admit defeat. In November 1939 Stetson paid the three appellants a total of \$7,500, a sum it could ill afford. Although the payment caused the AALS to restore the law school to full membership, it did not entirely erase the effects of the acrimonious dispute. In December 1939 the AAUP placed Stetson on its list of “censured administrations.”⁵⁵

The opinions President Allen and Dean Raymond expressed about the poor state of the law school obviously impugn not only Dean Tribble’s performance as dean, but also the quality of the education Stetson law graduates were receiving during most of the 1930s. Thus, it seems fair to suggest some reasons why the views of President Allen and Dean Raymond, as recounted in Gilbert L. Lycan’s history, may have been flawed and not entirely credible.

To justify the perceived need for drastic measures to improve the law school, President Allen and Dean Raymond both stressed the school’s record of never dropping a student for deficient scholarship. Their emphasis on this point seems to discount the natural attrition that occurs as substandard students who consistently make low grades drop by the wayside of their own accord. As evidenced by the incident of the two disgruntled students related earlier, this happened at Stetson, as it does at most law schools. In any event, it is doubtful that a high rate of student failures is a good measure of the quality of a law school. It would seem that producing graduates who become fine lawyers — and Stetson produced many during the 1930s — would be a better test.

The outstanding legal career of Stetson benefactor Perry Nichols proves that encouraging marginal students to persevere and excel can yield greater rewards than weeding them out. By the 1950s Nichols and the law firm he founded were setting nationwide

55. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 301.

standards for vigorous advocacy and effective use of demonstrative evidence. Nichols freely admitted that he had been a below average law student at Stetson and credited his survival and ultimate graduation largely to Dean Tribble's patient prodding and encouragement.⁵⁶

If the state of the law school in 1933–1938 was as low as that described by Dean Raymond and President Allen, it does not seem that their views were widely shared or even known by others on campus. The 1935 yearbook devoted an entire page to extolling the law school's merits. Below a portrait photograph of Dean Tribble appears the following commentary:

It is fitting at this time to pay tribute to the Dean of Stetson's law school, and to its other competent and efficient teachers. A law school is as good as its teachers, and judging from the past records, Stetson can proudly hold its record of achievements of its graduate lawyers to the world, showing that the training they received has been most proper. Stetson has the honor of having had more Florida Governors, Judges, State's Attorneys, and lawyers trained in its halls than any other law school in the State. Under the present and able guidance of Dean Tribble, assisted by the other efficient teachers in the law school, Stetson can continue to hold itself out to all of Florida, as well as to the other States, as an ideal place to prepare for an honorable profession. It is earnestly hoped that in the near future a new law building will be completed, which new building will be in keeping with the progressive ideas and ideals of the present Stetson Administration.⁵⁷

Even allowing for the usual puffery found in such publications and the limited control exercised by school administrators over their contents, it is curious that there could be such a wide disparity between the views of President Allen and those of the yearbook editors. Obviously, both assessments could not be correct. A law school that was in deplorable shape, as President Allen later claimed, would not be worthy of even a small fraction of the praise found in the passage quoted above.

56. Interview with Perry Nichols, *Stetson Benefactor* (1972); Interview with Perry Nichols, *Stetson Benefactor* (1963).

57. *The Hatter* vol. 29, 24 (1936) (Stetson's yearbook).

It is more than possible that the ex post facto opinions of President Allen and Dean Raymond were colored to some degree by their desire to justify the dismissals that brought Stetson University College of Law to the brink of disaster. Painting a dark picture of the law faculty would be key to President Allen's defense to any potential charge of mismanagement in precipitously firing the three professors. One can only speculate whether Stetson University and its law school would have been better served by leaving Dean Tribble in office, free to follow his plan to upgrade the faculty gradually.

Lycan refers to Dean Raymond's account of a 1938 meeting between Dean Raymond and Dean Tribble just after Dean Tribble learned that President Allen intended to remove him as dean and appoint Dean Raymond in his place. According to Dean Raymond, Dean Tribble told him of the impending offer and urged him to accept, explaining that he would prefer to work with Dean Raymond than any outsider who would otherwise be hired as dean. It appears from this account that Dean Tribble had by then decided to accept the professorship President Allen offered him in lieu of his position as dean.⁵⁸ There is no way of knowing whether Dean Tribble's decision to remain on as a professor was the product of his resolve to follow his first love, teaching, indefinitely or because he had no other immediate prospects of employment. Both factors probably played a part in his decision to teach law for at least one more year. Because no prospective employers were on the horizon, he decided to give teaching a try under the administration of his former subordinate.

The school year 1938–1939 could not have been very pleasant for Dean Tribble after the humbling experience of being replaced as dean, especially with the ongoing bitter controversy over the firing of the three professors, who were his friends. Still, there was a bright spot in December 1938 when Dean Tribble's wife gave birth to their third and last child, a daughter named Carmean in honor of Hillis's father, George Carmean. During the year, Dean Tribble decided to make a change and prepared to leave Stetson by seeking other employment. In January 1938 Governor Frederick Preston Cone appointed him to a four-year term on the newly-created Board of Review of the Unemployment Division of the Florida Industrial Commission. The mission of the Board was to devise a system for appealing orders granting or denying unemployment benefits. Dean

58. Lycan, *supra* n. 7, at 302.

Tribble accepted the assignment, but it did not directly facilitate his planned departure from Stetson. The pay for the part-time job was only ten dollars a day when the Board convened for its meetings.

In July 1939 Dean Tribble was presented with a job opportunity that suited both his financial needs and legal qualifications. It came from Florida Attorney General George Couper Gibbs, whom Governor Cone had appointed the previous year to fill the vacancy created by the death of his predecessor, Cary D. Landis, a respected lawyer who had begun his career in 1901 as one of Stetson's first law professors.⁵⁹ Dean Tribble accepted a position to head the newly-created statutory revision section of the Office of Attorney General. Dean Tribble submitted a one-sentence letter resigning his professorship effective September 1, 1939, and prepared to move to Florida's capitol city. He found a paying tenant for his West Minnesota Avenue property and rented a house in Tallahassee.

Surely Dean Tribble was deeply hurt when the University with which he had been so long and closely identified replaced him as head of the law school. However, it is equally certain that he expended no time or energy indulging in corrosive self-pity, bitterness, or even resentment. Such actions would have been foreign to his frugal nature, because he abhorred waste of any kind. He and Hillis remained life-long loyal supporters of Stetson University, especially after J. Ollie Edmunds, one of the dean's former students, became Stetson's president upon President Allen's death. The Tribbles also maintained their friendship with the Raymond family, though their social contacts were less frequent than before.

However, the less pleasant aspects of Dean Tribble's last two years at Stetson University College of Law could not erase his accomplishments or the satisfaction he derived from them. Under his deanship, the law school finally obtained the official approval of the ABA and the AALS, goals that had eluded his predecessors. But Dean Tribble's greater pride was in the achievements of his students, many of whom distinguished themselves as leading members of Florida's bench and Bar. Among the judges who attested to the excellence of the dean's teaching skills were J. Ollie Edmunds, an outstanding Jacksonville lawyer and Duval County judge who became Stetson's fourth president (1948–1967); Florida Supreme Court Justices E. Harris Drew (1952–1971) and T. Frank Hobson (1948–1962); and David W. Dyer, judge of the United States

59. *Id.* at 88.

District Court, Southern District of Florida and later the Courts of Appeals for the Fifth and Eleventh Circuits. The noted trial lawyers trained by Dean Tribble included Perry Nichols, Harry N. Beaureau, and Robert G. Young, all of the Miami Bar. Those named are but a few who remained lifelong friends and admirers of the dean.

*THE YEARS AS PUBLIC SERVANT AND LEGAL WRITER-
EDITOR (1939-1963)*

Any regret Dean Tribble had upon leaving DeLand and Stetson in Summer 1939 was probably offset by the prospect of taking on a fresh legal challenge of great public import. His new assignment was to carry out a massive legislative mandate, the main purpose of which was to provide ready access to, and improved tracking of, the many changes in Florida's rapidly increasing body of general statutory law. This much-needed reform, known as continuous statutory revision, was long overdue. There had been no officially re-enacted compilation of Florida's biennial session laws since 1920. There was one intervening compilation of Florida Statutes, the Compiled General Laws of 1927, but it was not separately enacted into law. This patchwork system meant that finding the current Florida statute on any given subject in 1940, for example, required researchers to consult the indices of as many as ten biennial volumes of session laws, plus any acts of special legislative sessions. The texts of all relevant acts had to be studied with care, and even then researchers could rarely be sure that the statute on which they relied had not been amended or repealed by implication since the last official Revised General Statutes in 1920. It was to eliminate these and other deficiencies in the former system that reform was devised, leading to the enactment of the first official Florida Statutes in 1941. The final paragraph of the preface to that work summarized the purpose of the grand undertaking.

Constant revision will reduce the language of our statutes to a minimum and will keep the volumes of statutes, notwithstanding the biennial additions, a size easily handled. To employ skill in the effective use of words and composition construction is one of the first aims of continuous statutory revision.⁶⁰

60. Fla. Stat. preface to vol. 1, pt. 1 (1941).

Dean Tribble's penchant for studious attention to detail made him ideally suited for the exacting task before him. At the outset, he had to analyze each section of the 1920 Revised General Statutes and every legislative act since then, not only for internal content, but for its potential effect on all other existing statutes and how each fit into the overall scheme of statutory regulation. Dean Tribble, aided by his small staff, divided the entire body of Florida statutory law into some 900 topical chapters, omitting some numbers to allow for new topics. Every chapter consisted of multiple related sections and subsections, using a uniform numbering system. Florida's then-current statutes, purged of much obsolete or redundant verbiage, were all reproduced in two separately bound parts of Volume 1. Part 3 of Volume 1 was devoted to a voluminous index of all statutory provisions. To complete the complex task, Dean Tribble compiled, for publication in Volume 2, a detailed legislative history and reviser's notes to all the statutes in Volume 1.⁶¹

The pattern set by the 1941 Florida Statutes has stood the test of time. The same system, essentially unchanged, has been used for nearly sixty years. Each successive legislature convened after publication of the most recent Florida Statutes has re-enacted Florida's entire body of statutory law to keep it current and readily available. The system has become so familiar that few now remember that it began with the 1941 Florida Statutes compiled by Assistant Attorney General Tribble.

By the time the new Florida Statutes were published in 1942, Dean Tribble was no longer an assistant attorney general. When Attorney General Gibbs chose not to run for election in 1940, J. Tom Watson, an old-time career politician with a populist bent, was elected his successor. In January 1941, soon after Attorney General Watson was sworn in, he and Tribble found themselves in fundamental disagreement about the need for an updated version of the Florida Statutes every two years as prescribed by Florida's plan for statutory revision. Dean Tribble strongly supported the program on which he had labored for nearly two years, but Attorney General Watson wanted to abandon or amend it for reasons that are not clear. As a result, Dean Tribble submitted his resignation, apparently at Attorney General Watson's suggestion. No stigma attached to such terminations; they were accepted as a normal part of Florida politics. In the end, supporters of continuous statutory revision,

61. Fla. Stat. vol. 2 (1941).

including former Attorney General Gibbs and Dean Tribble, overcame Attorney General Watson's opposition, and the plan was implemented as scheduled.⁶² As a matter of collateral interest, the first name listed below that of Attorney General Watson at the close of the Preface to the 1941 Florida Statutes is "Paul E. Raymond, *Ass[istant] Attorney General*."⁶³ He had resigned as dean of Stetson University College of Law in Summer 1941 to take that position.

An Acknowledgment and Recognition note in the 1941 Florida Statutes gave Dean Tribble due credit for his part in preparing them.⁶⁴ And to show there were no hard feelings, the new attorney general presented Dean Tribble with a leather-bound personalized set of the statutes, signed by the donor beneath a printed inscription.

Presented to

LEWIS H. TRIBBLE

in appreciation of his excellent work

in the editing and the program of

preparation and publication of

the Florida Statutes, 1941.

J. TOM WATSON⁶⁵

These fine plaudits could not change the recipient's status as one of the unemployed, this time as a result of state politics rather than the politics found in the academic environment. Fortunately, Dean Tribble's resourceful wife was able to help. Hillis, through her civic activities in Tallahassee, had become a good friend of the wife of J.M. Lee, Florida's comptroller since 1933. Hillis told a sympathetic Mrs. Lee of the family's plight, adding a glowing account of her husband's credentials. Mrs. Lee kindly reported the conversation to Comptroller Lee, and an interview was arranged.

62. Letter from George Couper Gibbs, Former Atty. Gen., to Lewis H. Tribble, Former Asst. Atty. Gen., *Statutory Revisions* 1 (Apr. 3, 1941) (copy on file with Author); Letter from Lewis H. Tribble, Former Asst. Atty. Gen., to George Couper Gibbs, Former Atty. Gen., *Statutory Revisions* 1-2 (Apr. 4, 1941) (copy on file with Author).

63. Fla. Stat. preface to vol. 1, pt. 1 (1941) (emphasis in original).

64. Fla. Stat. acknowledgment and recognition to vol. 1, pt. 1 (1941).

65. Fla. Stat. (1941) (Inscribed Presentation Copy) (copy on file with Author).

Up to then, Florida's comptrollers had always relied on the attorney general and his staff for legal advice. But the interests of the two elected cabinet members were not always congruent, and Comptroller Lee quickly warmed to the idea of having a member of his own department as his legal advisor. He found funds to create the new post and offered it to Dean Tribble, who quickly accepted.

Beyond the obvious function of responding to the comptroller's day-to-day requests for legal advice, Dean Tribble was largely able to define his own duties within the confines of the comptroller's constitutional and statutory responsibilities. Article IV, Section 20 of Florida's Constitution of 1885, still in effect when Dean Tribble assumed his new post, made the comptroller one of the governor's six-member elective cabinet.⁶⁶ Under Section 17 of Article IV, the Governor and cabinet comprised the "Board of Commissioners of State Institutions" charged with supervision of a wide variety of statutory state agencies and institutions.⁶⁷ Section 23 of Article IV conferred on the comptroller individual authority to "examine, audit, adjust and settle the accounts of all officers of the State" in addition to performing the many fiscally-related duties imposed by statute.⁶⁸ These expanded over the years to include regulation of state banks and other lending institutions, overseeing the collection of state taxes, and providing data and guidance to tax assessors.⁶⁹

Over time, Dean Tribble became involved in the broad array of legal issues that arose from these diverse regulatory duties. He also initiated an educational program for various state and county tax officials in the field to instruct them on legal matters affecting their duties over which the comptroller had supervisory authority. To this end, Dean Tribble became active in presenting training programs and taking part in conferences of organizations such as the Tax Assessors Association, the County Finance Officers Association, and the Southeastern Association of Tax Administrators, of which he was a founding member.

In early 1942 John Dickenson, executive secretary of The Florida Bar Association, entered active military service, creating a vacancy in the Bar office he held. In February 1943 Florida Bar Association President J. Thomas Gurney announced that the Association's Board of Governors and Publications Committee had

66. Fla. Const. art. IV, § 20 (1885).

67. *Id.* § 17.

68. *Id.* § 23.

69. Fla. Stat. ch. 17, vol. 1, pts. 1, 3 (1941).

unanimously endorsed “Dean Lewis H. Tribble, formerly of Stetson Law School” as their choice for secretary of the Association and editor of its monthly publication, the *Florida Law Journal*. The article referred to Dean Tribble’s “conspicuous service to the Bar of the State in his participation in the compilation of the Florida Statutes for 1941,” and concluded, “We feel that we are fortunate in securing a man of his qualifications and standing, to carry on with us.” Dean Tribble started his new part-time assignment without delay; his name appears as editor on the masthead of the same page of the *Journal* that announced his appointment.⁷⁰

When Dean Tribble took office, The Florida Bar Association was a voluntary organization, as it had always been. All members of the Association were also admitted to practice law in Florida, but the reverse was not true, and the Florida Supreme Court did not explicitly have the broad regulatory powers over the practice of law that it now has. Those and other changes came about with the creation of the integrated Florida Bar in 1950. The term “integrated” had no direct racial connotation, but referred to the process of merging, or “integrating” the statewide voluntary bar association into an official Florida Bar, comprised of all lawyers admitted to practice law in Florida. Florida’s move toward integration had begun in the mid-1930s and had gained broad support by the time Dean Tribble took office in the voluntary Florida Bar Association. When the Bar was integrated seven years later, the post of executive secretary became a full-time job. Dean Tribble did not seek to fill the post, but continued to serve as The Florida Bar’s advisor to the law journal.⁷¹

In the meantime, Dean Tribble received a small salary for the many hours he devoted to his Bar duties, which included editing the Association’s *Florida Law Journal*. Each monthly issue, in about thirty-two pages, reported on Bar and committee meetings, activities of local bar associations, and noteworthy news of members’ activities. There were usually one or more short legal articles and often an editorial.⁷² Old issues of the *Journal* remain a valuable source of historical and biographical information about The Florida Bar Association and its members.

70. *President’s Message*, 17 Fla. L.J. 42 (Jan. 1943).

71. Dewey A. Dye, *The Proposed Integrated Bar*, 17 Fla. L.J. 5–10 (Jan. 1943); *Tribble Ends Seven Years as Secretary*, 24 Fla. L.J. 222 (Jan. 1950).

72. Review the *Florida Law Journal*, volumes 17–24 (1943–1950), for editorials and legal articles published while Dean Tribble was editor.

Because of his editorial experience and familiarity with court rules acquired while preparing the 1941 Florida Statutes, West Publishing Company retained Dean Tribble to write the notes and commentary on the rules of court published in Volume 30 of the 1941 Florida Statutes Annotated. The success of this project led West to employ Dean Tribble to compile and write a complete legal text, the *Trial Manual of Florida Evidence*, published in 1948. The primary aim of the 1,343-page work was to provide trial lawyers with a ready reference to points of evidence. The book consists of Florida case notes arranged according to the factual context in which particular issues of admissibility or probative value of evidence arose. The single volume has over 400 main topics of substantive law, from *Abandonment* to *Zoning*, each with multiple sections, numbering over 5,500 in all. The book, which was supplemented with a pocket part in 1954, was well-received and enjoyed good sales for years until the initial printing sold out.⁷³

Dean Tribble did not allow his legal writing to interfere with his primary work for the comptroller. He wrote at home, in the evenings. His home office was a corner of the living room and his favorite easy chair with a large writing board resting on its arms. The board, with the name “Stetson” affixed in metal letters at the top, had been custom made for him years before by a colleague at the University, probably Curtis Lowry. Here, Dean Tribble spent long hours in deep concentration, apparently oblivious to the activities and hushed voices of family members around him.

Shortly after the end of World War II, Dean Tribble was twice approached about other employment opportunities. Justice Harold L. Sebring⁷⁴ of the Florida Supreme Court, who had been appointed to preside over the Nuremberg trials of some of the Nazis charged with war crimes, asked Dean Tribble to come with him to Germany as his legal assistant.⁷⁵ The other overture came from a former student and family friend, Boyce F. Ezell, Jr., a Miami lawyer and later a Dade County circuit judge, whose father had been a faculty colleague of Dean Tribble’s at Stetson. Ezell wrote Dean Tribble, saying that he and several other Stetson law alumni, including Paul

73. Lewis H. Tribble, *Trial Manual of Florida Evidence: Presenting the Law of Evidence from the Standpoint of the Instrumentality of Proof and the Fact to Be Proved* 1 (West 1948).

74. Justice Harold L. Sebring later became dean of Stetson University College of Law. Bruce R. Jacob, *Remembering a Great Dean: Harold L. “Tom” Sebring*, 30 *Stetson L. Rev.* 71, 137 (2000).

75. Letter from Harold L. Sebring, J., Fla. Sup. Ct., to Lewis H. Tribble, Former Dean, Stetson U. College of L., *Job Offer* 1 (Oct. 16, 1946) (copy on file with Author).

MacIntyre, Perry Nichols, Tom Teasley, and Harold Vann, wanted Tribble to consider returning as dean when the law school reopened in Fall 1946 after its three-year closure during the War. Ezell told Dean Tribble that he would have the full support of those mentioned and invited him to discuss the possibility.⁷⁶ Although Dean Tribble was honored that Sebring and Ezell thought him worthy of their proposals, he graciously but firmly declined both. He assured his former students that he shared their hopes that the law school would again thrive after reopening and urged them to give President Allen's choice, Dean Lemuel Allen Haslup, their full support, as he planned to do.⁷⁷ Tribble had by then resolved to stay in his present position for the rest of his legal career unless political changes dictated otherwise.

The next test of Dean Tribble's staying power came with the death of Lee and the appointment in October 1946 of Clarence M. Gay, a prominent Orlando banker and clerk of the Orange County Circuit Court, as his successor. The new comptroller could have replaced Dean Tribble, as Attorney General J. Tom Watson had done, but Dean Tribble's reputation and past performance served as his job protection. Comptroller Gay asked Dean Tribble to remain and he obliged. After being elected comptroller in his own right, Comptroller Gay raised Dean Tribble to the level of general counsel in 1949.

After Comptroller Gay retired in mid-term, his successor, Ray E. Green of Clearwater, asked Dean Tribble to stay on as general counsel, which he did. He held that title until he reached mandatory state retirement at the age of seventy in July 1961. To avoid losing the valuable services of one whose legal and mental prowess were undiminished by age, Comptroller Green appointed him as special counsel. Dean Tribble retained that title until the end of his life, rendering the same services he rendered as general counsel. While counsel to the comptroller, Dean Tribble depended on, and worked closely with, the attorney general's office on various matters. This included requesting official advisory opinions from the attorney general and litigating disputes with taxpayers. As a result, a warm and mutually beneficial collegiality developed between Dean Tribble

76. Letter from Boyce F. Ezell, Jr., Atty., to Lewis H. Tribble, Former Dean, Stetson U. College of L., *Job Offer* 1 (Mar. 29, 1946) (copy on file with Author).

77. Letter from Lewis H. Tribble, Former Dean, Stetson U. College of L., to Damon M. Gunn, Colonel, War Crimes Branch, *The Pentagon* 1 (Oct. 25, 1946) (copy on file with Author); Letter from Lewis H. Tribble, Former Dean, Stetson U. College of L., to Boyce F. Ezell, Jr., Atty., *Job Offer Declined* 1 (Apr. 3, 1946) (copy on file with Author).

and the much younger assistant attorneys general, who frequently availed themselves of his expertise on state taxation, legislative history, and statutory interpretation. Among those who came to know Dean Tribble in this way was a young graduate of Stetson, Bruce R. Jacob. He, like Dean Tribble before him, went on to become a distinguished professor of law and dean of his alma mater.⁷⁸

Throughout his career as public servant, the dean was as much admired for his quiet, courteous good humor as for the studious intensity of his work. He rarely raised his voice in anger, which made the experience all the more intimidating to the object of his wrath when he did. In some ways, Dean Tribble personified the only animate figure depicted in the seal of the office of the Florida comptroller. In the center of the seal appears a large iron-bound safe, before which rests an alert guard dog, supine, but with head erect. Below is the one-word motto, "DEFENDO." Dean Tribble, like the watchdog on the seal, guarded the taxpayers' money, not by snapping and snarling, but by the quiet deterrence that comes from constant vigilance backed by unseen teeth.

Dean Tribble's life was thoroughly engrossed in his family and work, in that order. He had few hobbies and seldom took vacations. Dean Tribble was a frugal man with a generous spirit. He was a lifetime registered Democrat and voted in every election in what was then a one-party state. Aside from supporting his successive employers whenever they were on the ballot, Dean Tribble was essentially apolitical. His legal philosophy was basically conservative, and he opposed judicial activism that disregarded legal precedents. Dean Tribble was a Baptist, well-versed in the Bible, and committed to Christianity, but little concerned with denominational differences in religion. He always preceded family meals with the traditional one-sentence blessing his father had used.

Dean Tribble suffered a severe heart attack in November 1963. For a time, he seemed to be improving and was able to have hospital visits with family members. Then, on December 7, 1963, a second massive heart attack ended his life in his seventy-third year. His funeral service at the First Baptist Church was well attended by his extended family, many friends, co-workers, and leaders of Florida's Bar, government, and judiciary. He was laid to rest in a Tallahassee cemetery, where his widow, who survived him by thirty-five years, now lies by his side.

78. Letter from Bruce R. Jacob, Former Dean, Stetson U. College of L., to Author, *Classroom Dedication* 1 (Sept. 22, 1987) (copy on file with Author).

News of his death spread throughout Florida, followed by touching tributes in newspapers, other periodicals, and memorial resolutions by the many organizations with which he had been associated. Of all the praise accorded to him, both during his life and after, two examples seem most appropriate here. The first is from Dean Sebring's letter to Hillis Tribble, dated March 10, 1964. After thanking her for a memorial gift she had made to Stetson's law library, he added, "I know of no one who made a more lasting contribution to the law school than Ike did."⁷⁹ The other tribute is one Dean Tribble was able to savor during the last five years of his life. It came in the form of Stetson's Distinguished Service Award. The Citation, presented to him in 1958 by his former student and close friend, President J. Ollie Edmunds, reads,

CITATION

LEWIS H. TRIBBLE CLASS OF '15

For many years [as] the Dean of Stetson's Law School, you worked successfully to raise its professional standards and to secure its national recognition. At Tallahassee your efforts have created new dignity for the concept of public servant. Aware of the complexities of modern law, convinced that its application must be fair and consistent, you have worked tirelessly to assure a fair but strict enforcement of Florida's tax laws. You are one of those "unsung heroes" whose service has created a distinction between mediocre and superior execution of a public trust.

Stetson University salutes you, Lewis H. Tribble, and takes pride in your distinguished achievements.⁸⁰

79. Letter from Harold L. Sebring, Dean, Stetson U. College of L., to Hillis Tribble, Tribble's Wife, *Library Donation* 1 (Mar. 10, 1964) (copy on file with Author).

80. Stetson U., *Citation* (Nov. 15, 1958).