



James Concannon III

October 2, 1947 - June 17, 2023

James M. Concannon III, died Saturday, June 17, 2023, in Topeka, Kansas.

Jim was born in Columbus, Georgia, on October 2, 1947, to James and Mary Jane Concannon. Survivors include his spouse of 35 years, Melissa Porter Masoner, PhD; their son Chris Masoner and spouse Michelle Masoner of Lenexa; three grandchildren: James, Paul, and Maggie; and numerous close friends, cousins, and colleagues.

Jim hailed from Finney County, Kansas, in a rural area outside of Garden City that is now the site of the Concannon State Fishing Lake and Wildlife Area. He received the International DeMolay of the Year award in 1966. He was a Summerfield Scholar at Kansas University, graduating in 1968. He then attended KU Law School, graduating second in his class in 1971. He was a proud member of the Garden City High School Hall of Fame and received the Distinguished Alumni award from the University of Kansas School of Law.

In the summer of 1972, Jim discovered he had a passion for teaching the law while an adjunct professor at Washburn Law School, and in 1973 he became a full-time faculty member. He would go on to teach at Washburn for nearly fifty years, including service as Dean of Washburn Law School from 1988 to 2001, and holding the title of The Senator Robert J. Dole Distinguished Professor of Law Emeritus.

Jim was a preeminent scholar on the subjects of Evidence, Civil Procedure, and Appellate Practice, teaching thousands of students, many of whom would go on to become distinguished lawyers in the State of Kansas, around the country, and indeed the world. As one former student commented, “He made learning the law interesting, challenging, and fun;” however, Jim is universally remembered by his students for the following advice: “Don’t think great thoughts, read the statute.”

Jim’s lasting legacy is in the generations of Washburn lawyers he taught, but he will also be remembered for the book he wrote to commemorate the Centennial of Washburn Law School – “The Ideal Place . . . for the Establishment of a Great Law School: History of Washburn Law School, 1903-2003.”

Jim’s service to the legal profession extended beyond Washburn. Since 1998, he has served as a Kansas delegate to the Uniform Law Commission—the national organization responsible for providing every US state and territory with non-partisan, well-conceived, and well-drafted model legislation that brings clarity and stability to critical areas of state statutory law. Jim’s great joy has been chairing the ULC’s Style Committee which revises every proposed model statute for clarity and consistency without altering its meaning or context.

In 1997, Jim received the Kansas Supreme Court citation for contributions to the judiciary. In 2012, the Kansas Supreme Court awarded Jim its prestigious Justice Award, an award given infrequently to recognize the achievements of highly-deserving persons who have contributed significantly to the improvement of justice in Kansas. In recognizing Jim’s contributions, the Court noted, “He brought his trademark skill, tenacity, wit, and humor, always leaving behind a greatly improved work product and fostering a sense of collegiality.”

Jim was a staunch defender of the rule of law, our constitutional democracy, and the checks and balances of the three branches of government. He was a strong advocate for the non-partisan selection of judges and keeping politics out of the courts.

Jim will be remembered as a scholar, as a mentor, as a role model, as an advocate, as a steadfast friend. He served on many non-profit boards including Topeka Youth Project and Kansas Appleseed. Additional passions and pastimes included Nature, sports, and his home in the country.

On Friday, July 21, following the dedication and tours of the new law school building on the Washburn campus, family and friends will host a community celebration of Jim's Life and Legend from 5 to 7 pm, at the World Famous Topeka Zoo Japanese Garden.

In recognition of his more than 50 years of service to Washburn University School of Law, friends and family respectfully suggest contributions to the Washburn Law School Foundation, designated to permanently endow the Law School Deanship in honor of James Concannon. Gifts may be made online at wualumni.org/givenow or by check (please include Concannon Legacy in the memo line of your check or gift giving reason online) to Washburn Law School Foundation,
1729 MacVicar Avenue, Topeka, KS, 66604.

Condolences may be sent online to www.kevinbrennanfamily.com.

Previous Events

Celebration

JUL **21**. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

World Famous Topeka Zoo Japanese Garden
635 SW Gage Boulevard
Topeka, KS 66606

Tribute Wall



“ *Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home created a Tribute Video in memory of James Concannon III* ”



Kevin Brennan Family Funeral Home - July 20, 2023 at 12:33 PM

DF

“ Jim Concannon:

First, I regret sincerely not being able to attend Jim Concannon's memorial. I am shocked at his untimely death! I am on crutches in Minnesota and travel opportunities for me are limited at best.

Second, I can at least offer these limited thoughts for my friends Jim and Melissa:

Jim was my first professor in law school at Washburn. He was young -- fresh from KU -- and refreshing. His concern then, and I believe since, has been about the students. About their well being, learning and success as professionals in the law. To the contribution they are making to our democracy and rule of law in Kansas and beyond, as our alumni newsletter reports. It is an inspiration that serves me even now as a professor at the University of Minnesota Law School. And he has always been scholarly -- he always knew his material and stayed ahead of his students, has been innovative and always researching. Frustrated me! This is a talent I have struggled with as an academic over the years (as a former simple corporate lawyer). Jim, Melissa, Barb, and I became friends during/after Washburn Law School because Melissa's parents were good friends of my own, then living in Topeka. We became close friends, or I like to think so, even as Barb and I moved back to our own hometown of Minneapolis, MN. We did stay loosely in touch over the years and have several memories of that.

The bottom line for me -- for my friend Jim Concannon -- is that Jim is an academic and administrator of unparalleled talent, of the highest integrity, sincerity, energy, mentoring, energizing, make-do guy, legacy person, honorable, noblest -- and hyperboles could go on. I'm a fan and there are no negatives for Jim. I love Jim Concannon and what he and Melissa have stood for in the community of Washburn Law and Topeka/Kansas and for their legacy into the future. Let this be written on the walls of our new Washburn University School of Law Memorial Board. I wish -- wish - - I could be there to join all.

David F. Fisher | Legal Counsel | Governance, Fiduciary Expert |

Adjunct Professor of Law 612-749-2389 | dffisher@umn.edu

Dave Fisher - July 19, 2023 at 07:49 PM

CB

“*Dear Melissa, we're so sorry to hear about Jim's passing. We hope it helps to know that we care and share in your loss. Please accept our deepest condolences. Board and staff of Western Kansas Community Foundation, Garden City, KS.*

Conny Bogaard - July 17, 2023 at 10:11 AM



“*Mellisa, so sorry to hear of your loss. It would be good to see you again, soon.*
Nancy G. Stone and Timothy K. Stone

Timothy K. Stone - July 17, 2023 at 10:04 AM

CA

“*Charlotte Adair lit a candle in memory of James Concannon III*



Charlotte Adair - July 16, 2023 at 06:14 PM

JJ

“*I am sorry to hear of Dean Concannon's passing. I had him as a professor during the 1977-1980 time period. I remember he had a passion for teaching and demonstrated high expertise in the law.*

Joe Cosgrove Jr - July 05, 2023 at 02:57 PM

MC

“ I had Professor Concannon for civil procedure and appellate practice. I was also paid as an upper level student to attend civil procedure and guide a group of first-year students who were taking the class. I, therefore, attended his civ pro class for three semesters. And I enjoyed it all three times. I loved how he would raise his arm and point in the air while saying, “moreover,” before driving home that final point. I still think of him every time I use the word “moreover.” I learned a lot from him, and I’ll never forget him. To his family, I’m sorry for this enormous loss.

Melissa Castillo - July 03, 2023 at 06:35 PM

JJ

So sorry to hear of Dean Concannon’s passing. Had him as professor during 1977-1980 time period. I remember his clear love of teaching and high expertise in the law.

Joe Cosgrove Jr - July 05, 2023 at 02:46 PM

EW

“ Dear Melissa, Chris, and family,

I’m so very sorry. I’m sorry for all of us. What Professor Concannon taught me as a law student continues to inform me every time I sit down to learn and discern the law. Even his gentle, unassuming presence represented all of what I knew him to be - brilliant, excellent, generous, kind, funny - and always encouraged me to do better, to be better. I’m incredibly lucky to have known that giant of a man, and I miss him.

Evelyn Wilson - July 01, 2023 at 12:45 PM

BJ

“ Dear Melissa and your entire family, Please accept my profound sympathy upon Jim's passing. When we were young lawyers and academics, we interacted frequently, and I had--and continue to have--the utmost of respect for him. He was a true gentleman--gracious in all respects, fair, forgiving, immensely talented but humble, and zealously loyal to the people and institutions whom he valued and who reciprocated his devotion with great appreciation for his tireless service. I hope knowing that Jim touched countless people in these ways brings you much comfort as you grieve his passing and celebrate his legacy. Sincerely yours, Bob Jerry

Bob Jerry - June 30, 2023 at 11:36 AM

PB

“ Dear Melissa, I am so saddened to hear of my cousin Jim's passing. Nothing but fond memories from childhood until the present. At a young age, it was quite apparent that Jim possessed a brilliant intellect and would do great things in life. Jim was also an all around great person who everyone enjoyed being around. Thinking of you

Paul Beer

Paul Beer - June 27, 2023 at 10:46 PM

ML

“ Dear Melissa and Concannon Family: Ro and I are so saddened to hear of Jim's passing. He did so much for so many. He hired Ro into his first academic job..We came to Topeka from Chicago intending to stay for two years. We stayed for 12, in large part because of Jim. I attended Washburn and had the great pleasure to take classes from Jim and learned so much from him. He was an amazing leader, colleague and professor. He will be dearly missed.

Marianne Deagle & Rogelio Lasso - June 24, 2023 at 02:03 PM

JL

“Melissa, I am so very sorry. You and Jim were such a great team; I can't imagine the depths of your loss.

I first met Jim as his student, when he famously instructed us, "Before you think great thoughts, read the statute." This perfectly summed up his inductive reasoning style of thinking and teaching: he taught us all the rules and by that we gradually figured out the "great thoughts" behind the rules. But he was going to make damn sure we knew the rules first!

He was such a popular professor and we loved him for his intelligence, kindness, professionalism, and wonderful sense of humor. I later got to know Jim as my boss, when I started teaching at Washburn Law during the many years that he was dean. He was a great colleague, a great dean, and a pillar of the legal community. He had a tremendously positive impact on Washburn Law and on thousands of students.

I, like so many others, turned to him for wise counsel in many things, and thought that I would have that privilege for many years to come. It hurts to have him gone from us so soon, but I will always be grateful to have known him, and to be able to continue to consult his incredibly helpful "History of Washburn Law" that has a permanent place of honor on my bookshelf.

Thank you for sharing him with us, Melissa. We are thinking of you.

Jalen O'Neil Lowry

Jalen O'Neil Lowry - June 23, 2023 at 02:23 PM

MB

“*Melissa: May the memories of the life you and the Professor shared help you through this time of sadness. His colleagues and former students each have their own great memories. Mine include being taught: "Don't think great thoughts. Read the law;" his making several nice shots in the law student vs. faculty basketball game in Whiting; and his leadership in the Sam A, Crow Inns of Court. His students always came first. I had several conversations with him recently as he prepared to move to the new law school building. He will be missed.*

Mark S. Braun

Mark S Braun - June 23, 2023 at 10:16 AM

LL

“*I am so saddened to hear of Professor Concannon's passing. He was truly a gentleman and scholar. I remember him as a kind man, full of wisdom, who never humiliated students, but encouraged and shaped so many. I am so grateful and honored to have been taught by him.*

Luanne Leeds - June 23, 2023 at 01:49 AM

PH

“*Melissa, Paul and are so sorry to hear about Jim's passing. He was a good friend, favorite professor, and treasured colleague. His leadership shaped legal education at Washburn making it the top-tier school it is today. Decades of students remember him fondly. It was always fun to hear him share memories of incidents and students he encountered over the years. He will be greatly miss and can never be replaced! Sending love and prayers.*

Paul & Jeanne Hoferer - June 22, 2023 at 01:45 PM

JP

“ *Melissa, Diana and I are saddened to hear of Jim's passing and you have been in our thoughts since Cindy Rogers let us know while we were out of the state. As I recall Jim was the youngest member of our law school class yet one of the most distinguished upon graduation and throughout his career. I have many fond memories of our time together in law school and since. I regret that COVID and its aftermath kept us from getting together in the past few years. Please know that we are fortunate to have known Jim and will keep you and your family in our thoughts. Joe Pierron*

Joe Pierron - June 22, 2023 at 12:29 PM

CI

“ *Melissa,
So crushed to hear about Jim and so very sad for your loss. Jim will be missed and I send my warmest hugs and just know that I am thinking about you and your family. Cindy Irigonegaray*

Cindy Irigonegaray - June 21, 2023 at 07:12 PM

NH

“ *Melissa, my thoughts and prayers are with you. Jim was brilliant and funny. In my first class with Professor Concannon, I was completely intimidated but soon found that his humor and willingness to laugh at himself, as well as others, made him a delightful person to know. Even in retirement he was a sought after legal mind in the development of our future laws. He will be missed by the entire Washburn and Kansas legal community as well as fellow scholars across the country.
Natalie Haag*

Natalie Haag - June 21, 2023 at 06:03 PM

CD

“ *Melissa- I'm so sorry to learn this. Jim was a brilliant man with a rapier wit. He was loved and respected by countless law school students and members of the community.*

Cliff Davis - June 21, 2023 at 05:08 PM

AS

“ *Professor Concannon was my Civil Procedure professor my first year of law school. He didn't need notes or slides simply because he knew the material by heart.*

I will never forget the dinner I had at his home with Melissa which myself and three other law students bid on at Barrister's Ball.

His knowledge, expertise, and experience will be missed.

Azor Smith - June 21, 2023 at 03:53 PM

TJ

“ *Jim was a great friend and neighbor. Was instrumental in my attending law school and a great mentor to me.*

Tom Jackson

Tom Jackson - June 21, 2023 at 11:47 AM

ZZ

“ I was a student of Professor Concannon's. He really inspired me by how brilliantly and precisely he spoke. He encouraged me and helped me find my place at Washburn. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from him.

My sincerest condolences to his family. My prayers and thoughts to you, and may he rest in peace.

Zachariah Zallo

Zachariah Zallo - June 21, 2023 at 11:45 AM

DB

“ Melissa I am so sorry for your loss I met Jim when I helped with a catering event at your house and I believe it was a wedding, he was very nice and we laughed and had a great time with your family.

Debra Dugan Bahret

debra bahret - June 21, 2023 at 11:01 AM

AZ

“ Thank you Melissa and Jim for sharing your life with our community - locally, nationally and internationally. You are a treasured couple in our community and leave a long legacy. Melissa we are here for you.

angel zimmerman - June 21, 2023 at 09:25 AM

EB

Melissa, I am so sorry for the loss of Jim. He was one of my very favorite people at the law school. My first office there was next to his. What a steady presence he was.

Over the years, no matter the subject, I always left our conversations feeling better, even if the advice or the news wasn't what I wanted to hear. I think it was because he was such a straight shooter as well as a compassionate man. Not to mention his wit. Laughing with him was good for the soul. Often he would make an initial pithy observation, and just when you were laughing pretty hard, he'd drop in another layer. That usually sent me over the edge.

And he knew so much about law, not only the letter of it but the greater picture. I drew from that frequently in some thorny cases.

As many have said, his impact on the law school, his students, his colleagues, the greater legal community, Topeka and Kansas as a whole was immeasurable.

Mark and I appreciated him so very much and we extend our deepest sympathies.

Ellen Byers - July 02, 2023 at 04:58 PM