

Mark Pettit Jr. Was LAW's "Singing Professor"

Inspired thousands of students throughout his four decades at BU

MARK PETTIT JR., A School of Law professor of law known as the "singing professor" for his playful renditions of classic and contemporary songs in his first-year contracts class, died on June 8, 2018, after a battle with cancer.

A member of the LAW faculty since 1977, Pettit taught thousands of students in the areas of contracts, evidence, consumer law, and professional responsibility. He twice served as associate dean for administration and annually chaired the admissions committee.

ONLINE: Watch a video of LAW students paying tribute to Mark Pettit Jr. in song, at bu.edu/bostonia.

His teaching style introduced props and law-themed parodies of Top 40 hits to entertain students in his contracts class. The idea grew out of a poem a former student wrote about a case under discussion. More poems followed, until a few years later a student brought in a song to be sung to the tune of *The Brady Bunch* theme. The practice continued from there, and many students and alumni recall fondly the Pettit classics, "Don't Go Breakin' My Nose," "Breach It," "Smoke Ballin'," and "Statute of Frauds." Earlier this year, Pettit's current students

paid tribute to him with a song of their own.

In a 2007 interview with NPR, Pettit said that his "schtick" was "really about breaking the tension in class" and that "his willingness to embarrass himself in front of students encourages them to take more risks as well, and they participate more in class."

His methods paid off. He was a beloved professor who in 1993 was recognized with the Metcalf Award for Excellence in Teaching, the highest honor for faculty at BU. He received a Silver Shingle Award for Service to the School in 2001, and at the 2018 Commencement ceremony, the LAW community honored him with the

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Michael W. Melton Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Before joining the LAW faculty, Pettit was an associate at the New York City law firm of Cravath, Swaine & Moore and a clinical fellow and staff attorney for the Mandel Legal Aid Clinic at the University of Chicago. He was a visiting professor at Harvard Law School in fall 1999 and spring 2001 and was appointed to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Advisory Committee on Massachusetts Evidence Law.

"It is hard for me right now to find the words to express how much Professor Pettit meant to me and to the School of Law," says Maureen O'Rourke, who stepped down as dean this year and has returned to a teaching post at the school. "I treasured his friendship and, like many of our faculty and students, considered him a role model. As much as his humor and warmth inspired his colleagues and LAW students for decades, it is his goodness of heart that we will miss most. I send my deepest condolences to all of us and especially to his beloved sons, Eric, Andy, and Tim, and their families. We will never forget him."

