

The Original Rush Limbaugh

Lawyer, Legislator, and Civil Libertarian

Dennis K. Boman

Born at the end of the nineteenth century into a farming family of modest means in southeastern Missouri, Rush Hudson Limbaugh Sr. led a distinguished professional life as an attorney, legislator, and special ambassadorial representative of the United States. Today his descendants benefit from his reputation for integrity and public-spiritedness as a lawyer and member of his community, a legacy that lives on in his family in the careers of two federal district court judges, Stephen Limbaugh Sr. and Jr., and David Limbaugh, a practicing attorney and a nationally known author and political commentator. Moreover, Limbaugh's character and life has gained wider renown on the radio talk show of his grandson and namesake.

In this biography, Dennis K. Boman recounts Limbaugh's legal career, which spanned most of the twentieth century and included a number of important events in Missouri history. His legal prowess first came to wider public notice when he managed the impeachment trial of state treasurer Larry Brunk, who was accused of misconduct in office. Among his later achievements was presiding over the infamous 1935 case *Ware vs. Muench*, in which a young woman sued for the return of her infant son. The case gained widespread attention, and the daily courtroom proceedings were reported in detail by newspapers across the United States. His legal opinion in the case was widely quoted and upheld by the Supreme Court of Missouri.

In the midst of the Great Depression, as a state legislator, although a member of the minority party, Limbaugh led the effort to pass significant legislation. In the late 1950s, President Dwight D. Eisenhower appointed Limbaugh to represent the United States as a goodwill ambassador to India.

As a respected lawyer, Limbaugh was selected to serve on different civil rights commissions. First a member of the American Bar Association's Special Committee on the Bill of Rights, he later was appointed its chair. This committee investigated the circumstances of African Americans, especially in the South, and sought to find practical ways to end racial discrimination and segregation. Moreover, he served as a member of the Special Committee on Civil Rights and Social Unrest in 1964 and 1965, as well as a commissioner



Photo courtesy of Stephen N. Limbaugh Sr. and Stephen N. Limbaugh Jr.

on the Missouri Commission on Human Rights and Responsibilities.

Boman conducted personal interviews with many members of the Limbaugh family, whose candid answers add invaluable insights into Limbaugh's character and career. Boman delves into Limbaugh's memoirs, family correspondence, and personal papers, as well as newspaper accounts, to chronicle the life of a man who served his state and country until his death at the age of 104.

Dennis K. Boman is Adjunct Professor of History at Yorktown University and is the author of several books, including *Lincoln and the Citizens' Rights in Civil War Missouri: Balancing Security and Freedom*. He lives in St. Louis, Missouri.

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