PHILIP B. KURLAND
1921-1996

Philip B. Kurland, the William R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, the College and the Law School, died on April 16, 1996 at the University of Chicago's Bernard Mitchell Hospital. An internationally renowned scholar of the United States Constitution and a professor at the University of Chicago for more than forty years, Professor Kurland is credited with fundamentally reshaping our understanding of the U.S. Constitution, particularly its system of checks and balances, the separation of church and state, and the importance of judicial restraint.

He was known by his many students and friends both for his intellectual brilliance and for his incisive wit. "Phil Kurland's insights into the law were always accompanied with wit and warmth," Dean Douglas G. Baird observed. "For many decades, he made students and colleagues alike feel at home in this community. His uncompromising commitment to excellence and integrity in scholarship and in teaching will always set the standard for the rest of us."

Mr. Kurland was born in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1921. He received his bachelor of arts degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1942. In 1944, he graduated from Harvard Law School, where he was president of the Harvard Law Review. After graduation, he served as law clerk to Judge Jerome N. Frank of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit and then for Justice Felix Frankfurter. After working at the Department of Justice in 1946, he returned to New York City, where he practiced law, first with Milton Pollack, and then in partnership with Richard F. Wolfsen.

He turned to teaching in 1950, with a visiting appointment at Indiana University Law School. Mr. Kurland was on the faculty of the Law School of Northwestern University before coming to the University of Chicago in 1953. In 1973, he was appointed the William R. Kenan Jr. Professor in the College, and in 1977, Distinguished Service Professor.


During the course of his long career, Mr. Kurland dedicated considerable time to public service. He served as consultant to the Conference of Chief Justices, reporter for the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Pattern Jury Instructions, consultant to the U.S. Economic Stabilization Agency, consultant to the Department of Justice, and, in 1967-74, chief consultant to the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Separation of Powers, one of whose tasks was to study the Watergate break-in.