ONE FINAL NOTE
by Holly Davis '76

Sometimes after I became assistant dean, we established this space in The Law School Record as a forum for the dean to address alumni in an unstructured setting. Over the intervening years, Deans Stone, Currie, and Baird each used this space as the print medium’s version of a home page: a place where a personal voice can directly speak to alumni about a variety of timely issues.

Since it has proven itself a worthy forum for that purpose, we recently discussed expanding the format by permitting assistant deans to contribute their voices as well. I chose to inaugurate this new format by contributing a few words myself. However, it is with irony that I do so in what is my last issue of The Law School Record.

In the nearly five decades since Dean Edward Levi created the position of an assistant dean with the responsibility for alumni relations and development, there have been only four incumbents. That remarkable fact speaks volumes to the cohesion and continuity of the Law School’s alumni community. Because of the dedication and enthusiasm of so many graduates, it has been an exciting and rewarding job.

Often, in my capacity as assistant dean of alumni relations, I felt I benefited the most. After all, as major law schools go, the University of Chicago is still a young (or, at least, adolescent) institution. And because its history is so brief, I have enjoyed the honor of knowing graduates spanning nearly the entire period of its existence. I have met those who were students under James Parker Hall, the Law School’s first full-time dean. For an article in this publication, I interviewed Earl Dickerson, a member of the Class of 1919 and the first African American to receive a J.D. from the Law School. I wasn’t able to meet Sophonisba Breckinridge ’04, but I did know Judge Samuel Epstein ’15, Bernard Nath ’21, and Ines Catron Hoffman ’28. In fact, I have been able to discuss literature with Elmer Gertz ’30, art with Burt Kanter ’52, and, yes, neckties with Walter Blum ’41.

I benefited from the dedication of a core group of faculty, who in addition to their dedication to scholarship, have committed themselves to the Law School: Bernard Melzer, Bill Landes, Mary Becker, Randy Picker, and Dan Fischel. But among faculty members with whom I have worked, two names stand out in their total commitment to the welfare of the Law School, the University, and our students and graduates: Walter Blum (with whom my relationship was sometimes taxing but always rewarding) and Richard Epstein, who, like Professor Blum, enthusiastically serves as teacher, mentor, confidant, and champion to us all. My longtime colleagues Richard Badger and Judith Wright give insight and structure to the administrative challenges of the Law School.

There are more than 7,000 graduates of the Law School and I cannot begin to list the individuals who have been important to the success of our alumni programs: the reunion chairs, the Fund for the Law School chairs, our mentors, and the hosts of dozens of alumni events across the country among others. Of this group one name stands out, Herbert B. Fried, who tirelessly and selflessly dedicated himself to the advancement of the Law School and to counseling many of its graduates, including myself. Herb, may more of us aspire to the high standards you have established.

But most rewarding perhaps is that I have attended every entering students dinner and every graduating students dinner since 1979, and I have personally seen men and women transform from anxious students to mature professionals.

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We graduates of the Law School are a heterogeneous lot and because of this the alumni have played an important and enriching role in continuing to shape the institution.

We may view the Law School from different perspectives, while challenging or defending its greatness, we remain unable to deny its significance in our lives. We share, above all, a keen, almost proprietary, interest in the Law School's continued well being.

I can only urge you to continue your support. Alumni participation, enthusiasm, and even criticism are vital to the life of any educational institution. And perhaps the greater the institution, the greater that participation, enthusiasm, and criticism need to be. I hope you continue to fill those needs. You are the ones who hold those of us who run the Law School today to the same high standards dictated by our predecessors.

Ten years ago, in the pages of this magazine, Geoffrey Stone wrote: "The University of Chicago Law School is in an era of genuine greatness. With a young, dynamic, and extraordinary faculty, an outstanding student body, a firm commitment to rigorous teaching, a tradition of innovative and interdisciplinary research, loyal and supportive alumni, and a general aura of good feeling, our Law School is flourishing." He continued by saying, "If the Law School is, indeed, in an era of greatness, it is our alumni who have made that possible. On behalf of your Law School, I thank you."

I share that sentiment and I want to add my thanks as well. Thank you for making these eighteen years as enriching and, well, as fun as they were. I also wish to thank Gerhard Casper for having enough faith in me to offer a young woman barely out of law school this rewarding position. And to thank Geoffrey Stone, for the guidance and vision he shared with me. I wish to thank David Currie, for the quiet dignity and wisdom he displayed in his months as acting dean. And to thank Douglas Baird for the fresh approaches he brought to the position.

Thank you all very much. I look forward— as a fellow alumnus—to seeing many of you at Law School events in Washington, D.C.