Centennial Gala
The Celebration of a Century

“Have you seen Professor Meltzer?” Laurence Reich, ’53, inquired. “I wanted to say hello.” Meltzer wasn’t easy to spot in the large crowd that filled Stanley Field Hall, but reconnecting with old friends was part of what the Centennial Gala was all about. In that spirit he set out to find his former professor.

On a beautiful spring evening in early May, nearly 1,200 alumni, friends, students, and faculty gathered at Chicago’s Field Museum for the Centennial Gala. Held in conjunction with Reunion Weekend, the Gala was also the culmination of an eventful and busy year honoring the Law School’s many accomplishments.

That night, Law School guests literally took over the museum. Alumni from as far away as Hawaii and from classes as far back as 1929 were represented. More than 300 current students happily joined the festivities. “It’s wonderful to see so many students here tonight,” said Professor Geoffrey Stone, ’71. “It’s a terrific reflection on how committed our students are to the Law School that they wanted to be part of this celebration.”

Conversation and cocktails took place in the balcony, where the special exhibit *Baseball as America* was open throughout the evening. Since softball games have long been a cherished part of Law School history, it seemed appropriate to follow up on these themes. Guests received a Law School baseball cap, and the program was packed with images from student-faculty softball games throughout the years.
Also visible from the balcony were a series of large screens, hung from the columns in the main hall. A slide show of images from the Law School's photo archive played throughout the reception. The images illuminated moments in our shared history, from portraits of beloved faculty to snapshots of students studying, relaxing at Wine Mess, or skating on the once-frozen fountain. "It was appropriate to have this at the Field Museum," said Assistant Dean Richard Badger, '68, "Seeing myself in some of those old pictures made me feel like a dinosaur."

Following the reception, guests proceeded to dinner in Stanley Field Hall. It was a remarkable sight, that gigantic space completely filled with the Law School community. The sound of lively conversation rose to the vaulted skylights. Student tables overflowed into nearby Rice Hall. Though a bit further from the main festivities, these guests savored their tenderloin in the shadow of the Maneaters of Tsavo—a pair of rogue tigers believes to have eaten 130 railway workers in Africa and the basis for the movie *The Ghost and the Darkness.*

After dinner, University of Chicago President Don Michael Randel welcomed the party and wished the Law School another century as illustrious as its last. Dean Saul Levmore
ascended the podium and introduced, for those few who may not have known them, the six previous Law School deans in attendance that evening: Phil Neal, Norval Morris, Gerhard Casper, Geoffrey Stone, Douglas Baird, and Dan Fischel. Levenore also offered his thanks on behalf of the school to the law firms which helped make the Gala possible. And with his characteristic wry wit, he spoke of the Law School's continuing evolution. "We won't become like Sue," he quipped, gesturing toward the Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton poised at the north end of Field Hall. "One hundred years from now we will still be vital."

Then the house lights dimmed and the short film, Ideas and Action, filled the screens. Produced to commemorate the Centennial, the film features a series of different voices and perspectives describing what is unique about the University of Chicago Law School. In turns thoughtful, introspective, and whimsical, Ideas and Action examines the forces that combined to forge this unique institution—a loving tribute to a great Law School.

Dancing followed the program; the band played everything from Glenn Miller to Gloria Gaynor. Current students and Reunion classes hit the dance floor until nearly midnight.

"What a lovely party," Reunion Class Chair Laura Grisolano, '98, commented. "This was the most exciting Law School event I've ever attended."

That was the consensus. Too bad it only happens once every one hundred years.—K.F.