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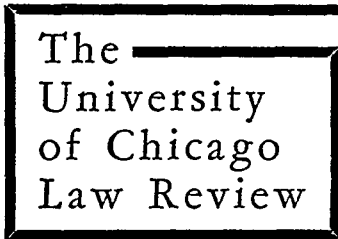


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LAIRD BELL

On October 12, 1966, the University of Chicago Law School Quadrangle was dedicated in memory of Laird Bell, 1882-1965. Edward H. Levi, Provost of the University and Professor of Law, delivered the following remarks:

One can think of Laird Bell in terms of the offices, governmental or otherwise, of public importance which he held. He was Chairman of the Board of Weyerhaeuser Timber Company and senior partner in a great law firm. He took the time to grade papers as a member of the Illinois Board of Law Examiners. He was chairman of the National Navy Price Adjustment Board; he worked as a government official in the Allied Control Council in Germany after World War II. He was a member of the United States delegation to the United Nations. He was President of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations. He helped to organize the Council for Aid to Higher Education. He was Chairman of the National Merit Scholarship Program, a member of the Board of Overseers of Harvard University, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees of Carleton College, and of the University of Chicago. As I list these positions, I can hear Mr. Bell saying with amusement and shyness, "Must you list them all?" And then again, "You know I didn't hold all those positions at the same time." The facts are, of course, that not all of the positions are listed, that he held many of them at the same time, and that in his lifetime he became in fact and in symbol a member of that elite group of lawyers whose official position is in themselves. Those who sought a man of special wisdom and stature to grace and do a job, difficult or important, would think of Mr. Bell as the example of what they wanted. Today his name continues to be used as measure and example.

Any man, of course, has qualities which are not adequately described by the offices he has held, but I think this was particularly true of Mr. Bell. Indeed, one of the challenges in speaking about him is to meet his own standard of educated truthfulness—an extraordinary mixture of simplicity, honesty, reflective good humor about himself and the world. I am sure he suffered fools perhaps gladly, but, as he said, he disliked stuffed shirts. He was a serious person, and, in this sense, selfless. He was serious about problems and their solution. This seriousness led him to be skeptical about easy answers. He played the devil's advocate within himself and with respect to the causes which concerned him. He wanted, for example, to be sure that this law school really needed a new building, that the building was importantly related to its educational program and not merely an expression of a desire for gracious living. Once convinced, he was equally strong in the determination that the school not settle for anything less than the grand design, and he encouraged and aided its progress with what I think can be called delight. He was aware of the costs to the University of a variety of educational experiments, and he made sure that these experiments did not go unquestioned. Yet his greatest hope for this University was that it would not seek the easy life, that it would continue to have ideas which might be irritating and at least sometimes be right. He wanted experiments to continue; his design of the constitution of the University with its division of powers among the faculty, the president, and the Board clearly was written with that in mind. Unlike so many of us, Mr. Bell seems to have always remained young. His capacity to be interested, his delight in new ideas, his openmindedness stayed with him. Perhaps, indeed, his tolerance and zest for the new increased with age.

It would have been characteristic of Mr. Bell that he would have found it uncomfortable to be the subject of these proceedings. Yet Mr. Bell knew the importance of ceremonies. He wanted the buildings of the University to be appropriately named. He wanted the best for this Law School and for the University. This Law School indeed has been fortunate in that group of men who have joined with its faculty to aid in the growth of the School and who have made this Quadrangle possible. Fortunate, too, is this School to carry for this quadrangle the name of Laird Bell as measure and as example.