

DEAN'S PAGE



Past Deans of the University of Chicago Law School. Top row ovals (left to right): Joseph Henry Beale, Jr., James Parker Hall, and Harry A. Bigelow. Second row (left to right): Wilber Katz, Edward H. Levi, and Phil C. Neal. Third row (left to right): Norval Morris and Gerhard Casper. Bottom row: Geoffrey R. Stone.

HOLDING THE COURSE

by David P. Currie

Geof Stone has left the Law School. Fortunately he has not gone far. After 6 1/2 years of inspired service as dean, he has moved across the Midway to become provost. Thus we are not losing him; we are sharing him with the rest of the University. The University's gain is our gain; and the University could not have done better.

What is a dean? The term comes from the Latin *decanus*, the leader of a troop of ten soldiers. We are more than ten, and we may be more unruly than soldiers; but Geof has certainly been our leader. He has led us in strengthening our faculty, in improving our curriculum, in raising funds, and above all in maintaining the congenial and collegial environment that is so indispensable to fulfillment of our mission.

It is the function of a dean not only to lead but also to serve – to do all the tasks that must be done in order that students can study and teachers can teach. Geof has done them selflessly, cheerfully, and enthusiastically, and above all he has done them well. He leaves the Law School with the heartfelt thanks and praise of faculty, students, alumni, and staff; may the wind be ever at his back!

When I agreed to take leave of my books to fill in for Geof until his successor took office, I did so because after more than thirty years as a member of this faculty I believe deeply and sincerely in the Law School. Much has been said about the deficiencies of public primary and secondary education in this country; but our system of higher education, especially in private institutions like the University of Chicago, remains a national treasure, unmatched anywhere else in the world.

I emphasize private institutions because, as I have said in my recent comparative study of the German constitution, I believe that their excellence is attributable in no small measure to their relative freedom from political influence. I emphasize the University of Chicago because I believe that this Law School, in a time of increasing uncertainty as to the proper function and focus of higher education, has

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been extraordinarily successful in maintaining a commitment to academic excellence, to law as an intellectual discipline, and to civilized discourse among persons of differing views.

The world moves on, and the Law School changes. When I came to the Law School in 1962, there were 23 full-time members of the faculty. A number of them – Walter Blum, Phil Kurland, Edward Levi, Jo Lucas, Bernie Meltzer, Phil Neal – are, to our great good fortune, very much in evidence today. Only two of us – Kenneth Dam and I – are still full-time members of the law faculty; there has been an almost complete turnover in the past 31 years.

Yet in an important sense there has been continuity as well. As a result in substantial part of intrepid faculty-building under the leadership of Edward Levi, the Law School was a fine institution in 1962. Thanks to the dedicated efforts of his successors – Phil Neal, Norval Morris, Gerhard Casper, and Geof Stone – it may be an even stronger institution today, and it is our aim to make it still better in the future.

And now our search for a new pilot has reached its happy conclusion. Under the exemplary leadership of Richard Epstein, our search committee scoured the whole country to find the right candidate and found him right here in the Law School,

and President Sonnenschein has appointed him. Douglas Baird is a nationally renowned scholar in several fields including bankruptcy law; he has served the Law School superbly in a number of administrative positions from associate dean to chairman of the Appointments Committee and director of the Law and Economics Program. No one knows the inner workings of the Law School and the University better than Doug; no one is more dedicated to the institution; no one better exemplifies the qualities of integrity and excellence that make it great. Doug is a fine teacher, a stimulating and supportive colleague, and one of the leading legal scholars in the United States; he will be an exciting and worthy addition to our long line of magnificent Deans.

Doug will officially take the helm on July 1; until then we shall proudly hold our course, with a little help from our friends. ♦



David P. Currie is the Edward H. Levi Distinguished Service Professor of Law, Arnold and Frieda Shure Scholar, and the interim dean.