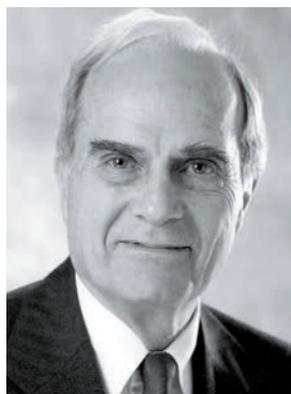


## Former Law School Dean Phil C. Neal, 1919–2016

Former University of Chicago Law School Dean Phil C. Neal, an antitrust expert, litigator, and law firm founder whose ability to cut through complexity earned him a reputation as a deft problem solver, died in September. He was 97.



Phil C. Neal

Neal was a professor at the Law School for 21 years starting in 1961 and served as its sixth dean between 1963 and 1975. He taught a wide range of subjects, including Elements of the Law, Antitrust, and Constitutional Law. As dean, he hired many influential scholars, including Richard Posner, now a judge on the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals; the late Ronald

Coase, the 1991 recipient of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics; Gerhard Casper; Norval Morris; Frank Zimring; Richard Epstein; William Landes; and Geoffrey R. Stone.

Neal began a new phase of his long career as senior partner at Neal Gerber Eisenberg, the Chicago-based law firm he helped found in 1986. During his time in private practice, Neal litigated cases on a wide range of issues, from antitrust to school desegregation, and advised the corporate boards of major companies. In the 1950s and 1960s, Neal was appointed to several high-profile government bodies, serving as chairman of the Pacific Regional Enforcement Commission of the Wage Stabilization Board, executive secretary of the Coordinating Committee for Multi-District Litigation for the United States District Courts, and chair of a White House task force on antitrust policy.

“Phil Neal led an exceptional career of service and responsibility,” said Dean Thomas J. Miles, the Clifton R. Musser Professor of Law and Economics. “He was one of our longest serving deans, and he led the Law School during a time of extraordinary change for our country and the legal profession. The Law School is forever better thanks to his leadership. Were that not enough, he was an elite practitioner, served in multiple high-level positions in the government, and even founded a major law firm. His career is a model of leadership for all lawyers.”

Neal was an agile thinker who could “untangle Gordian knots where others were just sort of lost,” said his son,

Andrew Neal. “He was very intelligent, quick-witted, and didn’t suffer fools gladly. But he was also incredibly gracious, and very deliberate and thoughtful in the way he approached problems—life problems or legal problems—and he would not stand pat on whatever the thinking of the day was about anything.”

This enabled Neal to “see the core simplicity” in even the most complex issues, said Stephen Fedo, ’81, Neal Gerber Eisenberg’s General Counsel and a Law School alumnus who first encountered Neal when he took Professional Ethics from him in 1980.

“He was brilliant at cutting away the underbrush from an issue, and he was wonderful at articulating the simple truth of a problem in the most simple, elegant prose I’ve ever read,” Fedo said. “His real strength, as a lawyer and as a friend, is that he was always present when he spoke to you. His focus was on that person’s concerns, and on finding a way to address those concerns.”



Phil C. Neal speaking in the Green Lounge.

Neal, who was born in Chicago and graduated from Oak Park and River Forest High School in 1936, received his undergraduate degree *summa cum laude* from Harvard in 1940, and graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard Law School in 1943. While in law school, Neal was president of the *Harvard Law Review*.

After law school, Neal served for two years as a law clerk to Justice Robert H. Jackson of the US Supreme Court. In spring 1945, Jackson permitted Neal to leave his clerkship a few months early because he had the opportunity, through the intercession of Justice Felix Frankfurter, to assist Department of State official Alger Hiss in his work as secretary general of the United Nations organizing conference.