Some reminiscences on the University's
Columbus School of Law
by the
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Delving into the annals of a School which counts its past in seven decades inevitably reveals items of human interest. Even in 1897, we are reminded that students looked up from their studies, when we read of the Dean's complaining that "the recurrence of the athletic season has distracted the minds of some of the members of the Law Department from their work more than is to be desired." The weather, too, played its part in the fashioning of our first lawyers, as the Dean, in 1898, asks for a library properly warmed in the evenings, and, in 1899, points to the "blizzard" that suspended access to the University for four days.

Then, in view of the very high standards of our Law School today, it is interesting to count the steps taken by this School on the road of progress. The study of law, like other professions, developed gradually on the American educational scene. In the early days, all students of law did not attend classes; some registered and then pursued their studies "elsewhere in private under written directions from the Professor in charge of their work." In 1900, for example, of 47 students registered at the University's Law School, 18 were listed as engaged in their studies in absentia. In the early days, too, applicants for admission to the undergraduate section needed only a high school education, or its equivalent, for acceptance. This is difficult to realize in light of our long-standing requirement of a previous bachelor's degree for admission to the Law School.

Though over the years, there have been many changes within the School of Law, our objectives have remained constant. In 1930, the Rector, the future Bishop James H. Ryan, restated these goals when he wrote: "Our intention is, first, to train a bar solidly in the fundamentals and technique of the law, fitting them to cope successfully in the practice of their profession with the products of the best American law schools. Second, to integrate in all courses sound legal philosophy rather than attempt in several isolated courses to treat superficially of the natural law and legal ethics. Third, to provide a legal training school from which law schools may obtain teachers, not only grounded in proper philosophy but who have been accustomed to approach legal problems from the point of view of right legal philosophy . . ." Again, in 1944, in the midst of the pressures of war, Dr. Brendan Brown, who was in charge of the School, could write: "The pedagogical modifications which have been necessitated by the demands of war have not interfered with the ultimate purpose of the Law School, namely, to bring home to its students the existence of the controlling ethical order which communicates meaning and significance to positive law." And these statements but echo the continuing objectives of our School of Law down to the present. For, since it has been observed "that the common law has never prevailed where the Christian religion did not exist," and since Christian legal tradition can count such luminaries as Augustine, Suarez, Aquinas, Francis Vittoria and Bellarmine, it becomes even more imperative that the vague and amorphous norms sometimes found in American legal education continue to be rejected in favor of this rich Christian philosophy of law. The bedrock of Christian legal philosophy, then, remains the cornerstone not only of our teaching of law but also of the justice that will be reared on that foundation.

From its beginning, the School has been blessed with outstanding deans. Its first head was the Honorable William Callyhan Robinson, LL.D., who came to the University at the peak of a brilliant career. With an M.A. from Yale and an LL.D. from Dartmouth, he practiced law, became one of the founders of the Yale Law School and a Professor of Common Law at that institution, and was Judge of the Connecticut Court of Pleas until 1895, when he organized the Department, soon to be the School, of Law at The Catholic University of America. A prolific writer whose volumes were used as textbooks by law students, he was considered an authority on patent law and sent one of his pupils to Japan to revise that country's patent laws, for which he was highly honored by the Japanese Government. In fact, Yale University paid its tribute to our Law School's first dean by unveiling a tablet to his memory, in 1909.

Professor Robinson was succeeded as Dean, in 1912, by Dr. Thomas C. Corrigan, who had been an Associate Professor in the School. It was during his tenure that the School was extended an unsolicited invitation to become a member of the Association of American Law Schools. Following Dean Corrigan's death, the Vice-Dean, Dr. Peter J. McLoughlin, was appointed to the post of dean, in 1922. At this time our faculty of law became the first District of Columbia law school to be recognized by the American Bar Association and, in
1924, was rated in class A by the Association.

The death of Dean McLoughlin in 1928 occasioned the appointment of the Honorable William H. De Lacy as Acting Dean. He served in this capacity until his death in 1930, when John McDill Fox was designated as the fourth dean of the School. Dean Fox reorganized the School and its library and was instrumental in raising the requirements for entrance. During this period, the School, echoing the increasing interests of the day, joined with New York University in forming the American Academy of Air Law and became one of the incorporators, in the District of Columbia, of the Academy of World Economics.

Wars and rumors of wars involving our nation characterized much of the tenure of the fifth dean, the Reverend Robert J. White, J.C.D., who assumed office in 1937. A capable lawyer before entering the seminary, Father White, as a priest, was accorded wide publicity by his election as National Chaplain of the American Legion. He began his work as dean by declaring, “We are determined to achieve the highest possible scholarship standards...” In fulfillment, he could soon point to a rise in scholastic standards and to the fact that the School was then one of a select group of eight law schools in the United States requiring a baccalaureate degree of every candidate for admission. He strengthened the faculty by adding several professors of outstanding scholastic and teaching accomplishments; he revised the curriculum and introduced new courses of practical interest, in which he insisted on sound legal philosophy, aiming to present a distinctively Catholic legal culture. In 1943, Dean White was granted leave of absence to join the American Naval forces as a chaplain. Following the end of hostilities, he again took up his duties as Dean, but, in 1948, because of ill health, he resigned this post. Recognition of his abilities was also accorded by the Naval Chaplain Corps which advanced him to the rank of Rear Admiral before his retirement.

During part of the regime of Dean White, Dr. Brendan F. Brown was in charge of the School, and after Dean White resigned, Dr. Brown, who had served as a judicial consultant in Japan, was designated in 1949 as the sixth dean of the School. Within this period, the first issue of the new Law Review made its appearance, but Dean Brown’s distinctive contribution to the School lay in the realm of the philosophical. He urged a distinctively Catholic conception of juristic thought to compete with the utilitarian jural theories flourishing on the American legal scene. In his own words, he sought, “a Law School which will be Catholic not only in theory and accen-
Martin, a 1901 alumnus of the School, who became President of the American Bar Association; many justices of the Supreme Court, as Wiley B. Rutledge, Frank Murphy, Felix Frankfurter, William O. Douglas, Tom C. Clark, John Marshall Harlan, and Robert H. Jackson, who presented a photograph of himself to the Law School, inscribed, "For the School of Law, Catholic University, with good wishes and high respect, Robert H. Jackson." Among others the roll also includes the Honorable James P. McGranery, the Attorney General of the United States and before his death a trustee of the University; and the Honorable Wayne L. Morse, United States Senator and former Dean of the Law School of the University of Oregon. This sampling is significant as an indication of the rewarding legal associations enjoyed by our School of Law over the years.

The mountain to Mohamet or Mohamet to the mountain for many years remained a problem to the University's Law School. In the horse-and-buggy days of this discipline, again and again its location on campus was underlined as a most obvious deterrent to its success. The campus was in the country and the lawyers and prospective students were at work in the city. Law professors as a class just did not exist in 1897. A lawyer could step into a nearby building to give a lecture but could not be expected "to journey three miles into the country for such a purpose." But the first dean, sanguine though unsigned, wrote: "It is possible that at some future day the means of reaching the University from the city will be improved. But the distance will still remain, and the journey to the University will still be a journey into the country, and not vice versa . . . ."

By 1938, Dean White, in pointing to the School's advantageous location in the city of Washington, added, "but out of the city's congestion in the quiet of the campus." He could hardly have foreseen, however, the 1954 consolidation with the Columbus School of Law, and the move to that School's building in the heart of downtown Washington.

School closer contact with its sister discipline, the School of Canon Law, which is the sole pontifical faculty of Canon Law in the United States. This proximity of Law with the other University disciplines also facilitates the attainment of the University's aim of imparting a liberal education to its students. As a law school under Catholic auspices, however, this discipline not only has a relationship with other areas of learning on campus but actually has its roots buried deep, for instance, in both the theology and philosophy which are taught here. So its presence on campus is a distinct aid to better orientation in the teaching of law, which in turn will reflect itself in a more distinctive Christian legal culture.

On May first of last year, I had the pleasure of breaking ground and, on October 20, of blessing the cornerstone for the attractive and functional law building which opened its doors this past September. This new home for the Law School is a three-story structure of masonry, steel, and brick which has its main entrance facing the campus. It is located immediately west of Caldwell Hall on a sloping site extending to Harewood Road. The air-conditioned building includes classrooms, Moot Court and attendant facilities in one wing and, in the other, the library with a hundred thousand volume capacity and reading space for 190 students. The top floor of the classroom wing is devoted entirely to offices, conference rooms, and faculty-related activities, including secretarial areas and a faculty lounge. The lower floor of the classroom wing is for student activities, including the Bar Association, Law Review, Moot Court Board, and student lounges. With the Law School enrollment of last year at 310 students, the new building was designed to accommodate 400 students, with provisions to expand, in case of need, to a future 600 student capacity.

In fine, with such ideal facilities, located in a city of which the late Justice Robert H. Jackson said, "no place in the country can compete with the Nation's Capital as a training ground for lawyers," and buttressed by a long-standing tradition of striving for excellence in the study of law, The Catholic University of America's Columbus School of Law can surely be said to be poised on the threshold of an even more brilliant future.