Tribute to Henry King

Barbara R. Snyder

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TRIBUTE TO HENRY KING

Barbara R. Snyder†

I am honored to be here with all of you this afternoon to remember one of our university's greatest faculty members.

In Henry King, our students, staff and faculty have had the privilege of walking side by side with a man who lived, and shaped, an unforgettable part of history.

During his work at the Nuremberg Trials, this 26-year-old attorney looked directly into the faces of evil.

He did not flinch.

Instead, Henry King took the lessons of his experiences and forged them into a philosophy that would guide the rest of his life.

Henry King returned to the United States passionately committed to helping create a world where such atrocities never happened again.

He believed that the law, and lawyers, had a critical role to play in improving the lives of others . . . in assuring justice . . . in helping bring order where before there was none.

Henry King returned from Nuremberg not bowed, not struck with horror, but, quite simply, powerfully emboldened. He returned with full confidence that individuals of compassion and commitment, intellect and integrity could make a measurable difference in the world.

As all of you gathered here today know well, he was right.

We stand today in the school that was Professor King's home for more than a quarter century.

At Case Western Reserve, Henry King played a pivotal role in the development of our programs in international law. He recruited professors and students. He helped launch the Canada-United States Law Institute, and served as its Chair for many years. And, most of all, by his every word and deed, he illustrated the positive impact a man of laws could make.

† President, Case Western Reserve University.
After Nuremberg, Professor King went on to serve as legal counsel for the United States foreign economic aid program during the Eisenhower administration—a program better known to many of us as the Marshall Plan. He spent two decades as chief corporate international counsel for TRW. In the 1990s he was part of the American Bar Association’s task force on war crimes in the former Yugoslavia; in 1998, he and two colleagues from Nuremberg played a pivotal part in the creation of the International Criminal Court.

The accomplishments are legion. So too is the affection he inspired among so many. Earlier this year, members of the Canada-United States Law Institute gathered with other colleagues and friends to honor Professor King. The remarks are included in an edition of the Institute’s journal. I will be surprised if anyone is able to read them without experiencing a few chuckles, a few tears, and a renewed sense of awe.

This afternoon, however, I would like to close not with words of one of his many admirers. Even today, Henry King has so much to teach us. Here is an excerpt from his remarks at the end of that dinner:

I can leave you with one thought [about what] makes life worth living outside of love and affection: it is having ideals. I think you [have] got to have ideals to judge your progress.

You never quite fulfill the ideals, or you get very close, but you grow in the process. It makes life worth living. I think that you have to have hope. You have got to have dreams.

And I think the real danger in life is not to dream at all. It is dreams that force out a change, and a better world, and you grow in the process.

That is what life is all about.¹

Thank you all for being here today. And thank you, Professor King, for touching every last one of us by your endeavors, and by your example.