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## Walter Gellhorn

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## WALTER GELLHORN

Walter Gellhorn is irreplaceable. To be sure, in every generation there will be a few scholars who are his peer. In a strong teaching faculty like Columbia's, there will always be some who teach as well as he. The republic is occasionally blessed with public servants who give themselves with the sort of selfless devotion that Walter Gellhorn brings to every task. Each of us can count on a handful of good friends like him for moral support, good advice and uncritical love. But I know of no one who has served an institution so loyally and so effectively with so little personal gain as Walter Gellhorn has served Columbia.

Babe Ruth the great pitcher was always in the shadow of Ruth the slugger. Had he also been a sure-handed fielder, a record-breaking base stealer and a wise and humane man, one would have an appropriate sports analogy for Walter Gellhorn.

Anyone who writes about Walter Gellhorn must fear for his credibility. And so I emphasize that what I have just said is neither mere courtesy nor extravagant hyperbole. The editors of the *Review* will, I know, forgive me if I offer my scholarly support in the text rather than in the footnotes. The Association of American Law Schools has conferred upon Walter Gellhorn its highest distinction—the Presidency of the Association. Our alumni have awarded him their highest honor—the Medal for Excellence. The University has had the good sense to dub him University Professor, a rank reserved for Columbia's best. Harvard called upon him to deliver the Oliver Wendell Holmes Lecture and conferred the Henderson Prize upon him not once, but twice out of the five times that that distinguished award has been given. At my last count, he had been awarded honorary degrees by six universities here and abroad, and more are doubtless on the way.

Walter's bibliography appears elsewhere in these pages. Forget its impressive length and outstanding quality if you will. Consider instead that almost everyone reading this issue will, at one time or another, have come into contact with his writings and an extraordinarily large number will actually have worked with them. The result is an effect on the development of the law that is almost without parallel.

The citation for the Alumni Association's Medal for Excellence catches the spirit of Walter's commitment to Columbia:

The greatest professional interest in his life has been unflinching, uncompromising and unending faith in the greatness of the calling to which he has given himself as a member of the University law faculty. He has dedicated himself to the proposition that the teaching of young men and women to know law is a vocation that has no peer for a lawyer. Who among us has not heard him good-naturedly in-

quire, especially of judges: Why in the name of good sense would anyone in his right mind give up law teaching for money, fame or judging?

That commitment has been manifested in countless ways. Walter has, of course, been a dedicated classroom teacher, developing new courses and seminars, and spending literally thousands of hours in painstakingly critical analysis of student papers so that he might help them to grow. As the head of our Graduate Program, he has helped hundreds of aspiring law teachers to choose courses, find apartments, make the right career choices and, of course, develop into the kind of professional worthy of Walter's calling. If there were an international Michelin for academics, Walter Gellhorn would surely have its full three stars: it seems that no academic from abroad regards a visit to the United States as complete unless he has called upon Walter Gellhorn who, of course, receives them all with unflinching courtesy. When he travels, he lets us know so that we may schedule him for visits to alumni groups anywhere in the country or around the world. And it is not just the visible part of the School's chores that he so frequently shoulders. I am embarrassed to recall how many committee assignments he has accepted when others have regarded them as too time-consuming or too dull. And what member of the Columbia Law Faculty has not received one of Walter's brief memoranda calling his attention to some citation or idea that may be useful to him?

Walter insists, and in his case I am inclined to believe he means it, that none of this entitles him to anything extra because he has only done what he has been paid to do. Perhaps virtue is its own reward. Walter Gellhorn has our love and respect. His wife, Kitty, is worthy of him and he of her. And he is enjoying the special pleasure that only an ex-editor can know, as the *Columbia Law Review* does him honor 45 years after they first brought glory to one another.

Conventional celebrations of retirement too often signify the end of a career. As all of us know, Walter's retirement has no such meaning at all. His notes about recent developments, promising possibilities for the faculty and what I have done wrong lately still spice my regular correspondence, and though he has left the classroom, he continues to teach us all. It is a great joy for me, both personally and institutionally, not to have to say goodbye.

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