

THE IOWA LAW REVIEW AT AGE FIFTY

Frank R. Strong*

In the affairs of men fifty years remain a right smart span of time whether for a marriage, a business enterprise, or a law review. Only a small percentage of all couples in the United States celebrate a Golden Anniversary; the average life of business in this country is not long; only a handful of law reviews have reached the fiftieth volume of publication. The golden anniversary of the *Iowa Law Review* is thus richly deserving of celebration and felicitation within at least the world of legal publications.

It was my privilege to be faculty advisor to the *Review* during the years in which it came of age. Through its original twenty years of publication the *Iowa Law Review* had gained respect and stature under a pattern of close faculty direction. With Volume 21 it became a journal for which student editors assumed major direction and responsibility under only general faculty supervision. Volumes 21 and 22 were the initial products of the new dispensation. That they amply justified faith in student competence for editorial control is a lasting tribute to the able young men whose names are carried on the mastheads of these volumes. I shall forever cherish the close associations with these outstanding students of the State University of Iowa College of Law. I shall never cease to take pride in their immediate and convincing vindication of the merit of the student-directed law review.

The American law review is a unique institution. Justice Roger Traynor of the Supreme Court of California, himself a contributor to the *Iowa Law Review*, has well stated this uniqueness: "There is in no other profession and in no other country anything to equal the student-edited American law review, nurtured without commercial objective in university law schools alive to the imperfections of the law, and alert to make space for the worthy commentary of an unknown student as well as for the worthy solicited or unsolicited manuscript of a renowned authority." The American law review is the major medium in this nation, as it is not elsewhere, for critical appraisal of legislative act and judicial decision and for that exposition and revaluation of legal theory so essential if "law, like the traveler, [is to] be ready for the morrow." As someone has sagely observed, the American law review is

*Dean, College of Law, Ohio State University. B.A., LL.B., Yale University.

the profession's free press; it is indeed the very marketplace for free trade in legal ideas. In a nation which, wisely or not, places such great reliance upon judicial participation in the art of governance, a free agency of "law review" is essential.

There are those who discount the significance and the mission of the American law review. Their self-appointed spokesman has recently returned to the pages of the *Virginia Law Review* to say goodbye for a second time. No human institution is without its deficiencies and limitations, and even the most avid devotee of the American law review recognizes the continuing presence of discouraging weaknesses. Yet withal, there are from great judges and able practitioners abundant testimonials to the unique contribution which the American law review makes to the practice, the decision, and the shaping of law. Who else beside a law review deigns to "reverse" the Supreme Court of the United States? It takes no daring prophecy to predict that the *Iowa Law Review*, and sister publications, will be around to say goodbye to the Rodells of many a generation.