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## A Tribute to William H. Bowen: Tributes and Response to Words of Congratulations

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## A Tribute to William H. Bowen: Tributes and Response to Words of Congratulations

### Authors

Charles W. Goldner Jr., J. Thomas May, Rodney K. Smith, Thomas F. McLarty, Derrick Smith, William Jefferson Clinton, and William H. Bowen



*William H. Bowen*

*The 2000-2001 Editorial Board respectfully dedicates this issue to  
Dean Bowen.*

### ABOUT WILLIAM H. BOWEN

William H. Bowen, born May 6, 1923, was reared in the Jefferson County town of Altheimer in southeast Arkansas. After a successful career as a tax attorney and CEO of one of the state's largest banks, Bowen became chief of staff in 1991 for then-Governor Bill Clinton during Clinton's campaign for the presidency.

In 1995, Bowen was asked by UALR Chancellor Charles Hathaway to take over as Dean of the Law School and to help the Law School maintain its accreditation status, conduct a nationwide search for the next dean, and establish a fund-raising arm for the Law School. Bowen also served the Law School as he: established the prestigious Bowen Scholars, a full scholarship program based on merit with the emphasis on encouraging diversity at the Law School; secured an endowment for the Altheimer Foundation Lecture series; and secured an endowment for the Altheimer Distinguished Professorship.

Dean Bowen has always looked for ways to promote and serve his state. Dean Bowen's life defines professionalism, and he is an outstanding example for the future graduates of the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law.



## A TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM H. BOWEN

Charles W. Goldner, Jr.\*

*Attorney, Banker, Businessman, Public Servant, Educator, Leader*

You will find these words inscribed on the plaque next to William H. Bowen's portrait which hangs at the north entrance to the University of Arkansas at Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law. You read that correctly—the William H. Bowen School of Law. On April 27, 2000, more than one thousand people joined us on the law school's lawn for the ceremony naming our law school in honor of Bill Bowen.

I am pleased that our Law Review has chosen to include in this issue a tribute to Bill. The remarks of those who spoke that day follow. You only need to look at the names of those participating to realize the high esteem the people of Arkansas have for Bill; you only need to read their remarks to appreciate the deep affection each has for Bill.

I had the distinct pleasure of acting as Associate Dean for Bill when he served as Dean of our law school from July 1995 through June 1997. During that time I became friends with and developed a deep respect for a man who for decades has worked tirelessly for the people of the State of Arkansas. Bill pays attention to and cares about the individual; his is a very personal, one-on-one style. Whether talking to President Clinton, a law school employee or student, or a member of the public in need of assistance, Bill focuses on that person. And he focuses on *all* people. Bill's belief in the importance of diversity will have a lasting impact on this school and on the state. The endowment he created to fund scholarships for minority students is but one example of his commitment to opportunity for all. In typical Bowen style, at the same time he created a second endowment for scholarships for outstanding law students, whether Arkansans by birth or Arkansans by choice (his description of those of us like me who had the good sense to move to Arkansas). Suffice it to say, this law school will only continue to improve as a result of Dean Bowen's leadership and commitment.

Read the remarks made by President William Jefferson Clinton and others the day we honored William H. Bowen. You will understand why I started this dedication with the words "Attorney, Banker, Businessman, Public Servant, Educator, Leader."

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\* Dean and Professor of Law, William H. Bowen School of Law, University of Arkansas at Little Rock; B.A., DePauw University; J.D., University of Oklahoma; LL.M., Georgetown University.

**J. Thomas May\***

Today, many great things will be said about our honoree, Mr. William H. Bowen. Personally, I cannot think of a greater testimony to the significance of this occasion and this person than to have the President of the United States of America as the keynote speaker. Mr. Bowen, you have obviously done well. However, I have been sent to Little Rock from southeast Arkansas to make sure that everyone understands that Bill Bowen was born and raised in the metroplex of Altheimer, Arkansas, and that all of us from Jefferson County take considerable credit for all the outstanding things that he has done for the banking industry, the law profession, and higher education, as well as for so many of the good things that he has personally made happen in Arkansas.

I have known Mr. Bowen since 1976, when I moved back to Arkansas, and I can testify that he does many things to help others that no one ever knows about. During his tenure as chairman of First Commercial, he truly built one of the state's premiere financial institutions. I can tell you personally he was a tough competitor, yet he was always very gracious. He had a way of making you feel good while he was taking your best customer. I—like a lot of young bankers in Arkansas—have benefitted tremendously from knowing and watching an unselfish Bill Bowen at work in trying to make this state the best it can possibly be. For that, I am grateful.

Mr. Bowen, probably one of the greatest honors that I have had on the Board of Trustees is to present diplomas to my two children. My oldest son, Chris, graduated from this outstanding law school, and it gives me a great deal of pride and pleasure, on behalf of the entire Board of Trustees and president Alan Sugg, to present to you the resolution naming the School of Law at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock the William H. Bowen School of Law.

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\* Chairman, University of Arkansas Board of Trustees; Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer, Simmons First National Corporations; B.S., B.A., University of Arkansas; M.B.A., University of Arkansas; National Commercial Lending School; Stonier Graduate School of Banking.

**Rodney K. Smith\***

In this tribute we celebrate lives of service. In that regard, I was touched by remarks recently made by a religious leader, Elder Alexander B. Morrison, who told of efforts in his church to obtain quilts for the people of Kosovo. The women's organization for his church set a goal of 30,000 quilts. By March 1 of this year, over 120,000 quilts had been received. A woman from West Yellowstone, Montana, wrote: "I am 87 years old and cannot walk, but I can still quilt a bit. I have hugged these little blankets and have told them to 'fulfill the measure of their creation,' so I hope they keep a little one warm and give comfort." As I read this quote, I was struck by the fact that the service *is* the measure of our creation. As Dean, I trust that the law school is imbued with a commitment to service, both to Arkansas and to the world.

Certainly, the measure of President Clinton's life has been service. I would like to mention two areas of service by the President that have touched my life in significant ways. I could offer my appreciation for his service in many areas but will speak only of these two. First, as I was preparing these thoughts, I received a call from my Chinese son, who lived with us when he studied law in the United States. He now has a thriving law firm in Shanghai. When I told him about the visit of the President, he emphasized how very much the rising generation in China respect President Clinton. Previously, he had told me of what an unprecedented miracle it was for the Chinese people to be permitted to hear the President address them directly via their media, during his trip to China. My son said, "Dad"—that is what he calls me—"you cannot believe how the President's remarks moved us. They gave us a great ray of hope." I have heard similar stories from other parts of the world, but I have never been moved the way I was by my son's remarks.

Second, and again personally, I want to thank you, Mr. President, for the work you have done in an area of great scholarly and personal interest to me—religious liberty. With the possible exception of James Madison, who largely penned the First Amendment's guarantee of religious liberty, no president has been as committed to religious liberty as you have been. I am gratefully aware of your unequivocal support for the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and your efforts to ensure that religious freedom continues unabated in the nations of the former Soviet

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\* Donaghey Dean and Professor of Law, August 1997-July 2000; B.A., Western Colorado State College; J.D., Brigham Young University; LL.M., S.J.D., University of Pennsylvania.



Union, particularly Russia, and the world. You have not and could not possibly receive the credit you deserve for your service in either of these areas, or many others. But, on behalf of my Chinese son and those of us who treasure religious liberty in this country and throughout the world, thank you.

Our honoree, William H. Bowen—Bill to those of us who have come to know him as a friend and respected colleague—has also led a life of exemplary service. Others will no doubt mention his life as a respected lawyer in one of our nation's fine law firms, as a leader in Arkansas and elsewhere, and about his life as a banker and public servant. I want to focus on his service to the law school.

Bill served as our Dean for two full and productive years. During that time, Dean Bowen guided us through a very successful accreditation visit, helped establish strong external relations for the law school (something he continues to do), and secured endowments for an Altheimer Professorship and for the Altheimer Lecture and Symposium series, which has brought leading scholars from all over the world to Little Rock and the law school. Dean Bowen also strengthened the school's efforts to reach out to diverse groups who have historically been under-represented in the law, established collaborative links with UAMS which led to a major symposium last fall, and helped move us in the direction of strengthening our relationship with our sister law school, the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He also broadened our reputation by serving as a wonderful emissary for the law school in the business and legal communities, which he continues to do.

After serving as Dean, Bill created the prestigious Bowen Scholars Program, with a gift in excess of \$2 million for scholarships, to assist us in our efforts to keep the best and brightest students in Arkansas and to help us recruit talented students from outside the state. Just as Bill would have it, the Bowen Scholars represent a diverse cross-section of Arkansas and the world, with two Bowen Scholars even coming from China. This act of forming the Bowen Scholars program will probably do more than any other single act I am aware of to help the Law School build its service mission in Arkansas and throughout the world. I wish we could look forward twenty or thirty years and see the great service of these Bowen Scholars and those who will follow them in future years. They are here in no small part due to your generosity, Bill. Thank you.

I could speak at length about William H. Bowen. However, I will share but one more anecdote. In the midst of our preparations for the ceremony, I paused to talk with a staff member, who has served us well for a number of years in a staff position. As we talked about what an

honor it is to have the school named after Bill Bowen, she said, "I think he is the greatest man I know." People in all walks of life who have come to know Bill might well echo those sentiments.

From this day forward, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock School of Law will be known as the William H. Bowen School of Law at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Thank you from the deepest reaches of our hearts, Bill. You honor us by permitting us to put your name on our—excuse me, your—law school.

### Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty\*

I am honored to be here to salute a man I consider an example, mentor, patron, and friend. But, more importantly, I am proud to represent the countless people across our state and nation who have been influenced, motivated, and guided by Bill Bowen.

Bill Bowen has always understood that the true value of a person is not the sum of all he owns, but the total of all he has given. With contagious spirit and unparalleled energy, Bill has worked his whole life for the common good—and along the way, he's helped many others achieve their fullest potential.

I know that very well. I was only twenty-eight when Bill asked me to join the Commercial National Bank Board of Directors—a gesture of trust and confidence in me that I cherish to this day. I've turned to him many times since then for counsel and advice. With grace and good humor, he's never failed to point me in the right direction. He's always honest, always frank, but he has the gift of making people feel better just by being there. He is man, as Rudyard Kipling once described, who walks with kings without losing the common touch.

I think everyone here is familiar with his distinguished legal career. From the Justice Department in Washington to his successful practice in Little Rock, he earned a reputation as one of the best tax lawyers in the south. However, Bill has always been eager for new challenges. In 1971, he accepted the invitation to become President of Commercial National Bank, a respected and venerable institution whose philosophy was conservative in nature. The transition from lawyer to businessman was bound to be tricky at best. The bank was facing competition as the market grew and changed. But Bill, with Lee Iacocca-like spirit and

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\* Vice Chairman, Kissinger-McLarty Associates and Chairman, McLarty Companies; White House Chief of Staff 1993-94; Recipient of the Secretary of State's Distinguished Service Medal.

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considerable personal flair, built that bank up from within. Drawing on his years of service as a Navy pilot, he worked aggressively—even pugnaciously—to rally our troops to the cause. His “Bowenisms,” as I like to call them, became legendary. At the same time, he developed a focused, disciplined plan for business growth. Then, he orchestrated a major merger that catapulted the new entity to number one in Arkansas, and one of the most profitable in America. And in 1998, the bank consummated a major merger at a rather stunning premium—almost four times its book value—which was an extraordinary testament to Bill’s rare combination of business savvy and personal style.

And yet, despite the demands of his profession, Bill Bowen always found time to give back. Through his volunteer service at UALR, the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, and the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority, he helped expand opportunity and growth for Arkansas and its people. He also established the National Advisory Board, made up of distinguished Arkansans, to discuss and address the pressing issues of the day and develop recommendations to help our home state move forward.

Then, after a shining private sector career, Bill became a full-time public servant. In the early 1990s, I had worked hard to convince Bill to join me as Vice-Chairman at ARKLA. I almost succeeded when, in 1991, I got a call from then-Governor Bill Clinton, asking me to try to persuade Bill to serve as *his* Chief of Staff during his run for the White House. Even I had to admit it was a higher calling, so I reluctantly, but with good spirits, agreed. And Bill rose to that challenge like every other—with vigor, grace, and success. His tenure was marked by sound judgment, professionalism, absolute integrity, and signature Bowen style. More recently, as you know, Bill’s career came full circle in his service as Dean of the UALR Law School. But of course his greatest, proudest achievement is his wonderful, loving family. Let me say to Connie and the rest of the Bowen clan—including a dozen grandchildren—how honored I am to be with you today and how proud we all are of Bill.

The famed British statesman Edmund Burke once said that “great men are the guideposts and landmarks in the state.” And from law to banking to education . . . from business boardrooms to government halls . . . as a family man and a community leader, William H. Bowen—Citizen Bowen—is indeed a symbol of much of what we prize the most in the state we love so well. Supported by his family, sustained by his faith, and driven by his remarkable intellect and character, this son of the south, in his lifetime, has lifted many other people’s lives. He

stands for something larger than himself—and inspires us all to reach higher. Yet, despite this rich legacy, there is no one I know who better personifies the campaign song that our mutual friend President Clinton made famous: *Don't Stop Thinking About Tomorrow*. I am sure that, for Bill and the William H. Bowen School of Law, the best is yet to be. Thank you, my friend, for a job well done.

### Derrick Smith\*

I want to take this opportunity to thank Bill Bowen for keeping a promise he made to me several years ago. Three years ago last month, when I was a senior at Hendrix College, I drove down from Conway to meet Dean Bowen to talk about law school and my future. As I sat in his second floor office and listened to him tell me how good his law school was and how much better it was to become, I anxiously waited for him to give me that one reason why I should attend the UALR School of Law. Near the end of our conversation he began to talk about the goals of the law school—he said a good law school does not just train students to practice law. More importantly, a good law school prepares its students to serve the public—he was proud that fully 25% of our graduates go into public service. Dean Bowen summed up by saying, “Derrick, here we don’t just make you valuable to prospective employers, we make you valuable to society. And I promise you this, if you decide to attend our law school and take advantage of all its opportunities, when you graduate you will not only be able to practice law, but you will be ready to serve the public.” For keeping that promise to me and countless others, I want to say, thank you, Dean Bowen.

It is a special privilege for me, as a young man from Marianna, Arkansas, the proud hometown of Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater, to have the honor of introducing a great American. To join us in today’s celebration, we welcome someone who has made a life of serving this state and nation. President Clinton has spent the last seven and a half years putting people first and building a bridge to the future that is strong, inclusive, and wide enough for all Americans. He has served this state and nation by showing us that everybody counts, that everybody should have a role to play, and we all do better when we work together. Today he joins all of us in paying special tribute to Dean Bill Bowen.

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\* J.D. 2000, UALR School of Law; 1999-2000 President, UALR Student Bar Association; Bowen Scholar; Law Clerk to the Honorable Ollie Neal. B.A., Hendrix College.

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## William Jefferson Clinton\*

I must say, when Mack McLarty was speaking, he was laying it on so thick, I had to lean over and pinch Bill to make sure he was still breathing. I said, "Bowen, are you still alive? Is this is a eulogy?" And he said, "I guess if Mack ever does run for office, I'll have to support him now." To all of you here who are responsible for this, I want to thank you on behalf of Hillary and myself for naming this law school for Bill Bowen.

I was looking out in this audience today. There are hundreds of people I know by first name in this audience. I counted over twenty people who were members of one or more of my administrations as Governor in some form or another. There are many lawyers here whom I have admired since I was a very young man. But as a person who's spent most of his life in politics, it's somehow reassuring to me to know that this law school is being named for a brilliant man who spent the last thirty years trying to avoid practicing law—and seems to me to have succeeded in an outstanding fashion.

I want to say that Bill Bowen agreed basically to make it possible for me to run for President—and I say that in all sincerity. I was profoundly concerned about what would happen if I were to undertake a campaign in 1991, and I wanted to know that the office would continue to operate and that things would go well, and that if I needed to make a decision or come home, somebody with enough sense to know would tell me and get me on a plane forthwith.

I had known Bill Bowen for a long time by then. By then, for the better part of two decades, he had been a friend of mine, an advisor, a supporter, and a banker. I remember that I had been attorney general about two months when the Arkansas Jaycees named me one of the outstanding young men of the year. I knew I didn't deserve it, and I found out later that Bill Bowen and Mack McLarty got it done. I am still trying to live up to it. And unfortunately, I outgrew the title before I lived up to it.

By the time 1991 rolled around, there was only one thing Bill Bowen hadn't done for me. He hadn't actually been a full-time member of our administration. So I asked him to become the Chief of Staff, as Mack said. He actually took about an hour to agree, and that's a long

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\* President of the United States of America, 1992-2000; Governor of the State of Arkansas, 1978-80, 1982-92; Attorney General of the State of Arkansas, 1976-78; J.D., Yale University School of Law; B.A., Georgetown University; Rhodes Scholar.

is a long time for Bowen—if you know how he makes decisions. After all, I was asking him to turn his entire life upside down. But he did it. And he performed in an absolutely superb way.

From the time I set foot outside Arkansas to seek the presidency, I knew that the state and the State House would be in good hands. I never worried about whether decisions would be made in a timely fashion, whether anything that should be done was being done, whether there was some problem that should be brought to my attention that was not. I never worried about any of that. I can honestly say, my friend Bill, if it hadn't been for you, I could not have done it. And I hope you are proud of what has happened in America for the last eight years, because your decision to be a selfless public servant made it all possible, and I thank you for that.

One of the things that bothers me is that people in elected office sometimes get all the credit for what so many people do. So I hope you will think about this, Bill: more than twenty-one million people with new jobs and the longest economic expansion in history. Today my staff gave me—just before I came up here—today's economic report. It shows that in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, our economy grew at a rate of 5.4 percent. That means for the last year our growth rate has been the highest it's been in over fifteen years. That is an astonishing thing.

And I would also like to tell you that I think my life with you in Arkansas had something to do with the economic policies we put in place up there. Somebody asked me the other day, when we passed the longest economic expansion in history, and everybody was celebrating, they said, "Well, what was the major contribution you made to the new economic policy, Mr. President?" And I said, "Arithmetic." I brought arithmetic to Washington. You are all laughing, but you are going to be asked to decide this year whether to continue arithmetic or return to some other theory, and I think we now have evidence with both, and I hope that arithmetic will prevail. And I thank you, Bill Bowen, for what you did to make it possible.

I would also like to thank you as the President, for your service to America in World War II, for flying the Hellcats and Wildcats—for waging freedom's fight. I would like to thank you as a former Governor, for always being there for the cause of the education of our children and for the economic development of people and places who were left behind in the 1980s, places like Althemier and Hope. And I would like to thank you, too, for being willing to come back and help out this law school, and for the role you all had in deciding to build this building



here around the old university building—to make a contribution at once to tomorrow’s lawyers, to historic preservation, and to the character of the MacArthur Park area, which is important to me and to so many others in this audience.

You could have done something else with the last couple of years of your life, and no one would have been able to criticize you. You could have decided that after succeeding as a lawyer, a banker, a public servant, and a public citizen, you did not need to prove that you could succeed as a law school dean. But it is true that of all the people I know, no one embodies the continuing energy and imagination for tomorrow any better than you do. I was not surprised when you agreed not to grow old but to help the young.

I told somebody one time that Bill Bowen made me look absolutely passive—and that I did not believe anybody could possibly be as aggressive as he was and still be likeable, but he managed to do it. And I think today answers the question why. Because I always had the feeling that whatever he was pushing for was something that was going to be good for everybody else, too. Through a long and rich life, it’s always been true. Thank you, Connie, for your friendship. I thank all the members of the Bowen family for loving him and keeping the rough edges sanded and giving him the anchor that every person needs. But most of all, Bill, I thank you for being my friend, for being a good citizen, for being a good man, and for being a very powerful example.

## A RESPONSE TO WORDS OF CONGRATULATIONS

William H. Bowen\*

Will Mitchell was president of the Arkansas Bar Association in 1962. Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson was guest speaker at the annual bar association meeting in Hot Springs. Will's introduction was nearly as complimentary and exaggerated as these remarks about me. LBJ thanked him graciously and added, "I regret that my mother and father were not here to hear it. My mother would have believed it, my father would have enjoyed it."

On December 5, 1996, in a speech to the American Enterprise Institute, Alan Greenspan, Chairman of the Federal Reserve System, added a new yardstick to measuring market performance. He asked "if irrational exuberance had unduly escalated asset value." Borrowing from that language, I want to focus your attention a few minutes on why supporters of this law school are exuberant—and rationally so—about its future. There has been a continuous law teaching experience in Little Rock for 132 years. It has matured today into a quality school, faculty, library, and student body.

Let us look at a few facts, not necessarily in order of importance. We have a first class school building. Completely renovated in 1992, it offers well-lit, acoustically sound classrooms with computer access, where students and teachers can hear and see each other—features missing from the school's previous home. The library, by any measure, is a gem, with computer access to electronic databases and other top libraries across the country. The faculty is professionally excellent, compatible with one another and the students, and committed to teaching law. You may access a web page on your computer for a list of this faculty whose background credentials and accomplishments will be reassuring for you to read. Adjunct professors have, amid busy professional commitments, found time to teach specialty subjects that under-gird and support this expert faculty. One of them has been teaching taxation subjects for thirty-five continuous years while building the biggest tax practice in Arkansas.

The student body embraces 400 students with 155 of those in the night division. There is a strong commitment to diversity in the student body and faculty: 10 percent of the students are African American, almost 50 percent are women, and the school enjoys a growing enrollment, currently 15 percent, from out of state. Each year, the qualifications of the entering class improve because the word is getting

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\* Dean, UALR William H. Bowen School of Law, 1995-1997.

out: UALR's law school may well be the best value in legal education in the United States.

We have a night division affording access to law school to full time employees and those caring for family during the day. This is distinctive in much of the law teaching experience and serves our market place exceedingly well. And that market place is all of Arkansas—we have part-time students who commute from as far away as Texarkana.

Greater Little Rock government offices, both county, state and federal, businesses and law offices offer full and part time employment to law students which is so important to their ability to get in and stay in school. Our graduates abound in top offices in the private and public sectors where they are leaders in the bar, the state bench, and among corporate counsel.

We are strengthened much and supported generously by the chancellor of UALR and his leadership. In our last accreditation review in 1997, the chancellor said to that visiting team, "the law school is a gem in UALR's crown."

Let me close with a brief word about an exciting near term expectation and opportunity. It reminds me of the unique experience we have here with the presence of a sitting President who is a native son. In 1991 and 1992 while running for President, he had regular sessions with his staff and leadership in his office in the Capitol. We regularly observed a pattern of behavior. Restlessly, he would pace around his office that was filled with artifacts and pictures of special interest to him. Two stood out. One, a picture on the west wall of grandfather and grandmother Cassidy in Hope with five year old Billy Clinton, and the other, a framed expression. The caption to Grandfather Cassidy's picture read: "It never hurt a good man to take a few unfair lickings." The other read, "The way to save your soul is through public service." His life is proof that he learned these lessons well.

How does the President's lifetime commitment to public service affect this law school? North of here, down the hill, east of Interstate 30 and south of the Arkansas River—less than a mile away—is the site of the park where the Clinton Presidential Library will be built. Because of this commitment to public service, a school of public service will be featured. A master's degree will be awarded after 24 hours of accredited work. This law school expects to share that teaching responsibility. It will open our doors to national and international students, faculty, and support, with an obvious move upward in reputation for all concerned.

All indications are that this law school continues to improve on all fronts, and that fact is increasingly recognized in Arkansas, the nation, and the world. Supporters of the school should be exuberant and rationally so. Thanks to the leadership of this dean, faculty, and staff, the support of the UALR leadership and the bar this school is headed on an ever-upward course.

In closing, I thank my family, friends and colleagues, with particular thanks to our President, Bill Clinton, for coming today and sharing the joy I feel as the University of Arkansas at Little Rock bestows this great honor on me.

