

**ROGER HOWELL JR.**, of the Class of 1958, tenth president of Bowdoin College: In 1954, when an alumnus learned of your admission to Bowdoin, he assured the dean that you would be able to pass all of your freshman courses. “Roger is a brilliant boy,” he wrote, “and I am sure he will be a credit to the College.” And today, twenty years after your graduation, this prophecy has become a classic understatement, surpassed only by President Kenneth Sill’s modestly cautious remark that “By and large and in the main, Bowdoin is a pretty good College.”

Indeed, your undergraduate career rivals that of President Sills himself. You were graduated *summa cum laude* with highest honors in history, elected to Phi Beta Kappa in junior year, and as a senior you were awarded the Lucien Howe Prize for the finest qualities of gentlemanly character – distinctions crowned in 1960 by your election as a Rhodes Scholar. At Oxford, without breaking your masterful stride, you earned, not one, but three degrees, capped by a doctorate in philosophy. Yet you found time to row on the St. John’s crew, to be captain of the tennis team, play rugby for your College and for the London and Scottish Clubs. Back on this campus, you valiantly attempted to organize and coach a mystified but impressed team in the rudiments of your favorite British sport.

Appointed to the Bowdoin faculty in 1964 as an assistant professor of history, you advanced to a full professorship in the incredibly scant time of four years, including a term as acting dean, a perilous and appropriate prelude to your election as president at the age of thirty-two in 1968, the second to rise to that position directly from the faculty, and the third youngest scholar to head the College since its founding in 1794.

You brought to the leadership of your alma mater that rare blend of reasonableness and light which you admired in Britain’s oldest University – precious qualities enabling you to face with imperturbable poise and firmness the troubled era of student restiveness and rebellion.

In 1968 you warned undergraduates that, “Student activism becomes dangerous when it turns into militant anarchism.” Confronted with the dissidence of dissent, you insisted that, “Violence in any form is intolerable,” and that “Freedom is not the same thing as chaos.” To critics who charged that colleges not in the midst of large urban centers were complacent, you declared, “One does not have to live in the middle of a mess to understand it.”

Throughout your administration, by precept and example, you taught that being perpetually enraged is not compatible with cultivating those habits of mind needed for intelligent involvement in public problems. By maintaining an Open Door Policy at your office and home, you made communication a two-way street. As a happy result, neither you nor your deans were ever forced to cross picket lines or to leave college buildings hurriedly by way of a fire escape.

A college presidency is often described as an impossible profession, the graveyard of once promising scholars. Yet despite the pressures of countless administrative duties, you wrote three widely acclaimed books, edited two others, founded a learned journal, while scores of important essays and reviews streamed from your pen. You are, sir, that rare academic anomaly: a college president who never ceased being a scholar. Both a realist as well as a humanist, you promised, “I shall not be embarrassed to ask for the money we need.” The success of Bowdoin’s 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Campaign proves that donors respond generously when a president *exemplifies* as well as *endorses* the value of a liberal education. You certainly betrayed no visible embarrassment when you leaped,

trailing clouds of academic glory, from the stands in Dayton Arena to lead cheers for Bowdoin's championship hockey teams.

This brief citation permits only a listing of some of the accomplishments of your decade of leadership: the admission of women in 1970 after more than a century and a half of untried masculinity; the inauguration of programs in African and Environmental Studies; the broadening of courses in the performing and visual arts; the development of major work in biochemistry; the bold elimination of the requirement of College Board Examinations for admission; your welcoming a Twelve-college Exchange Plan with sister institutions; your unflagging efforts to avoid curricular anarchy by urging the faculty to accept its responsibility for designing a student's education, and – among other innovations – the wise provision for a significant undergraduate voice in college governance. In these instances you helped to realize the ideal set forth in your Inaugural Address: “The best way to preserve the continuity of valued things and systems is to provide means for their continuing change.”

As a teacher of history, you were not only concerned with the past, but with the future. When you return to the faculty in 1979, not the least of the strengths of President Willard Enteman and his faculty will be your continued educational statesmanship in furthering Bowdoin's historic mission: an enlistment in the nation's service, and a devotion to the Common Good.

*Honoris Causa*, DOCTOR OF LITERATURE