



The Honourable W.A. Stevenson

THE HONOURABLE WILLIAM A. STEVENSON

In August 1998, the Alberta Law Review relocated to its own house, marking an important stage in the growth and development of the Alberta Law Review as an established and flourishing student-run journal. Through the efforts of past and present editorial board members, Dean Lewis Klar of the Faculty of Law, and Dr. Roger Smith, the University of Alberta Board of Governors granted permission to have the house dedicated to the Honourable W.A. Stevenson. Justice Stevenson was a founding editor of the Alberta Law Review in 1955 and continues to be a benefactor, advisor, and friend. On 10 September 1999, the house was officially dedicated as the Hon. W.A. Stevenson Alberta Law Review House. Following is a brief biography of Justice Stevenson, written by his friend and colleague, Justice J.E. Côté of the Alberta Court of Appeal.

It is hard to use formal titles for someone who has been my mentor and friend for so long. Nor are they suitable for all the lawyers and law teachers around when he was practising and teaching. All know him and were happy to call him "Bill."

Bill Stevenson is a very modest, private man. He has a host of distinctions, among them the amount of time he has dedicated to his profession and his family. His achievements are far too numerous for a few pages of prose. But three distinctions are exceedingly rare. First, he may well be the best student ever to graduate from the University of Alberta's Faculty of Law, allowing for changing marking standards. The second arises from his practising law for almost 20 years, the great bulk of it as a top-flight litigator. In all that time, he made no enemies and was universally popular with his fellow lawyers. Third, his priority and his interest has always been law students and young lawyers.

When Bill Stevenson came to article with W.G. Morrow, Q.C., one of Alberta's top barristers, the principal quickly realized that his student had a brilliant future ahead of him. That is why Mr. Morrow ensured that Bill Stevenson be the youngest of the counsel on the last Canadian appeal to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

Younger men and women of the profession now know Bill through the reported judgments which he wrote for about 20 years, on seven different courts (maybe the first person in Canada to collect letters patent).

In a very partisan age, Bill's thoughts, arguments, and writing were never shaped by partisan considerations, pre-judgments, dogma, social theory, or politicized views.

An important reason for that is his distrust of theory which is unrelated to experience.

Never has any lawyer or judge more fully integrated theory with fact, teaching with practice, than did Bill Stevenson. His statements of claim, examinations for discovery, and trials made full use of his very articulated knowledge of the law. Every talk which he gave to a law student, whether privately or to a big class, was full of practical examples and shaped by actual experience.

There were two notable examples of his wedding of theory with practice. First, the Legal Education Society of Alberta: he was its Founder and Chair, and often a lecturer at the courses given by it (and its predecessor in the Faculty of Extension). And, for the Law Society, he invented and headed Alberta's Bar Admission Course.

Second was the *Alberta Law Review*. He was its co-founder. He pushed its first number through to publication. For many years he has been its constant adviser. For years he was its benefactor, from the plate to print the original title page to the cost of many annual banquets and awards. Only his family is closer to his heart than the *Law Review*.

A summary of some other highlights of his life and career follows:

1. His father was near the top of the Edmonton City Police Force.
2. Attended High School at Eastglen.
3. Attended the Faculty of Arts, University of Alberta. Was an editor of *The Gateway*.
4. Achievements at the Law Faculty:
 - (a) As a student, attained highest marks, gold medal;
 - (b) Was sessional instructor, moot judge, professor, benefactor, almost dean — total 34 years!;
 - (c) Honourary Professor now;
 - (d) LL.D. 1992.
5. Articled to William G. Morrow, Q.C.
6. (a) Lawyer: rounded practice, litigator, first as junior to W.G. Morrow, then on own. Very able, very well liked.
 - (b) Counsel to several commissions of inquiry.
7. (a) Judge District Court, Deputy Judge of N.W.T. and Y.T., Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench, Court of Appeal, Supreme Court of Canada.
 - (b) Judicial Commissioner on various judicial inquiries.
8. Local Legal Associations:
 - (a) Edmonton Bar Association, President;

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- (b) Legal Circle: founding member, attending over 40 years.
9. Rules Committee: helped completely rewrite Rules of Court, then Chaired the Committee.
 10. Civil Procedure Guide: originator and co-author.
 11. Non-legal, non-profit bodies:
 - (a) Provincial Mental Health Board, Vice Chair;
 - (b) Sir Winston Churchill Society Executive;
 - (c) Association for Hearing Handicapped Executive.
 12. Alberta Law Reform Institute, member from inception 1969.
 13. Canadian Law Reform Commission advisory panel on criminal law.
 14. Past President of Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice; taught and organized, including its new judges' course and its judgment writing course.

Biographical notes prepared by the Honourable Justice J.E. Côté