Vernon M. Smith
(1905–1959)

Wm. N. Keeler*

Vernon Smith was born in Santa Cruz, California, September 12, 1905. He entered the University of California in 1924 and received his A.B. degree in 1928. As an undergraduate he was active in campus affairs. He was Editor of the Daily Californian and a member of the Order of Golden Bear. He entered the Law School, then the School of Jurisprudence, in August 1928 and received his LL.B. degree in May 1931. He was admitted to practice in August of that year.

Following admission to practice, he became associated with the firm of Garret W. McEnerney with which office he practiced until 1937. From 1937 to 1939 he was Secretary to the Committee on Administration of Justice, State Bar of California, and from 1947 to the date of his death he served as Special Assistant to that Committee. He was Assistant Secretary of the State Bar during 1938–1939.

In 1939 he came back to the University as Librarian and Lecturer in Law of the School of Law. He held those positions until the time of his death and during the major portion of such period he served as Endowment Counsel for the University. For the Law School he performed many services in addition to those of Librarian. These included responsibility for management of the School’s budget, direction of the non-academic personnel and maintenance of relationships with the Boalt Hall Alumni Association. In connection with his work as Endowment Counsel he was responsible, through constant and indefatigable effort, for many important gifts to the University; and in his capacity as Law Librarian he was highly instrumental in obtaining many valuable contributions to the School and its Library. His intimate relationships, over the years, with the State Bar and with members of the School’s practicing alumni were of immense value to the School and to the University in many ways.

Over a period of thirty years he served his profession, his University and his Law School with a selfless devotion which has had few equals. No

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task was too irksome, no demand upon his time too great where these loyalties were involved. In his dealings with his fellow men he was thoughtful and considerate and, above all else, he was the embodiment of fairness. No matter what his own point of view, he never failed to recognize and weigh carefully the opinions of others and to give them full consideration.

Every once in a while as we journey through this life we encounter a person whom we come instinctively to recognize as a gentleman in the highest sense of that term. Such a person was Vernon Smith.