I have been doubly fortunate; Lou Pollak was twice my dean. He was my dean in a time of trouble; he was my dean in a time of peace. In both times that he served he served our law school well.

When Lou became dean at Yale in 1965, Martin Luther King had described his dream, the Civil Rights Act had been passed, and the War on Poverty had been declared. There was in the law school a sense of forward movement toward building a new society. Students spent their summers in the South working on civil rights litigation, and the faculty planned new courses and projects in urban law to address the problems of the city. Lou helped provide the inspiration, the direction, and the institutional resources to make legal education more relevant to social needs.

This period of quiet change was soon shattered by the turmoil that turned campuses into staging areas for demonstrations or battlegrounds. Students insisted that democratic principles entitled them to a voice in the governance of the law school, while many faculty members insisted that legal principles required that the faculty not share control. "Non-negotiable" demands were made that the number of minority students should be increased, and these were met by a discord of dissents as to what, if anything, should be done. Every issue from student disciplinary procedures to the grading system or the food served in the lunch room became a matter of principle and threatened to fracture the faculty and the students.

Lou, as dean, bore the brunt of this. It was to him students made their "non-negotiable" demands, and it was he whom they blamed for refusing to agree. It was to him faculty members voiced their rejection, and it was he whom they mistrusted as not tough enough on the students. The dean's position was a fearfully lonely one, for he could not accede to any of the antagonists without rending the fabric of the school. It was Yale's great good fortune to have Lou as dean, for he remained restrained in the face of intolerable provocation, and he kept his patience in the face of unending frustrations. Some students and faculty at times mistook his gentleness for weakness, and saw him bending with the wind without seeing that his roots stayed firmly planted. But it was his gentleness and flexibility that enabled the law school to survive the
turmoil without disruption and to emerge with a greater unity and sense of purpose.

In his last months as dean, New Haven was the scene of a Black Panther trial and a nationally called demonstration to “Free Bobby Seale.” The law students prepared a legal memorandum to clarify the issues, monitored the demonstration, and gave legal assistance to those arrested. With the invasion of Cambodia, the law students again developed a legal memorandum to clarify the issues and organized a systematic lobbying effort for a congressional resolution calling for withdrawal. Their response as lawyers was an undedicated tribute to Lou’s five years of leadership. He had preserved the integrity of the law school and made it relevant to the times.

After five years of such deanship, reason and good judgment would have dictated refusing ever to be a dean again. Lou is a man of reason and good judgment, but it is subservient to his sense of duty and selflessness. He succumbed to the shameless importuning of his colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania who refused to take “No” from one who was most entitled to say it. It was Pennsylvania’s great good fortune that he said “Yes.” He brought to his second deanship an energy and enthusiasm worthy of a new recruit. With his quiet persuasion he put faculty committees to work injecting new ideas and adding new faculty. With his personal warmth he built a friendliness and cooperative spirit in the law school community. It was a period of peace and stability, and he managed it with the same grace and effectiveness as he had managed more troubled times.

The faculty and the students of two law schools owe much to the man who was twice dean. My debt is double, for I had the special privilege of sharing both times.