

COMMENTARY: PROFESSOR COVEY OLIVER

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Covey Oliver has brought to the legal profession the unique ability to excel in four different roles: the scholarly academician, the competent administrator, the skilled diplomat, and the practical business lawyer. Rarely are such diverse capacities combined in one individual.

As a professor of law, he relishes the cerebral games of logical analysis, critical dissection, and verbal counterploit. Beneath those intellectual pyrotechnics, however, lies a deep concern for the basic human values which must form the foundation of any civilized legal structure. The treasury of his accumulated writings repeatedly reveals this preoccupation with the establishment of a fair, as well as orderly, world.

Both in his position as a young government official, and later as the Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, he demonstrated the ability to operate effectively within a bureaucracy, to supervise expenditures of vast sums of money, and to lead large numbers of people. The frustrations of maneuvering within a government agency have defeated many brilliant people. However, Professor Oliver possessed the understanding of organizations, the feel for the possible, and the sense of humor required for success.

Despite his long public service, he has never lost his comprehension of the needs of the private sector and the practicing bar. His discussion of any trade, tax, or investment issue is of such practical nature that an immediate rapport is created with those lawyers who have to "put together deals in the real world."

His functioning as a diplomat has extended not only to formal positions, such as Ambassador to Colombia, but also to a myriad of informal contacts with foreign friends all over the globe. In these relationships, he unfailingly displays a warm charm and tact; more importantly, his finely tuned antennae permit a genuine communication with other nations and other peoples.

Although he circulates with ease among the most urbane sophisticated of the world's capitals, he has never forgotten or rejected his upbringing in a southern Texas town. He can employ elegant Portuguese or Spanish phraseology in conversing with the elite of Latin America, but he still retains his mastery of the more

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humble Tex-Mex dialect. Perhaps, it is this continual keeping-in-touch with his roots and with the disadvantaged of his home state that feeds a quietly burning compassion for the have-nots of this planet.

Professor Oliver had planned to retire at the end of last year. However, individuals like him are so uncommon that he was drafted into service as Dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School. As Dean, Covey T. Oliver once again drew on his well-stocked arsenal of unique qualities, and faithfully served the institution to which he has brought so much honor. In accepting and successfully confronting that additional challenge, Covey Oliver has demonstrated that his talents are irreplaceable, and that his "retirement" will be as exciting and productive as his past exploits.