

Introduction of  
Dean Kurt L. Schmoke  
Howard Law School

17th Coffin Lecture  
Law and Public Service  
October 23, 2009

It is a signal pleasure - indeed it is a double pleasure to welcome Dean Schmoke to this platform as our Seventeenth Coffin Lecturer. He is a real, live, walking paradigm of a life devoted to law and public service.

As you have heard, a life beginning at some excellent institutions of learning, followed by entry into the "real world" of practice in law firms, and service at several levels: of government - an exposure to White House policy making, the nitty gritty work of a state prosecutor, climaxed by a dozen years as the battle-tested Mayor of Baltimore. Finally, a return to academia as Dean of Howard Law School, a venerable institution known for its historical commitment to civil rights and fighting discrimination in all its forms. At present, Howard and the U. Maine Law School have already exchanged professors, and Dean Schmoke and Dean Pitegoff are exploring the possibilities of widening their collaboration still more to benefit both schools and the legal profession.

If this happens, a second link will have been forged. You will recall that I began these remarks by saying that it was a double pleasure to welcome Dean Schmoke. This is where my second pleasure comes in. Let me share my secret.

This past week has seen two notable anniversaries, one celebrated, the other only now to be mentioned. Last Saturday, the 24th of October, 2009, according to Google, Howard Law School celebrated its 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Last Monday, October 26, 2009, was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of a Mainer born in Leeds, named Oliver Otis Howard. He attended both Monmouth Academy and North Yarmouth. He graduated from Bowdoin in 1850, went on to West Point, and later volunteered for the Union army in the Third Maine Regiment.

By the time of the first battle of Bull Run he was a Brigadier General. At Seven Pines he lost an arm, but survived to fight in many other battles, rising to the rank of Major General. At the end of the war, President Andrew Johnson appointed him head of the Freedman's Bureau to serve during the stormy days of Reconstruction. It was in this capacity that General Howard first became involved in the events that led to the creation of Howard Law School's parent, Howard University.

In late 1866, a series of meetings took place among religiously motivated people in Washington. In November of 1866 a meeting was held to explore ways to train freedmen for the ministry. In December, at another meeting a proposal was made that a teacher training institution be formed with the name, the Howard Theological Seminary. General Howard vetoed the idea. Though himself a stout member of a church, he was devoted to keeping any new educational establishment free from sectarianism. The concept of such an establishment soon changed. In January of 1867, Senator Wilson of Massachusetts, who had attended the December meeting, introduced a bill in Congress. Remarkably, the bill found itself on a very fast track and became law in early March.

The charter was for a university which had broadened its graduate offerings to include law, agriculture, and medicine. Its aim was simply "the education of youth in the liberal arts and

sciences." No race or sex differentiation was made. The entering class of six students had their instruction at faculty homes. General Howard and another man had undertaken to guarantee payment for the land that had been acquired for the university. A Reverend Boynton served briefly as the university's first president, but in 1869 Howard accepted the position and held it for fifteen years. In addition to helping eliminate sectarianism, he constantly raised money year after year, and even endowed a chair in the law school. His home, the Oliver Otis Howard House, a three story brick building with Mansard roof and magisterial tower, still stands on Howard's campus. He even went so far as to write Queen Victoria, asking for funds. I would love to see her answer, but nothing has been unearthed.

There was one difficulty which might possibly go down hard with today's students. After all, Howard had been a general. In the interests of health, neatness, and discipline, students had to go to reveille, march to classes, salute, go to roll calls and inspections. Somehow, these practices disappeared after he left. Dean Schmoke- that sounds like a stimulating project for you.

Now, Dean Schmoke, you can understand why we are doubly glad to have you here in Maine.