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Tribute to William and Adele Rogers

James A. Baker, III†

When I was in government, my wife, Susan, and I would frequently go out to the Chevy Chase Club for a pickup golf game with Bill and Adele. It was terrific. First, Bill didn't want anything, which is an extreme rarity in Washington. Second, he was willing to talk shop exactly as much or as little as I wished. And, third, the game was low pressure because he and Adele played just as badly as Susan and I did. But we sure had fun.

Sadly, our old friends have now departed, and I have been asked to help say goodbye. I will leave it to others who knew her better to write about Adele's public service at Cornell, in the inner city, and elsewhere. I will simply observe that it was Bill's good fortune to have met her in the law school library, and that his greatest diplomatic initiative was persuading her to marry him.

As for Bill, I need not recite his accomplishments. If I were to tell that story—beginning with his service in World War II as part of what some call the greatest generation, ending with his chairmanship of the Challenger Commission, and covering two of the most senior cabinet positions in the U.S. government and so much else in between—I would need far more space than this one journal can provide. Yet we cannot pass by the monument of his public life without stopping briefly to run our fingers over the deep inscriptions in the marble.

A good way to think about Bill, I think, is this—if he had lived in the late 1700s, he might well have been one of our Founders; and if one of our Founders had lived during the Twentieth Century, he might well have been named William P. Rogers. Such was his stature. By enlisting again and again on the right side of the great issues of his times—against totalitarianism of the right and the left, for peace in the Middle East, for civil rights, for free speech, for vigorous and decent politics, and for honest and well-managed government—Bill preserved and strengthened our republic. He left the nation and the world far better places for his having served. And like the Founders, Bill was a man of substance. He brought to public life the same deep intelligence, practical skills, good judgment, work ethic, and moral clarity that made him such a superb and successful lawyer and businessman in private life. This, too, must be said: after all the battles were over, Bill Rogers' good name, his reputation, his integrity bore not one scar, one blemish, or one shadow.

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Long after Bill had retired from public life in Washington, his influence lived on among those who admired him. One was George Bush, the 41st President of the United States, who once wrote:

In my life, there have been two or three people who, by their character and just plain decency, had an enormous effect on my life. Bill Rogers, one such man, was very close to my dad; and for me he was a close friend, a wise advisor, and an inspiration. I will never forget him with that twinkle in his eye and wonderful sense of humor. People who serve in government are often criticized and looked down upon. Bill Rogers proved that public service can be noble. He was the best—the very best.¹

Indeed, he was.

It was an honor to know my friend, Bill Rogers, and to try, however imperfectly, to follow the model of his life and career. I'll conclude here, as I did in my remarks at Bill's funeral service, by asking him for one last favor: "When you meet St. Peter, tell him to keep an eye out for me," I said, "because I'm looking forward to another pickup golf game—this time on God's great course.

Anthony F. Essaye†

I was hired by Bill Rogers in 1967 to join his law firm, and I remained associated with Bill and Adele for the rest of their distinguished lives. While others may address tributes to their many public accomplishments, I wish to pay tribute to them as private citizens, particularly in their relationship to Bill's law firm, which, while its name changed over the years, is best known as Rogers & Wells.

This relationship began in 1948 and spanned more than half a century. It was interrupted, of course, by Bill's major public service, first in the 1950s as Deputy Attorney General and Attorney General, then in the late 1960s to early 1970s as Secretary of State, and then in 1986 as Chairman of the Presidential Commission on the investigation of the loss of the Challenger space shuttle. But in each instance, Bill returned to his law firm, notwithstanding the various other opportunities that were available to him. The reasons, I believe, were twofold: Bill loved the private practice of law, and he and Adele considered the firm to be their second family.

The enjoyment that Bill Rogers derived from his legal practice was obvious to all who worked with him. He approached legal issues in private practice with the same incisiveness and breadth of perception that he demonstrated in his public career. To many of his clients, he became a valued advisor on all aspects of their business. But his true love was litigation. For Bill, the opportunity to persuade others by the written and oral articulation of his arguments was the most exciting aspect of legal practice, and he was highly successful at it. For example, in the 1960s, through his

1. Letter from George Bush to Rogers Family (on file with author).

† Former law partner of Bill Rogers. Consultant, Clifford Chance US LLP.

representation of Martin Luther King and of the Associated Press, respectively, in the landmark Supreme Court cases of *New York Times v. Sullivan*² and *Associated Press v. Walker*,³ he played an extraordinary role in helping fashion the Supreme Court doctrines holding persons who are public officials or public figures to a higher standard of proof in libel cases.

Bill was equally comfortable down in the trenches pursuing more ordinary matters. I once assisted him on behalf of a client who had a moderate sized claim against the United States Air Force. Although he could have called the Secretary of Defense, whom he knew, to seek a high level review, instead we went over to the Pentagon to see the Air Force Major handling the case, and squeezed into his tiny office where Bill laid out our arguments in the same manner he would have used in a presentation before the Supreme Court. It was all the same; for matters of great or small import he sought the pursuit of a just resolution for his clients through the orderly workings of the legal process. He believed in it, he enjoyed it, and he excelled at it.

Bill was also a great resource to others in the firm. His advice was thoughtful, but direct. After one of his trips to China, he liked to display on his desk a white plaque stating in red writing on each side (one in English, the other in Chinese) that "Chairman Mao prefers short meetings and brief statements." While he often applied this maxim, his counsel was always invaluable and well worth the effort needed to present the issues to him in clear and concise terms.

At the same time, Adele and Bill's personal relationship with everyone at the firm was an important aspect of their lives. This became clear to my wife and me early on, when shortly after being hired, we were invited to dinner at their home. That evening, not only did we realize what extraordinary people they were, but we also understood that their interest in us went well beyond the professional relationship that I had just begun. As the firm grew larger, maintaining a personal relationship with the growing number of attorneys and their spouses in both Washington and New York, as well as our support staff, became far more difficult; but Adele and Bill sought out and enjoyed every opportunity to do so.

While Adele did not pursue a legal career after law school, she had a keen intellect, and I recall Bill saying that he thought she would have been a better lawyer than he, had she decided to practice. Instead, Adele devoted herself to civic responsibility. She was the first woman to receive the Presidential Citizens Medal and she served as a Director of the National School Volunteer Program. But it was personal involvement in volunteer work that seemed most important to her. For many years, while living primarily in Washington, Adele served as a volunteer tutor in schools in low income neighborhoods in both Washington and New York. And I remember seeing her several times on the early air shuttle to New York and then sharing a cab with her into the city and dropping her off near her school, where she

2. 376 U.S. 967 (1964).

3. 389 U.S. 28 (1967).

was determined to arrive in good time—a reflection of her commitment to fulfill the many responsibilities that she took on, whether convenient or not.

In their final years, Bill and Adele continued their close relationship with the firm. They enthusiastically attended the annual Washington office picnic, where Bill was generally the winning pitcher in the softball game, as well as various other firm social events in New York and Washington. Only a month before Bill's death, the firm held a ceremony to dedicate its new Washington office as the William P. Rogers Building. Adele was not well enough to attend, but Bill came in a wheel chair accompanied by his son Tony. It was a chilly day, and at the ribbon cutting outside he seemed frail and somewhat subdued. But once we got inside for the reception in the lobby his eyes lit up, and he obviously enjoyed a chance to talk with all of us and have his picture taken. In retrospect, it was a poignant moment in that he probably knew that this would likely be the last time he would be in the company of the colleagues who meant so much to him.

Bill and Adele Rogers were great Americans, not only in their public lives, but also in their private lives. Bill embodied relentless integrity, a love of the law and an unyielding commitment to the pursuit of justice in its truest and most basic form. Adele's life was characterized by her caring personality, her commitment to the community and her support for Bill in both his public and private career. Together, they have brought honor to their alma mater, Cornell, to their own family, and to their second family at their law firm.

Frank H. T. Rhodes†

Few individuals have achieved as much, in as many spheres and with as much success, as William Pierce Rogers and Adele Langston Rogers. Their lives combined significant professional accomplishment, great generosity, unflinching commitment to high principles, and deep love of Cornell.

Adele Langston and Bill Rogers met in 1935 in what is now the Gould Reading Room of the Cornell Law Library in Myron Taylor Hall. Adele had followed in the footsteps of her father, Samuel Langston, Cornell Class of 1902, and her brother, who graduated from Cornell in 1932, and earned her own Cornell degree in the humanities in 1933. She went on to study law at Stanford, but returned to Cornell to complete her J.D. degree in the Cornell Law School as a member of the Class of 1936.

Bill had attended Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y., as an undergraduate, supporting himself with scholarships and by working as a brush

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salesman and dishwasher. He had intended to become a teacher until a professor suggested a career in law, noting that Bill had the right kind of mind for legal work. Unfortunately, what Bill did not have, in those days of the Great Depression, was money for law school.

He was, however, a very good salesman. A college friend, Foster Goodrich, once recounted how he and Bill traveled throughout Upstate New York one summer selling brushes door to door. In Dannemora, N.Y., they were stopped for a traffic violation and fined \$15 by the justice of the peace, who convened court in his barber shop. Bill later went to the justice's house and sold \$20 worth of brushes to the justice's wife.⁴ Bill applied the same sense of enterprise to financing his legal education. He applied for and received a scholarship to the Cornell Law School, where he edited the quarterly newsletter and became a member of the Order of the Coif. For a time after his fortuitous 1935 meeting of Adele Langston in the Law Library, his professors worried that the couple might be spending too much time courting and not enough on academics. Nonetheless Adele earned her law degree in 1936, and Bill completed his the following year, finishing fifth in his law school class. He was also an avid squash player, often playing with one of his professors and fellow Colgate alumnus, Louis W. Morse. The duo even made it to the finals of the first Stevens Cup Squash match, despite the fact that Bill had been up the entire night before while Adele was giving birth to their first child, Dale Rogers Marshall, Cornell Class of 1959.

Bill Rogers once noted, "It is good for lawyers to go in and out of public life—it's like a change of seasons." As one of the best legal minds of his generation, he spent a lifetime doing just that. After passing the bar exam in 1937, he spent four months practicing law with Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, then went to work for New York's racket-busting district attorney, Thomas Dewey, with time out to serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II.

He subsequently worked for four U.S. Presidents—three Republicans and a Democrat. He was U.S. Attorney General under Eisenhower, U.S. Representative to the UN General Assembly under Johnson, Secretary of State under Nixon, and chair of the Presidential commission that investigated the space shuttle "Challenger" accident in 1986, under Reagan.

In all his professional posts, Bill Rogers won high praise for his forceful but calm and gentlemanly manner. He was also known for his decency and integrity, whether he was fighting for the cause of civil rights, helping extricate the U.S. from the war in Vietnam, or brokering a cease-fire in the Middle East.

And Bill was not without a sense of humor. He promised to remain in private practice after his term as Eisenhower's Attorney General, which posed a quandary when he was approached by President Nixon to serve as Secretary of State. As Bill told a reporter from *Life* in 1969, "I'd promised

4. Joseph M. Harvey, *U.S. Atty. Gen. Rogers Still 'Bill' to Home Folk*, BOSTON SUNDAY GLOBE, Mar. 15, 1959, at 46.

my wife, promised my children, promised my clients. And I meant it. So I told them, 'You see standing before you an about-to-be-confirmed liar.'⁵ Bill Rogers always credited his legal training at Cornell with helping in his government posts, especially Secretary of State. Speaking informally to a group of law students in October 1973, he noted that at Cornell he had learned to get to the heart of a problem quickly, to read vast amounts of material with precision, and to avoid "misspeaking." Still there were subtleties in diplomatic parlance that, as Secretary of State, he had to learn on the job. "For example," Bill recalled, "when I was discussing an ambassadorship with someone in the State Department, I said we couldn't take one man because his wife was an alcoholic. 'Mr. Rogers,' I was told, 'in the language of diplomacy we refer to that as hepatitis.'⁶ In 1973, Bill Rogers received the National Medal of Freedom, America's highest civilian honor, in recognition of a career of public service that had already spanned more than a third of a century and touched all three branches of government.

Although Adele elected to focus on her family rather than practice law, she could claim significant accomplishments in her own right. In addition to raising four children (two of them Cornellians) and maintaining households simultaneously in New York and Washington, D.C., she traveled with Bill on U.S. State Department business, visiting 75 countries in four years. She also found time to teach one day each week in an inner city school in Washington, D.C., and another day each week in New York City. She served as a trustee of Gannett Newspapers and the Meridian House International Foundation, and did volunteer work for the Boys Clubs of America and the International Red Cross.

It is a measure of the significance of her work that at the same dinner at which Bill Rogers received the National Medal of Freedom, Adele became the first woman to receive the Presidential Citizens Medal in recognition of her outstanding contributions to her communities and to national life.

After resigning as Secretary of State in 1973, Bill returned to private practice as senior partner at the firm of Rogers & Wells. The firm, now known as Clifford Chance Rogers & Wells, is the largest law firm in the world and employs some 30 Cornell graduates. The firm honored Bill on his 75th birthday by making a substantial gift to the Cornell Law School, where a modern classroom is named in honor of both Bill and Adele. And just two weeks before his passing, in December 2000, Bill was able to participate in another landmark event for Clifford Chance Rogers & Wells—the naming of the firm's new Washington, D.C. office building in Bill's honor.

Both Adele and Bill remained devoted to Cornell throughout their lives. They were recognized as foremost benefactors of the University and as Presidential Councillors, considered the University's highest honor. Adele was a member of the advisory councils for the Colleges of Arts and

5. *Mr. Rogers and Mr. Finch*, LIFE, Jan. 24, 1969, at 18.

6. *Id.*

Sciences and Human Ecology. She served on the Cornell University Council, and for 15 years between 1954 and 1974, she served on the Cornell Board of Trustees, remaining a Trustee Emerita for the rest of her life.

Bill served on the Cornell Law School Advisory Council for many years, beginning in 1959, and in 1981, he received the Law School's Distinguished Alumnus Award in recognition of his many contributions to the country and to Cornell. Adele and Bill both served on the Law School's Capital Campaign Committee, which helped make possible the \$20 million addition to the Law School, dedicated in 1989.

Just a few years ago, Bill made a significant gift to the Lincoln Hall Renaissance campaign in honor of Adele, and agreed to allow Cornell to name Lincoln Hall's new atrium and teaching wing in her honor. In March 1998, with many members of her family present, we announced the naming and saluted Adele for her "boundless energy and commitment to social, cultural, and educational affairs for the good of her nation and her alma mater."⁷

Adele and Bill Rogers provided scholarship support to the Cornell Law School through their estates, and in September 2002, though the generosity of family members, Cornell added the "Rogers Collection" to the Cornell Law Library. The collection is a wonderful tribute to the memory to two extraordinary Cornelliens, William Pierce Rogers and Adele Langston Rogers, and a reminder of a critical era in the history of the nation and the world, in which both Bill and Adele Rogers played pivotal roles.

William A. Schreyer†

*Remarks by Mr. William A. Schreyer at the memorial service for William P. Rogers at The National Presbyterian Church, Washington, D.C.
January 8, 2001.*

Ladies and Gentlemen, William Rogers family, fellow friends, and admirers of Bill Rogers.

Our sadness at losing Bill is tempered just a little bit by the memories we have of him; wonderful, warm memories, and some of them very funny.

When Dale called me last week and asked if I would say a few words, I thought, "good heavens, what could I say about Bill that wouldn't already be said by someone more profoundly or more eloquently than I could," as you just heard from Secretary Baker.

The public Bill Rogers—the statesman, the diplomat, the counselor to Presidents, the great architect of the law—is now a well-documented part of history.

7. Cornell citation presented to Adele Langston Rogers (Mar. 27, 1998).

† Mr. Schreyer is chairman emeritus of Merrill Lynch & Co., Inc. Mr. Schreyer serves as a trustee and executive committee member for the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Schreyer is also a member of the Board of Trustees for Pennsylvania State University.

He was one of those men, unique men, whose brilliance, whose discretion, and whose fine sense of humanity placed him center stage, for a very long time, in what has come to be known as the American Century.

But today I'd like to talk about the private Bill Rogers and share some recollections about the man whom I and my Merrill Lynch partners knew as a trusted advisor, a confidante, and most of all, a friend.

Shortly after Merrill Lynch became a public company, Bill was asked by Don Regan, our Chairman, to join our board as one of our first outside directors. It is hard to imagine anyone better suited for this kind of a role than Bill Rogers. And, it is not possible to overstate the contributions he made to Merrill Lynch, and what he meant to me, to my predecessors, and to my successors all here today.

He was extraordinarily sophisticated. He knew how the world worked and how to get things done. His name and his reputation opened doors all around the world.

He was exceptionally intelligent—capable of unweaving the complexities of any situation, recommending a sensible course of action, and forging a consensus.

With Bill, trust was implicit. You could totally confide in him the most sensitive of matters and be absolutely certain that your confidence would never be betrayed.

Bill was a great practitioner and interpreter of the law—but the advice he gave was never legalistic. It was always rooted in plain common sense. He did not spend his life “looking for loopholes,” a quote that—according to Bill—was uttered by W.C. Fields, when he was supposedly asked on his deathbed what he was doing reading the Bible. No loopholes for Bill Rogers. Just honest, clear-eyed, solidly reasoned advice delivered from the heart.

But there is one way that he was like every other lawyer I've ever known—every doctor too, come to think of it—and that is this: In all the lunches and dinners we had over the years, the subject of his picking up the check just somehow never came up. When we roasted Bill at one of our Merrill Lynch annual “kitchen cabinet” luncheons a couple of years back, none of us had the nerve to kid him about this. So Bill, wherever you are up there, please forgive me, but in the interest of full disclosure I do feel I have to mention this.

[brief pause]

I'm kidding, of course.

Bill was generous in every way that mattered. He was generous in human spirit.

Regardless of how tense or difficult the situation, Bill always had the human touch, and it made so much difference; all the difference. I'll never forget when Don Regan sent Bill and me down to Texas to sort out the mess after the Hunt brothers had tried to corner the silver market. We at Merrill Lynch were sitting there with not a small amount of exposure. After a tense day of negotiations—during which Bill exhibited all of his talents for

patience and persuasion—we got back to the hotel feeling pretty beat. Bill called me from his room and said, “why don’t you come on over. Now that we’ve gotten that taken care of, I’m going to make you the best martini you’ve ever had.” He did, and it was; a darn good one.

Of all the endearing qualities of Bill Rogers, and there were many, I think the one that a lot of us cherish most fondly was his marvelous sense of humor. He wasn’t a joke teller, but he was exceptionally quick-witted and shrewd in his ability to observe situations and people, and help us all see the funny side of things. He’d come out with a remark, or an observation, or a story that would make us all laugh; but it would also do something more than that. Through his humorous commentary, a deeper truth or insight was often gently revealed.

I’ll always remember the advice he gave to the late Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart when he was coaching him on how to get through his Senate confirmation hearing. Bill said, “Potter, just say as little as possible while still appearing to be awake!” That, I might add, was exactly the approach that Bill took at some of our Board meetings.

Then there was the story he liked to tell about a visit to Saudi Arabia that he made with Adele, early in his term as Secretary of State. Befitting the stature of his office, they were received with great pomp and circumstance, and then taken by motorcade to the palace, where the king hosted a state dinner in grand style. During the dinner Bill noticed that there were gold toothpicks at each place setting, and he told the King how much he admired them. Well, a day or so later when they got back to their airplane an aide came up and said, “Mr. Secretary, there are four cartons of gold toothpicks delivered as a gift from the King!” Of course, Bill couldn’t accept them because of government ethics rules. But Adele, being a very practical person, had even less use for them. Adele said, “Bill, for goodness sake, why didn’t you tell him that you liked his limousine.”

There’s one other story Bill told that I will always remember. Bill hated long-winded speeches, and this was a dislike that he happened to share with President Eisenhower. Apparently there was another member of the Cabinet who had a particular penchant for long-windedness. He would go on and on about anything and everything. As Bill told it, one day they were leaving a Cabinet meeting, and Ike leaned over to him and said, “that fellow sure missed some really good opportunities to keep quiet.” What a nice way of suggesting that someone should just, well, shut-up! Today as we pay our final respects to Bill, I am going to stay mindful of his dislike of long-windedness, and take full advantage of the opportunity that now presents itself to keep quiet.

I know that I speak for all of us at Merrill Lynch when I say that our admiration of Bill and our affection for him will always endure. Bill was a leading actor in some of the most significant historical events of our time, but he never sought the limelight. His words and his deeds helped to shape our destiny for more than half a century, but he never sought to take credit. He was a truly great man—a greatness worn with grace, with style, and with ease.

To know Bill Rogers was to revere him—a great statesman, a great counselor, a great public servant, a great mentor. Also, a great friend, and a symbol of leadership to us all. Thank you very much.