

Clyde Bowles—My Law Partner and Mentor to All

By Robert S. Held

In the early 1960s, Tyrone Brown a young, tall, black man was arrested by the Chicago police for loitering. Tyrone (not his real name) was belligerent, calling the police many inflammatory names. After a few hours at the police station, the police took him to the hospital, his hands still cuffed tightly behind him. Tyrone died shortly thereafter of internal injuries, the result of severe blows to the abdomen.

Clyde Bowles, a young lawyer, was assigned by the then state's attorney to head a special investigation to determine if the police were the cause of the injuries and Tyrone's death.

After a diligent investigation by Clyde and his staff, which included the work of two seasoned black officers from the police Internal Investigations unit, Clyde presented the matter to a grand jury. Based on the evidence gathered by Clyde as to actions of the police, the case was compelling: injuries Tyrone suffered while in custody were responsible for his death. But in the 60s, achieving justice was not a certainty. Out of the blue, the grand jury asked Clyde if they could be alone. The grand jury refused to indict the implicated officers. The state's attorney dropped the matter. This was a young lawyer's introduction to the justice system—hard work is always required, but the right results do not always follow. At this point in Clyde's career, he recognized a credo to live by: always do the right thing, but do not always expect the right outcome.

This first brush with the gritty underbelly of Chicago politics—and, I should add, the sinister side of the judicial system—was not Clyde's last. He made it his life's goal to continue to do what is right and to help those who could not help themselves, using his tenacity and skill-set. In one instance, Clyde helped secure the indictment of a recently retired, politically well-connected, senior attorney who was the brother of a well-known member of the judiciary. At the trial, fighting a clearly biased judge, Clyde's lead witness (who was an attorney) recanted his grand jury testimony. Clyde then called to the stand a woman who had some first-hand knowledge of the defendant's nefarious activities, only to learn she had "just" married the recanting witness. Under the rules of evidence, key elements of her testimony were barred.

As a side note, the recanting witness was later convicted of perjury for his trial testimony. Clyde, in looking back, remarks coolly that "one can only imagine the kinds of pressures and inducements brought to bear on the recanting witness."

Twists and turns have been no surprise during Clyde's 60-year ride as a practicing attorney. On the eve of his seventh decade as an attorney, Clyde remains the same gregarious, garrulous, and engaging person he has always been. Respected within and without the firm where he practices, Clyde continues his relentless—and thoroughly enjoyable—career. With a keen insight into the human condition, Clyde soldiers on in doing his part toward a just and moral society—advocating for his clients with a steel spine, on a morally straight path



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perhaps more common in the earlier era that define his roots.

A 1951 graduate of Yale Law School, Clyde has had some impressive assignments, including serving as chairman of the National Conference of Bar Examiners, president of the Japan America Society of Chicago, and later, chairman of the National Association of Japan America Societies. He later received a prestigious award from the emperor of Japan, the Decoration: The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon.

Clyde, when prompted, talks easily about lessons learned.

- Failure as a person differs from failure in an undertaking. Failure as a person occurs only if one accepts that condition.
- Be wary of adverse judgments of others without full knowledge of pertinent facts.
- Face adversity with courage and persistence.
- A self-centered life defeats itself. Break that mold. In concern for and service to others one finds and fulfills oneself.
- Cultivate, treasure, and honor relationships with others: friendships, both personal and professional; with adversaries, respect and trust.
- Treat the law practice as the profession it is, with obligations to clients and others, and not as a business and money-making machine.

Faith and friendships are a hallmark of Clyde's spirit. Originally joining a fellowship group at the Fourth Presbyterian Church on Michigan Avenue for social reasons, he thereafter joined the church and later became chairman of the board of deacons, president of the board of trustees, and clerk of the session (the senior lay leadership position). For over a half century, the church has played a fundamental and central role in the lives of Clyde and his wife, Alice. Clyde says, "The church and our faith form the glue which holds things together for us."

While many think about retirement or lifestyle choices (read as "part time," or even an exit from the practice), Clyde is a constant. At age 84, and after a brisk walk to his northwest Loop office from two blocks south of the Drake, Clyde is at his desk every day, focused on his clients, the intricacies of their problems and a methodical, if not tedious, examination of the strengths and weaknesses of his pending cases.

For Clyde, there is no change from his work in the early 1950s, before *Brown v Board of Education*, when lawyers were perceived, like the rest of the country at that time, as the protectorate of the less fortunate. The law practice continues to be a labor of love for him; an ongoing means of self-fulfillment through service to others, both compensatory and gratuitous; a way to remain in touch with the exigencies of human life, with all its mysteries, challenges, opportunities; a way to continue to grow, professionally and personally; a way, as it were, when combined with an active life outside the practice, to remain fully alive as a human being. As Clyde likes to say, "It beats withering away, by a mile or more."

Rob Held is a named partner in the law firm of Harrison & Held LLP with offices in Chicago and Springfield. He practices trust, will, tax and estate planning law. He received his B.A. in 1980 from the State University of New York at Buffalo, and an MBA in 1988 from Eastern New Mexico University, his JD from De Paul University in 1995. Held served seven years in the US Air Force, where he was a fighter pilot and later flew as pilot for a commercial airline.

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