

*At a meeting of the FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES on December 12, 2000,
the following tribute to the life and service of the late McGeorge Bundy
was spread upon the permanent records of the Faculty.*

McGEORGE BUNDY

BORN: March 30, 1919
DIED: September 16, 1996

This Minute will examine only McGeorge Bundy's role at Harvard - not his service as Special Assistant to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson for National Security Affairs (1961-66), his 13 years as President of the Ford Foundation, his 17 years as professor of History at New York University.

McGeorge Bundy was born on March 30, 1919, the third son of Harvey and Kay Bundy's five children. His was a family of distinguished New Englanders. McGeorge went to Groton and Yale, graduating in June 1940. He was selected as a junior fellow at Harvard in 1941. The following year, he joined the office of Facts and Figures in Washington. When it was disbanded, he went into the army despite his short sightedness - having memorized the eye chart - and was chosen as his aide by Rear Admiral Kirk. In 1946, former Secretary of War Stimson asked Bundy to work with him on and to write his *Memoirs On Active Service in Peace and War*, which came out in 1948. In 1949, McGeorge was appointed - without having ever taken any course in political science - a lecturer in the Department of Government; he taught US foreign policy. In 1951 he received tenure, and published a defense of Dean Acheson's foreign policy, *The Pattern of Responsibility*. Bundy was a liberal Republican, shocked by conservative attacks on Acheson. He was made chairman of the Government Department in 1953. James Conant had just announced his decision to resign, and Bundy, at 34, was proposed for the Presidency of Harvard by several overseers. When the Corporation chose Nathan Pusey, the president of Lawrence College in Wisconsin, the new President offered Bundy the position of Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. He took office in the Fall of 1953.

He devoted himself to an extraordinary strengthening of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. His natural authority, self-assurance, crisp style, mastery of precise language, impatience with fools, and extensive curiosity, allowed him to be both an imperious and an extremely popular leader of the faculty; at faculty meetings, he was something of a tamer lionized by his dazzled lions. He saw to it that salaries, especially those of the junior faculty, were raised. He consolidated the Admissions Policy based on merit President Conant had initiated. The

student body's move toward greater diversity began its spectacular progress. He introduced the Program for Advanced Standing and the Freshman Seminar program; he paid special attention to Behavioral studies at Harvard, and to the teaching of science, particularly to non-scientists. His role was decisive in the establishment of the Center for International Affairs and of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, as well as in obtaining the faculty's approval, in 1960, for the new inter-disciplinary undergraduate concentration in Social Studies. He helped make the Program for Harvard College a success - thanks to which resources for new chairs, for more financial aid to students, for an ambitious building program, for the launching of the Loeb theater and the Carpenter Center, for new academic curricula in theater and the arts, and for new laboratories were obtained.

Bundy's concern for excellence and wise refusal to take disciplinary barriers and specializations too seriously drove him to make a number of distinguished appointments - first choosing the personalities, and only then placing them in sometimes unenthusiastic departments. David Riesman in Social Relations, Erik Erikson who had no doctorate, Cora du Bois in Anthropology, Laurence Wylie for the Douglas Dillon Chair in French Civilization, Wilbur Frohock in Romance Languages, Konrad Bloch and Frank Westheimer in Chemistry, and (as an assistant professor) James Watson in biology, were thus brought to Harvard - along with a vast number of visiting professors, lecturers, and temporary appointments made in the search for strong permanent faculty.

Bundy also had to deal with some highly delicate matters of relations between Harvard and Washington. The hottest issue in 1953-54 was that of academics who were accused of Communist leanings and refused to testify about themselves and others, taking the 5th amendment against self-incrimination. Bundy saw to it that tenured members were kept safe; but he combined his fight for academic freedom with his conviction that Communists were not free intellectuals, and with his determination to protect Harvard; several junior or potential faculty members appear to have been pressed to cooperate with authorized investigative agencies if they wanted to remain at Harvard. The other issue was that of links between the University and the government - including the CIA. President Pusey and Bundy maintained the ban on classified research, but Bundy was keen on preserving both academic integrity and the freedom of academics and centers to put their expertise at the disposal of the US government.

Bundy, impatient with Eisenhower's presidency, and casually friendly with John F. Kennedy - they had been a year apart at Dexter School in Brookline - left for Washington after Kennedy's election. He never lost his interest in Harvard. As head of the Ford Foundation, he helped Professor Paul Doty establish the Center for Science and International Affairs in this Faculty before its transfer to the Kennedy School. His life-long interest in nuclear strategy and arms control culminated in the publication of his masterly and wise book, *Danger and Survival*, in 1988.

He had a genius for friendship across generations, and a deep loyalty to the institutions and persons he served. As a teacher, he was eloquent, elegant, and combined the sharpness of the mathematics major he had been with the subtlety of a student of foreign affairs who had considerable practical experience. As Dean, he showed ambition for Harvard, clarity of purposes, openness to innovation, candor in judgments, fair mindedness, and attentiveness to the views of people even younger than himself. His quickness in recognizing, attracting and promoting talent was impervious to bias. His service as Dean left a legacy of excellence on which his successors have continued to build.

He died of a heart attack on September 16, 1996. He is survived by his wife Mary Buckminster Lothrop of New York, whom he had married in 1950, and who contributed in so many ways to the life of Radcliffe College, and by their four sons, Stephen, Andrew, William and James.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis Bator
Paul M. Doty
Edward Pattullo
Nathan Pusey
Stanley Hoffmann, Chair