

Charles G. Bell
1929 - 1992
PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, EMERITUS

B. A., Pomona College; M. A., Ph.D., Political Science, University of Southern
California, June, 1966
California State University, Fullerton From September 1, 1964 To August 30,
1985
Birth: April 8, 1929; Death: June 24, 1992

Dr. Charles Bell was a member of the CSUF Department of Political Science for over twenty years. He was a scholar, teacher, mentor and valued colleague; he was also a political activist, devoted husband, father and dear friend.

Charles' first love, after his family, was politics. After graduating from Pomona College he threw himself into Adlai Stevenson's campaign for the presidency. While working on the Stevenson Campaign he met life-long friend Bill Fitzgerald. While Charles began his graduate work at USC, Bill entered graduate school at UCLA and went on to become a tenured professor of Political Science at Loyola-Marymount University. Bill and Charles were active members of the California Democratic Council, an off-shoot of the Stevenson campaign, during its formative years.

Before coming to Cal State Fullerton, Charles was a lecturer in Political Science at California State University, Northridge (1961); lecturer at California State University, Los Angeles (1961-62); and Assistant Professor at California State University, San Diego (1962-63). He joined the Political Science Department at California State University, Fullerton, in September, 1964.

Not long after Charles came to Cal State Fullerton he met Claudia Myers, a student assistant in the Social Science Program. Charles explained to her that he was a hemophiliac and that his health would be a constant roller coaster all of his life. She accepted the challenge and became his wife, but ultimately it was the AIDS virus contracted as a result of his hemophilia which took his life.

During their years together in Orange County the Bells were gracious hosts--first at the Barnett Street house, then at their custom-built dream house on De Ville in Yorba Linda and finally at their canyon hideaway in Silverado where they spent their last four years before moving north.

Each of the Bell homes had a swimming pool. Often friends and colleagues would be invited over for a pool party, or an evening watching the election returns or dinner and a couple of bottles of vintage wine. Despite occasional setbacks because of his disease, Charles had amazing stamina. When he was healthy, he was very healthy. He had an exceptionally positive attitude. He was a joy to be around. And he was a prodigious worker. In so many projects, community, university and professional, he was a leader.

Early in his academic career Charles met Charles Price and helped to found the California State Assembly Fellowship Program. For years Charles Bell, Charles Price and others helped steer interested college students into internships with state lawmakers. Some of California's most distinguished lawmakers, along with a few of the other kind, used The Assembly Fellowship Program as a springboard to public office. Many in office today remember Charles Bell, his help, and inspiration.

Charles was not only active politically, he was a very productive scholar. He was the author of numerous scholarly articles on California politics and the legislative process. He served on many boards both civic and academic, including the Orange County Juvenile Justice Commission, the California Journal Editorial Advisory Board, the Western Political Quarterly, of which he was an Associate Editor, the California Assembly Fellowship Program Board of Directors, among others. He also served as Chairman of the CSUF Political Science Department from 1972-1978.

Charles' teaching got very high marks from students. He won the "Outstanding Professor" award at CSUF in 1979-80. At his funeral several former students said that it was Charles who inspired them to choose the study of politics as the focus of their own careers, and they went on to earn Ph.D.'s in political science. Several of his already-degreed colleagues described how he had inspired them in their own academic careers after coming to Fullerton. In addition to a stellar academic career, Charles also had a delightful sense of humor. Sometimes we would groan at his ubiquitous puns, but students and colleagues would never complain that he was dull.

In 1982 the Bell family moved to Davis, California, and Charles became a visiting professor at UC Davis. He made new friends at UC Davis, continued to inspire students to study California politics and continued his many professional activities at a pace that would be the envy of many junior faculty. At the same time he maintained his family, friends and business associates in southern California. The Bell home in Davis was always open to visitors from the southland, seldom a week went by without a visitor from the south if not an overnight guest. Charles and Claudia were always available for a game of pinochle, a trip to his beloved wine country or an evening discussing politics.

Charles continued to teach at UC Davis until 1988, when he suffered a cerebral hemorrhage. He had taken the family dog, Chopin to his dog obedience class; Chopin was much more interested in another dog than in Charles's directions, bolted in the wrong direction, tripping Charles with his leash. Charles referred to him as the "\$18,000 dog," his estimate of the medical bills. In truth, the cost was much greater. Charles never did fully recover from that injury. The combined effects of the cerebral hemorrhage and the AIDS virus took their inevitable toll on this valiant fighter. Charles passed away July 24, 1992.

Submitted by
Jon A. Yinger
Professor of Political Science
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