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Remembering Bob Sproul

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It is late at night as I pen these thoughts
in the quiet of my study. They do not
come easily: so many thoughts, so many
recollections, so much sorrow at the
passing of so great a man, a son of
California, a friend.

By precept and example, Robert Gordon
Sproul taught us the art of living,
of loving, of giving. His was a life of
committed service, of faith in the young,
of confidence in their teachers, of love
in the home, of respect for the distinguished
University he served so well and
so long.

It was my good fortune to have been
born and raised in Berkeley and, thus,
to have had not infrequent occasion to
see Bob Sproul in action, to have made
his acquaintance, and to have worked
with him in his later years. Perhaps it
would be worth recalling the assistance
he gave me during my graduate years
on the Berkeley campus, for it will illumine
some of what made President
Sproul the man he was.

I had chosen the California loyalty
oath controversy (1949-56) as the subject
of my dissertation. The history of that
particular incident in the University's
past was painful to recall even as late
as 1964. President Sproul remembered
the controversy with no less distress than
other principals whose cooperation was
essential to the research. But remember
he did, with respect for all, with
perspective on his own involvement, and
with a thoroughness and honesty few
men could muster under similar circumstances.

No acrimony, no vindictiveness,
no resentment or bitterness crept into
our conversations, nor was any such
found in his personal papers. Here was
a man full of charity and good will
toward all, capable of acknowledging his
own shortcomings, while overlooking
the frailties and weaknesses of others.
His generous and sensitive attitude
toward my inexperience and halting
efforts helped carry me through the research.

How I shall miss him! How very
lucky I have been to have known him.

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