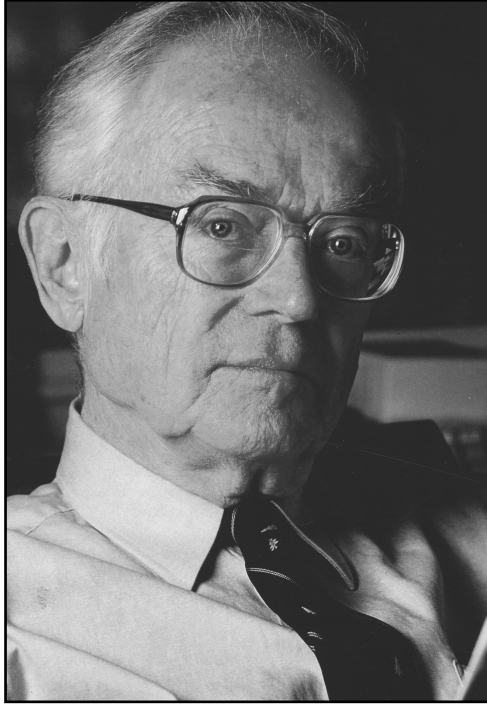

RICHARD W. LYMAN



18 OCTOBER 1923 · 27 MAY 2012

“ANY TIME IT BECOMES necessary for a University to summon the police, a defeat has taken place.” Then-Stanford provost Richard Lyman made this statement at a faculty meeting after police had successfully, without injuries or arrest, terminated a sit-in at Encina Hall on the Stanford campus in 1969. In 1970, Lyman succeeded the failed Kenneth Pitzer as president. Disruptions of academic life continued for another 2 years.

In his 2009 book *Stanford in Turmoil*, Lyman offered this ironically understated summary of the campus unrest from 1966–72:

Our troubles were not as widely noticed as those at Columbia, Berkeley, Harvard, and Cornell. People are surprised to hear that we had a half-dozen major cases of arson, suffered significant damage to campus buildings, principally in the form of broken windows, and during the notorious ‘Cambodia Spring’ of 1970 had to summon police to the campus repeatedly to end sit-ins or deal with disruptions; dozens of police and students were hurt. One Stanford president had his office burned, with the loss of a lifetime’s mementos; his successor was forced to resign after just nineteen months in office for his inability to cope with the uproar.

In a comparative study of how various university presidents dealt with the campus disturbances of the Vietnam era, Richard Lyman would stand out for his fortitude in handling disruptions and his commitment to reason over the tyranny of coercion. Politically, Lyman was a “liberal,” bemoaning a “brutal and senseless war abroad; brutal and senseless oppression at home; a feeling of desperation among the young at their powerlessness to remedy these things.” At the university, however, he drew a sharp line between his politics and adherence to the principles by which the university must be guided.

Born on 18 October 1923 in Philadelphia, Lyman grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, his father a lawyer, his mother a French teacher. Lyman returned to the Philadelphia area when he enrolled at Swarthmore in 1940. Drafted in 1943, he served in the China Burma India Theater with the Army Air Forces Weather Service and returned to Swarthmore in 1946, where he worked with Laurence Lafore, a European historian who later became known for his books on the origins of the two world wars.

The year 1946 became legendary in Lyman’s life because one day, in the Friends Library, he spotted a “gorgeous creature asleep.” She was Elizabeth Schauffler, known as “Jing.” After they graduated from Swarthmore, they married in the summer of 1947 and moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts.

From then on, Jing Lyman was by his side. Although she very much had her own life and agenda as a community volunteer and organizer (for instance, of Stanford's Center for Research on Women, now The Clayman Institute for Gender Research), during her husband's presidency, she also served as "go-between" when necessary. "Apparently," she said, "I made a kind of mark as being someone who was accessible. If they couldn't get to Dick, they could get to me, and I would raise the questions."

Lyman did his graduate work in the Harvard history department, where his teacher was David Owen, the distinguished British historian who was famous for his sharp eye for quality graduate students. Lyman's dissertation was on *The First Labour Government, 1924*. Published in 1957, it has, in the words of Peter Stansky (his successor as a British historian at Stanford) "not been superseded." Stansky writes: "The book is a superb study that has a richly incisive political sense, a firm grasp of the ideas that shaped the party, and a fine awareness of the personalities involved."

These qualities were apparent to *The Economist* as early as 1951–52, when Lyman wrote for the newsweekly while doing dissertation research at the London School of Economics. *The Economist* offered him their Washington correspondent position. Instead, Lyman opted for academic life. He taught for 1 year at Swarthmore and, subsequently, from 1953–58, at Washington University in St. Louis. He went to Stanford in 1958 to teach modern British history and there became "a legendary—and legendarily demanding—instructor."

David Kennedy, the American historian, remembers Lyman's 1962 undergraduate honors seminar on the philosophy of history:

[A]nalytic philosophy of history—that was grist for the Lyman pedagogical mill. And his was a mill that ground exceedingly fine [T]he whiff of intellectual combat hung pungently in the air. In the robust give-and-take of classroom discussion that he fostered, Dick could surely dish it out, and he did, with gusto and what at first appeared to be small regard for our tender undergraduate egos. But he could take it, too. More than once he modeled how to concede a point when confronted with better evidence or superior argument. He consistently pulled off the ultimate pedagogical trick of being simultaneously challenging and supportive. He surgically dismantled lax logic, trashed untenable hypotheses, mocked empirically unanchored assertions, and ruthlessly excoriated imprecise or pretentious language. Yet as it turned out, full-on no-holds-barred academic warfare was artfully modulated by Dick's consistently mordant humor, and, as we came to appreciate,

his deep humanity, sympathy—and yes, his avuncular regard for us students.

In addition to regular history courses, Lyman also taught History of Western Civilization, a course maintained by the Stanford history department for 34 years, beginning in 1935. With Lewis Spitz, the scholar of Renaissance and Reformation history, and with expert contributors from around the country, Lyman developed a set of captivating readings that were published in two volumes in 1965 under the title *Major Crises in Western Civilization*. He himself edited a chapter on the Industrial Revolution in England consisting of “the raw material of historical knowledge”—documents that were selected for “the study of a society under the stress of rapid economic change.” The chapter is still a great introduction to the conflicts raised by industrialization.

Lyman began “to try administration” in 1964 when he was appointed an associate dean of the School of Humanities and Sciences (while still teaching four history courses per year). Having acquired a reputation for the courage of his convictions, Lyman’s name came into play for deanships and then the presidency of Haverford; the Haverford board chair told Lyman, “We’d like the next President of Haverford to be a Swarthmore man!” Entertaining doubts about his ability to return to a research university after a liberal arts college presidency, Lyman became provost at Stanford in 1967 instead, succeeding the formidable Fred Terman.

Lyman’s provostship was to last for only 3 years (under presidents Sterling and Pitzer) before he succeeded President Pitzer upon the latter’s resignation in 1970. Lyman served as Stanford president until he became president of the Rockefeller Foundation in 1980. He returned to Stanford in 1988 to direct the Institute for International Studies (now the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies) and retired as the J. E. Wallace Sterling Professor in the Humanities in 1991.

In the years during which Lyman led the university, he not only did combat in defense of the university in the heyday of student unrest, but he also oversaw changes in the system of university governance (among other reforms, an elected university-wide faculty legislature was established) and helped increase the university’s diversity (it was “lilywhite,” he said, when Jing and he arrived on campus in 1958). Lyman favored the tightening of academic requirements for the undergraduates (including the introduction of a mandatory “Western Culture” freshmen humanities course), eliminated the quota that had limited the number of women undergraduates since the days of Jane Stanford,

did away with the university's Indian mascot, and conducted a \$300 million campaign (which was a very large amount then). The list of accomplishments could go on and on.

Quite a few people believe that Lyman saved the university in the days of turmoil. He, ever modest, rejected that conclusion by saying that no American university was destroyed by the turbulence of the 1960s: "I think I contributed to sustaining faculty morale by articulating proper purposes and parameters of a research university. I also avoided the mistake . . . of looking for solutions that would please everybody; pleasing everybody was not an available option in those troubled times."

The last word should go to a person who had been a student at the time of the unrest. Larry Diamond, now a Stanford faculty member, recently paid the following tribute:

As a student leader, I sometimes came into conflict with President Lyman during those turbulent early years of his presidency, but I came to have a deep respect—and then later, a profound gratitude—for the strength, courage, clarity, and prudence of his leadership. He steadied a reeling ship and restored Stanford to the rapid ascent that Wally Sterling and Fred Terman had launched.

Elected 1988

GERHARD CASPER

President Emeritus

Senior Fellow, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies
Stanford University