

New Bar Leader

NYTimes James Davison Fellers

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HONOLULU, Aug. 15—For most of its 180,000 members, the American Bar Association is a source of valuable contacts and educational aid, a professional fraternity, a political sideline or a provider of tax-deductible summer vacations in places like Waikiki. But for

**Man
in the
News**

James Davison Fellers of Oklahoma City, it has been very nearly a way of life. When he becomes president of the association here tomorrow, it will be the climax of an undramatic, painstaking climb through the ranks of the nation's largest legal organization that took him nearly 40 years.

In 1937, the year after he obtained his law degree from the University of Oklahoma, Mr. Fellers discovered the A.B.A. was meeting in nearby Kansas City, traveled there, joined what was then called the "junior bar" and, apart from time out for World War II, has labored untrudgingly in the association ever since.

A Slow Course

Cautious in his political and social views, he was content to travel the slow course to advancement. After service as an Air Force intelligence officer in Europe, he chose to return to the "junior bar" at the age of 32 rather than compete with the older lawyers, and that group made him its national chairman.

Since then he has occupied a long list of senior offices in the A.B.A. and related legal groups. He made it to the board of governors in 1962 and then to the organization's second-ranking office, chairman of the House of Delegates in 1966.

By contrast, the man Mr. Fellers succeeded as presi-

dent, Chesterfield Smith of Florida, joined the association only nine years ago. His rise, meteoric by the group's standards, was assisted by a keen sense of publicity, a willingness to work and travel and a refreshing country-boy candor.

A major factor in Mr. Fellers's success in the association has been his wife, Randy, the former Margaret Randerson. Their son wrote recently: "From the start he had a campaign manager who was close to the situation and knew his habits well, my mother."

Mrs. Fellers plans her husband's travel schedule, goes with him to all the multiple bar meetings and is in active hostess at the social functions that make new friends for an attorney rising in the association. One afternoon this week, she was organizing an Oklahoma cocktail party in the Fellers's suite in the Sheraton-Waikiki Hotel as her husband talked about his legal background.

He could not remember what inspired him to go to law school—"it seems like I always wanted to be a lawyer." His father was a paint manufacturer, and no one else in the family had any particular legal interests. He took his undergraduate and law degrees simultaneously, helping to support himself by waiting on tables and tutoring.

\$50 a Month

Mr. Fellers could not recall his first client or his first case when he joined an Oklahoma City firm after graduation, but he remembered his salary: \$50 a month. His only option had been a job with a credit bureau, telephoning Depression debtors about unpaid bills.

After working with several firms, he opened in 1948 the



United Press International

*Aims at better service
for the "near-poor."*

predecessor of his present Oklahoma City firm: Fellers, Snider, Baggert, Blankenship & Bailey. He identifies himself as "a trial lawyer with a general business practice."

He has little time for hobbies. As he travels the nation, he looks longingly at golf courses adjoining the hotels where bar associations meet. At home, he likes to garden "to get the meanness out of my system." His children—a son and two daughters—are married and the Fellers have seven grandchildren.

Mr. Fellers, who has never been active in politics, remains a registered Democrat but has voted more frequently for Republican candidates in recent years. He has questioned the bar association's recent vote to rule out possession of marijuana and private homosexual acts by consenting adults as criminal offenses.

After the Hawaii convention closes, Mr. Fellers will make his first tour representing the American legal profession abroad; first to Australia for meetings with their Law Council, then to New Zealand to talk with leaders of the Law Society. Both groups are equivalent to the A.B.A.