



## **REX “TONY” BELL, JR. (Class of 1953)**

Rex “Tony” Bell, Jr. graduated from LVHS in 1953. He was born Dec. 16, 1934 to one-time Nevada Lieutenant Governor and cowboy actor Rex Bell, Sr. and silent film legend Clara Bow. Rex and his brother, George, grew up on his parents' Walking Box ranch roughly 65 miles south of Las Vegas.

Rex attended Notre Dame from 1953 to 1955 and remained a lifelong fan of the Fighting Irish sports teams. He transferred to the University of Nevada, Reno, where he graduated in 1957. He earned his law degree in 1963 from the Willamette Law School in Oregon.

While Rex tried to follow in his famous parents' footsteps -- taking roles in two Westerns after college -- he found his true calling in the law. He began his legal career in 1969 as a Clark County deputy district attorney. He served as counsel to the Clark County Sheriff's Office while former Governor Bob Miller was counsel for the City of Las Vegas Police Department. The two lawyers helped the departments merge into the Metropolitan Police Department.

Bell was elected Las Vegas justice of the peace in 1972. At the end of that time, he sought the Republican nomination for Lieutenant Governor, a post his father held more than a decade earlier. Bell served one term and then entered private practice for two years before returning to the district attorney's office in 1978. He never lost a case as a deputy district attorney, a fact his former boss Miller attributed to the fact that opposing attorneys underestimated the tall, thin Bell and his slow Western drawl.

Elected district attorney in 1986, Bell oversaw growth in the office and pursued fraud cases with vigor, first policing Las Vegas' gambling culture and then attacking get-rich-quick schemes. He was also a tough-on-crime prosecutor who favored longer prison sentences for offenders, saying the cost to build new prisons to house them was less expensive than leaving criminals on the streets.

After leaving the district attorney's office in 1995, Bell Jr. formed a law partnership with defense attorney Drew Christensen.

Rex died July 9, 2011 at the age of 76 after a battle with cancer.

According to former Mayor Oscar Goodman, "Rex took care of the little guys". He often appeared before the City Council as a pro bono attorney, going to bat for people as if they were paying him a million dollars.

Bell embraced his father's Western lifestyle, said Clark County Commissioner Tom Collins, one of Bell's most cherished friends. The two were big rodeo fans. "Rex truly appreciated the Western culture," Collins said. "He was a cowboy. He was a true Nevadan. He was a very kind and humble man and very proud of his heritage."

These biographies are based on research and could contain discrepancies.  
If there are, any excerpts you feel should be changed please feel free to contact [dave@lvhsaa.com](mailto:dave@lvhsaa.com)

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