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## Mitchell Hall

Central Washington University

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What is in a Name? Mitchell Hall

Perry H. Mitchell wore several different hats during his two decades with CWU.

Hired in 1949 to be the school's registrar, Mitchell also served as acting president of the university, as Director of Institutional Effectiveness, and, later, as Director of Financial Aid and College Relations.

Mitchell was born in December 1903 and grew up in the Renton area. He graduated from the University of Washington in 1927 and taught in the Renton School District for several years. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, he was the football coach at Renton High School and, from 1932 to 1944, served as principal for Renton Junior High School.

In the mid-1940s, Mitchell was superintendent of schools in Renton, then served as the city's mayor from 1947-49. He also was editor and publisher of the Renton Chronicle newspaper from 1944 to 1949.

In 1941, he managed to find time to earn his Master of Art degree from the University of Washington.

Once he was hired as registrar at Central, Mitchell remained in that role until 1959. That year, Central's longtime president Robert McConnell decided to step down. The Board of Trustees immediately designated Mitchell as acting president while they conducted a national search.

The process of finding a new president, however, took far longer than anyone had anticipated. According to CWU historian Samuel Mohler, the trustees encountered complications in their search.

"There were many applicants for the position of President although few were recommended by the Screening Committee for serious consideration; the Trustees reduced the list still further—to three," he said.

"These three were invited to campus in June 1960," Mohler continued. "After one of them declined an offer, a second indicated that he would probably accept but asked for further time to consider the matter. Shortly afterward he was injured in an automobile accident, and some months later, gave a negative answer."

The result was that the Trustees were forced to reopen the search and solicit a new list of qualified candidates. By the time someone was selected and accepted the job—Dr. James E. Brooks became the new president in August 1961—Mitchell had served as "temporary" campus leader for nearly two years.

During his tenure, Mitchell introduced an honors program and helped the university establish stronger relationships with the city of Ellensburg. He also advocated for more student civic liberties and decentralized administrative responsibilities and authority.

Following Brooks' hiring, Mitchell was named Director of Institutional Effectiveness, overseeing the university's data collection, used to provide information to state, federal, and external agencies for grants and programs. In the mid-60s, he also served as chair of the Faculty Athletic Committee.

In 1964, Mitchell was named Director of College Development and Financial Aid, in charge of the university's fundraising efforts and financial aid programs for students. It was a post he held until he retired in July 1969 and was granted administrator emeritus status.

Mitchell told the Campus Crier student newspaper about his retirement plans: "There are lots of things I'd like to study, and lots of things I'd like to write about."

Mitchell eventually relocated to Coupeville, Washington, on Whidbey Island, where he died in May 1978 at the age of 75.

In 1969, the university completed construction of a new building to house administrative offices, which was named to honor Mitchell. The two-story brick and concrete structure, located north of Barge Hall, was built in the New Formalism substyle of Late Modernism.

Today, Mitchell continues to house administrative offices, including contracts, purchasing, student employment, human resources, and payroll services.