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University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey
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Class of 1966 Fifteen Year Report

University of Michigan Law School

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University of Michigan Law School
Alumni Survey
Summary of Findings
Class of 1966

In the fall of 1981, the law school mailed a survey to the 345 persons who graduated from the law school in calendar year 1966 and for whom we had current addresses in the United States. Two hundred and thirty-two persons, or 66%, completed and returned the questionnaire, a high return rate for mailed surveys, although below the 75% average return rate for the other sixteen classes sent questionnaires 15 years after graduation.

Here then is a brief report of our findings. We begin with a few tables that provide a profile of the class fifteen years after graduation, and follow with some additional explanatory text. We end with a compendium of the comments class members wrote in response to an openended question on the survey asking for views "of any sort about your life or law school or whatever."

As you will see, fifteen years after law school most of the class is married, practicing law in private settings, living prosperously, contented with their personal lives and careers. On the other hand, there is much diversity. Although most class members have been married once and remain married, one in every five has been divorced at least once. Similarly, although most class members work in private practice or in corporate counsel's offices, a quarter of the class either is not practicing at all or is practicing for the government or other nonprofit entity.

A Profile of the Class of 1966 in 1981

Total Respondents: 233 of 354

<u>Family Status</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Never Married	6%
Married Once, Still Married	72
Divorced	7
Remarried After Divorce	13
Other or Missing	2
	<u>100%</u>

<u>Children</u>	
None	12%
One	12
Two	49
Three	21
Four	6
	<u>100%</u>

Nature of Work

Class Members Practicing Law

Solo Practitioners	13%
Partners in Firms	54
Counsel for Business or Financial Institution	9
Government	7
Other	3
	<u>86%</u>

Class Members Not Practicing Law

Judge	2%
Government Executive	1
Business Owner or Manager	7
Teacher	2
Other	2
	<u>14%</u>

Earnings in 15th Year

under \$40,000	11%
\$40,000-60,000	25
60,000-100,000	28
over \$100,000	37
	<u>100%</u>

Life Satisfaction*

Proportion Who Report Themselves Very Satisfied With:

Their Legal Education at Michigan	72%
Their Current Family Life	80
Their Career as a Whole	69
The Intellectual Challenge of Their Career	69
Their Ability to Solve Problems for Clients	82
The Balance of Their Family and Professional Life	55

Politics

Proportion Who Consider Themselves

Very Liberal	11%
More Liberal than Conservative	24
In the Middle	23
More Conservative than Liberal	29
Very Conservative	13
	<u>100%</u>

Vote in 1980 Presidential Election

Anderson	15%
Carter	27
Reagan	56
Other or Not Voting	2
	<u>100%</u>

*Questions asked on a seven-point scale. We have combined responses 1 and 2 as "very satisfied."

<u>Attitudes On a Few Public Issues</u>	<u>Favor</u>	<u>Neither Favor Nor Oppose</u>	<u>Oppose</u>
Reducing Federal Regulation of Environment	39%	13%	48%
Passage of Federal ERA	45	20	35
Increasing Funds for Legal Services Corp.	41	20	39
Mandatory <u>Pro Bono</u> Work for Lawyers	23	14	63

More Information on the Class of 1966

Life Before Law School

White males constituted 97% of the class of 1966, which had only 2% white females and 1% minorities (most of whom were Asian-Americans). Most were from the middle west and had lived in small towns or cities. About 45% of the class members grew up in Michigan, another 25% in other Great Lakes States, and 20% from the Northeast. A majority of class members grew up in communities of less than 100,000 population, but a quarter in communities of over one million. Only 10% had a lawyer father and none had a lawyer mother. Almost 80% went directly from undergraduate school to law school, and nearly all those who had a hiatus spent it in the military, although 7% had some graduate school.

Three-quarters of the class had never been married when they began law school, and nearly all the rest were married for the first time. Only 5% had any children. Over three-quarters retained the same marital status during law school, with nearly all those who changed status getting married for the first time. Only 8% of respondents had any additional children while in law school.

The Law School Experience

Nearly half of the class began law school with no well-formed long-term career plans. The most common plan remembered by those who had one was working in a large law firm—one-sixth of the class had this initial expectation. The major changes in long-term career plans during law school were a substantial reduction in the proportion who had no plans, and a substantial increase in the proportion planning to work for a large law firm, although the changes were much more complex at an individual level—more than half had changed career plans during law school.

Most respondents relied primarily on their families for financial support during law school, receiving over half of total support from that source; employment was a distant second, at about 23% of total support, and law school loans and grants third at 12%. Only half of the respondents had employment at any time during law school, though the proportions and hours involved increased from the first to the third year, and most of this employment was not law-related. For those who did have employment, the average weekly number of hours employed varied from 12 to 17.

Over 85% of the class of 1966 indicated they were satisfied with their law school experience, intellectually, as career training, and overall, with most of those indicating high degrees of satisfaction. Less than 10% indicated dissatisfaction on any of these aspects. The highest levels of satisfaction were found among those who were most satisfied with their careers and those who had higher law school grade-point averages.

Respondents from the class of 1966 recommended changes in the law school curriculum primarily in terms of increasing course offerings in "skills" areas such as negotiation clinical law practice, trial techniques, legal writing, interviewing, counselling, discovery, legal research, and office administration. Among "substantive" courses, only two areas—banking and corporate and commercial—had even 10% of respondents recommending increases.

Life Since Law School

Geographic relocation since law school graduation has resulted in a decrease in the proportion of the members of the Class of 1966 (compared to parent's residence at law school entry) living in Michigan and other Great Lakes States, and increases in the proportions on the Pacific Coast and the District of Columbia. Only one-quarter of respondents now live or work in the same communities in which they grew up and less than half in the same region of the country.

Three-quarters of respondents in the Class of 1966 have married once and remain in that first marriage. Another one-eighth have remarried after a divorce, 6% have never married, 7% divorced. Forty-three percent of respondents have the same marital status as when they left law school, and 36% went from never married to a first marriage, and the remaining 20% had experienced a divorce since law school. Respondents averaged two children (half had exactly two, only 12% had none and 6% had four or more), nearly all born since law school.

A high level of satisfaction with family life was indicated by 80% of respondents in the class of 1966, with the highest levels among married persons, senior partners in law firms, and managers in non-firm settings.

Only 23% of respondents in the class of 1966 were still in the first job they took after law school; the average number of jobs since law school was 2.7. One-quarter had had one or more non-legal jobs, usually military service. Forty-three percent had had three or more legal jobs. Most job-changing seems to have taken place in the early part of these respondent's careers, since over 60% have now spent more than half their careers in their current jobs. About one-third of respondents had spent at least some time since law school in law practice other than private practice.

Eighty-seven percent of respondents in the class of 1966 are now lawyers, with only a few percent being judges, government officials, business owners or executives, or teachers. Two percent are judges. Most of them are state and local trial judges, the rest administrative law judges.

Among the practicing lawyers, 81% worked in law firms, 10% in business enterprises, 7% in government. Of those in law firms, 18% were solo practitioners, 79% were partners, and 2% associates. Slightly more than half of those in business and government were managers.

The typical law firm in which respondents from the class of 1966 worked had 8 attorneys, 2 legal assistants, and 8 nonlegal staff, although the range was great. One-fifth of firm respondents were in firms with over 50 other attorneys.

The average lawyer respondent in the class of 1966 reported working the equivalent of a 52-week, 42 hours per week year. The activities on which this time was spent varied widely among individuals, with drafting legal documents and client counseling being the only activities on which the average respondent spent more than 10% of his or her time. Similarly, substantive specialties were widely varied. If a "specialty" is defined by spending more than 25% of one's time on a substantive area, 58% of respondents had one specialty, 33% two, 3% three, and 5% had none. The most common specialties were corporate and commercial law (36% of respondents), torts and personal injury (15%), and real property (11%).

As to clientele, respondents in the class of 1966 averaged 25% of their time on work for individuals, 20% for small businesses, 37% for larger businesses, 17% for government and other organizations. Despite UM Law School's image as a producer of lawyers for large firms serving large corporations, 41% of respondents spent a majority of their time serving individuals and small businesses.

Earnings from principal occupation reported by members of the class of 1966 averaged \$9,000 in the first year after law school, \$22,700 in the fifth year, \$52,100 in the 10th year, and \$83,500 in the 15th year. (In 1982 inflation-adjusted dollars, the amounts were \$25,800, \$54,000; \$88,200; and \$88,500.) In 1982, only 7% of the class of 1966 had incomes below \$25,000, 14% earned in the \$25,-50,000 range, 28% from \$50,000 to \$100,000 and 37% earned over \$100,000. Lawyers tended to earn about 10% more than nonlawyers, solo practitioners and firm partners more than others, persons in larger cities more than those in smaller, those in larger offices more than those in smaller.

The majority of respondents were highly satisfied with their career overall and with the balance of family and professional life, income, ability to solve problems for specific clients, intellectual challenge, prestige in the community. There was one area of dissatisfaction: only 22% were highly satisfied with their ability to bring about social change. Overall, 92% of respondents were satisfied with their careers, and only 2% dissatisfied. Lowest levels of satisfaction were associated with low incomes, associate status in a firm or nonsupervisory status elsewhere, and being unmarried. The six aspects of career satisfaction appear to make fairly equal contributions to overall satisfaction, with intellectual challenge and prestige having somewhat more weight than the others.