

University of Michigan Law School  
**University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository**

---

Law School Alumni Survey Class Reports

University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey  
Project

---

# Class of 1956 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

Follow this and additional works at: [http://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni\\_survey\\_reports](http://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_reports)

 Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#), and the [Legal Profession Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

University of Michigan Law School, "Class of 1956 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments" (1971).

This Response or Comment is brought to you for free and open access by the University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey Project at University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Law School Alumni Survey Class Reports by an authorized administrator of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [mlaw.repository@umich.edu](mailto:mlaw.repository@umich.edu).

As a black man, I know that I have had problems not encountered by my white colleagues. In spite of the advances that we have made in this country in the area of race relations, it is still difficult for the black lawyer to compete in the legal arena. Unfortunately, race still affects many aspects of law practice. Perhaps law school in general, and the U. of M. in particular, may be able to help change the picture.

\*\*\*\*\*

More instruction in exam writing

As to XIX F I hope that he or she studies a subject which is of interest to that person. If it is "law" fine, but not because it is necessarily a rich or rewarding profession. In my opinion there are far too many charlatans, schemers and egocentrics practicing law, and such persons certainly take the fun out of the practice.

\*\*\*\*\*

Increase or decrease of subject matter doesn't matter that much; quality of teaching matters a great deal.

Thought XV D 1 poorly phrased, also XVIII A and E.

I subscribe to what is probably a discredited (trite) theory by now, that the function of legal education is to train people to think (and write) like lawyers - and this can be done by good teachers in any subject. Having achieved rather large success in a practice which is on the cutting edge of the newest areas of legal development, without any particularly "relevant" courses, I vote for tough, broad legal education.

\*\*\*\*\*

Answered "Yes" to XVIII but "not exclusively at Michigan. There are a number of schools I would be happy with."

\*\*\*\*\*

I am pleased to see our Law School keep up with the times. I suppose many of my classmates feel you are turning out a bunch of radicals. This reflects poorly on my classmates, not on my law school.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVIII F - Not if child had less than enthusiastic interest in this direction

\*\*\*\*\*

My law training has been useful to me as Police Instructor and Administrator

\*\*\*\*\*

XVIII F - I would not push on this one way or the other, but would hope he or she want to U-M if so interested.

\*\*\*\*\*

In the attempt to evaluate the members of the Class of 1956 do not lose sight of the fact that this evaluation reflects on the school as well as the graduate. In my experience I have found that I prefer to hire Michigan graduates because of their general social ability. This does not mean that all Michigan graduates can be categorized, but I believe that the percentage of ability is greater. Whatever the formula for success was in the past please do not change it.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVIII A Impossible to answer after 15 yrs. The law school developed basic academic background. This is all anyone can expect. Specific knowledge must be acquired on the job after graduation through practice, ICLE etc. The present professional position was achieved, and is being sustained

at a substantial personal sacrifice. Our work week runs to about 55-60 hours. The University of Michigan Law School (1950-56) did an excellent job in preparing us for careers in law.

\*\*\*\*\*

My experience has been that U. of M. law graduates as a whole have a more in depth knowledge and understanding of life and the world around us than from most other law schools.

\*\*\*\*\*

Late in my law school career, I determined that I was not interested in the practice of law. Nevertheless, the training I received and the discipline I acquired in law school have proven invaluable in my chosen career of foreign affairs and diplomacy. I have done well within my chosen career, and this has been in some measure due to my legal training.

\*\*\*\*\*

Will send comments in about two weeks (i.e. first week in April, 1971) if I fund a competent secretary, During that time. The problem here of locating a competent secretary is the most vexing problem of the practice of law.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have no quarrel with U. of M. curriculum 1953-56. Regarding XVIII F would neither encourage nor discourage son, if he had strong feeling. If he lacked a conviction I would answer both "no". I would answer both "no" as to a daughter of mine.

\*\*\*\*\*

I consider my legal education at Michigan to have been superb.

\*\*\*\*\*

With respect to XVI & XVIII A & B my practice from 1957 to 1969 was exclusively litigation & although legal education is necessary for a trial lawyer it, legal education, is more directed in my opinion to office, vis a vis, trial practice. I do recall a course taught by Charles Joiner related to trial work, but my subsequent experience demonstrated the academic conception or the realities of litigation to be somewhat deficient. I imagine what I am saying is that I suspect Michigan as well as other law schools are academically directed to the protection of solicitors, not the barristers or advocates of which I believe American jurisprudence stands in desperate need.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVI - Having been out of school for 15 years & having no knowledge of the present curriculum I find it difficult to properly answer this question.

XVIII F Whatever they want to do but if they did so, then yes to Michigan.

\*\*\*\*\*

I am concerned about the following: A. The concept of "publish or perish" B. The fact that when I interviewed prospective employees, 2 "underachievers" did not desire to vacate the space which had been reserved for me. C. That one who was within the top 20 in his class and who worked to earn money to attend school at the U. of M. was not accepted in law school.

\*\*\*\*\*

Not qualified to make comments on existing curricula.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVIII F Yes if male child & Mich. but not strongly to exclusion of others. Suggest changing question III A to include wife. If women's Lib permits, suggest changing question XVIII F to distinguish between male & female child.

\*\*\*\*\*

I have always felt that my Michigan Legal Training was invaluable, but there was a little too much emphasis on the case-work system and not enough on the practical aspects of the practice of law. Also some attempt could be made to inject interest by reference to the current problems and issues of our society.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVIII F If that is His or her choice. It would be a great contribution if you could train a lawyer to better anticipate problems ~~with~~ and to be well organized in all areas of life. The day is too short, and bad habits are too hard to get rid of. Michigan Law School was a great school, and I assume and believe it still is. I feel deeply indebted to the superb faculty that I had a chance to study under from 1953-56. They all weren't perfect, and they had their faults ~~individually~~. But collectively, they were great.

\*\*\*\*\*

Don't feel television necessary in curricula, only in methods of technic.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVI - I feel the method of teaching law should be changed- from the case method, judicial, to the case method, problems, as at the Harvard Business School. Of course, this would be hard for the faculty.

XVIII F I have no feelings. It's their business and decision. Frankly, I am appalled by the dishonesty of lawyers and the incompetency of judges, and if I were black or poor I suppose I would be very bitter about the judicial system. I think one large problem is that most law professors never really practiced nitty-gritty, and their approach to law is too logical. I'm afraid the judges don't function on logic. Also, I believe there should be emphasis from the very beginning as to what happens in the court room instead of so much discussion of appellate decisions. It comes as quite a blow to realize that the appellate courts change the facts to fit the decision. I think it's great to have been a lawyer, but now I enjoy my own business. I feel that law is on the verge of huge changes, with professional corporations and the coming of group practice. The ultra-specialization and the ~~bigness~~ <sup>bigness</sup> of law firms are taking the joy out of law practice in my opinion and law is just another job like working on G.M. Assembly line.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVI I make no choices because I believe the balance is about correct, but that reliance on the case method should be radically reduced.

\*\*\*\*\*

Michigan was a grand experience. But my training did not equip me for what I had to deal with later. I learned to think, but had little a how to be a lawyer. Remember, Appeal Work is something for mature lawyers. I wasn't sure how to approach the lowliest case. Bluntly I didn't really understand what being a lawyer meant. I personally believe the law schools should establish "internships" so that case management is understood and you can be placed into the crucible under "Learning Supervision and control."

\*\*\*\*\*

As I grow older I am tending to be much more conservative in my views concerning educational and the manner in which the academic community should handle the students. Complete academic freedom has not, in my judgment, produced the end product.

\*\*\*\*\*

Most attorneys do not know how to deal with clients - effectively. How to obtain facts, learning clients needs as opposed to counsel's desire, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

I was grateful for the opportunity to study law at the University of Michigan Law School - and I still am! In many ways it was one of the most challenging and productive periods in my life.

\*\*\*\*\*

A great school and a great experience. Would like to see continued pressure to lead in changing laws and in making laws and lawyers more responsive to the peoples needs.

\*\*\*\*\*

I feel the law schools have failed the profession in the sense that they do not prepare the student for the business problems and realities he must face. Our public relations with clients and the public have reached a sorry state and most lawyers are either unaware of the solutions or incapable of handling them. If the law schools continue to empasize "the law of outer space" or such other "way-out" subjects, then we may wake up some day to find that there is no practice of law - the insurance agents, financial consultants, accountants, real estate men, etc. will have preempted the entire filed. Perhaps this is as much the responsibility of the profession itself, but that still is no excuse for the law schools to close their eyes to the outer world. If just a little of that outstanding talent on the faculty could be devoted to our p practical business problems, a greater service to the profession and public could be performed than all the law review articles or books on hypothetical legal problems or ivory tower analysis put togehhher. (i.e.) computerization of research, fining systems, docket control, billing techniques, tests for determining competant legal secretarâal aptitude, etc.)

\*\*\*\*\*

The answers to questions XVIII F are possibly misleading (he answered "No") I would be satisfied if my sons chose the law, but I am not "hoping" that they do any particular work. This choice is theirs. If any did chose the law Michigan is a fine institution at which to prepare.

\*\*\*\*\*

In regard to XVIII F I do not intend to influence or direct my children's career choice and thus would not particularly or rationally hope anything with respect to it or preparation for it.

\*\*\*\*\*

As previously indicated - I do not feel that the method of teaching law (1956) at least as pertinent to corporate law, was particularly relevant. I strongly feel that an additional year or partial year with a revised curriculum should be instituted and specialists, such as legislative, regulatory, criminal, labor and other such attorneys recognized in particular fields, should be brought in to teach pnaactical law via seminars, etc. For example, I have had extensive experience in the legislative and regulatory areas and my law school training, with all due respect to our courses in Adm. Law & Leg., was not only lacking in substance but so inadequate as to be deemed somewhat misleading.

\*\*\*\*\*

Very satisfied with curricula as it existed in 1956.

\*\*\*\*\*

Not being in practice, but having substantial contact with practicing attorneys, I am most impressed with the lack of common business knowledge they possess and the fact that law school does not begin to offer the practical information - the "How-to" - as opposed to the weigh given the theory.

\*\*\*\*\*

Very well satisfied with curricula well-balanced between practical & theoretical

\*\*\*\*\*

XVIIIIF it would be up to him or her, however if UM would clear out the radical freaks and go back to what it was when I went there. Otherwise, I would just as soon he or she went to the YMCA Law School. Although I was not a diligent student, I appreciated and still appreciate the fact that Michigan had strict standards for admission and passing courses, because I believe this resulted in above average graduates. For example, from my class, last year Wm G. Sesler ran against Senator Hugh Scott of Penna. and Jean Macdougall McKee ran against Rep. Gerald Ford. On the other side of the political spectrum, J. Patrick Tannian of my class is a former law partner of President Nixon in N.Y. Furthermore, I know quite a few prominent attorneys in Kentucky and elsewhere who went to UM Law School. Being a UM Law School graduate carries quite a bit of prestige and respect, but it has never brought me even one case or won a case for me.

\*\*\*\*\*

Better study techniques should be communicated to first year students. More test papers should be returned with grades so students can identify their weaknesses.

Surprising how the broader education than many schools offer can help in practice.

Personal interest in graduates by the faculty. After good undergrad grades I was a 2.33 student in law school - including a "D" in a tax course, my specialty! After working for the Internal Revenue Service as an agent, I was offered a job with a tax attorney. He spoke to Prof. Wright. Prof. Wright didn't "gild the lily" but did the best that he could for me, emphasizing my undergraduate record and the fact that I worked my way through. I will be forever grateful that he took the time and effort - and I certainly was one of his lesser lights!

\*\*\*\*\*

This questionnaire is impossible to answer. Many of the questions and categories are ambiguous. (157)

\*\*\*\*\*

Increase basic court procedures, pleadings, study of rules and basic practice tips - Not enough practical practice knowledge imparted in Law School

\*\*\*\*\*

When I retire from the Army I will be 46. I then intend to try to practice law with a small law firm on an office sharing basis. In the Army I have done quite a bit of trial work (criminal) and spent two years doing nothing but trying contract cases before the Board of Contract Appeals. I liked that more than any other work I've done. I spent four years advising the Imperial Iranian Armed Forces in the reorganization of their judicial system. I spent 2 years as Asst. Labor Advisor to the Secretary of the Army.

\*\*\*\*\*

From experience in private practice and in government practice with both legislative and executive branches, I find Michigan prepared me well - Better than I would have believed and better than my grades would have indicated.

\*\*\*\*\*

My earnings are not particularly relevant to my area of specialization because they could have been equal or better in other areas and I have not worked completely within the one area.

During my era in school, C students had very little, if any, opportunity to obtain financial assistance. I will always be convinced that certain members of my class - with high academic ranking, would not have been graduated if they had been compelled to devote various degrees of time to their maintenance and support. I had a roommate for two years that finished in the upper 20% of his class. He worked a full 40 hours a week at an honest, outside, non-law related job during this time. Had he been freed of this necessity, he would have finished in the upper 5% with ease. I know of various instances that go both ways, but I am convinced that during my materialistic era - a lightening of financial pressures on some and an exertion of financial pressure on others - would probably have altered class standings.

I was a transfer student and as such was compelled to take partial courses in property, contracts and procedure. This resulted in my attending class 6 hours per day for almost a full year - attending class with freshman and seniors and taking six examinations in seven days at the end of one year. At the same time I was working at various outside jobs - non-law related - because of financial necessity

My final class standing was once very material to prospective employers yet, the University would never acknowledge that I carried an unusual burden during my first full year in Ann Abr.

As far as I know, I never had a counsellor and no one in Law School Administration took cognizance of this situation when it was brought to their attention. Yet when I made application to take the Ohio Bar examination, I was called in and told to take the Bar Review Course in Columbus "because Michigan had no man flunk the Ohio Bar in years."

I could not afford to and I did not take the Bar Review course. I passed the bar examination while two or three members of my class - who took the course and had much higher class standing- did not.

My point is not completely to air a long standing "bitch," but to emphasize that students should be more thoroughly and completely evaluated and all the facts and circumstances considered when and if the Law School is called upon to supply information regarding a former student.

On the lighter side - my records won't disclose that I took some courses in the Business School because I felt at least two Law School exams tended to favor students with a Business or Finance major or that I took up golf in the summer of 1955 and graduated with a five handicap at the University course.

I know that no prospective employer ever got a full picture of my Law School career because I know the Law School never bothered to gather the facts - even

when requested to do so. This hurt me for several years but, after sufficient opportunity, I was able to overcome it. I wonder how many graduates never got this chance.

\*\*\*\*\*

I would think more guidance could be given to pre-law students insofar as course selection. Political Science was emphasized at Penn State and I believe it is emphasized at a good many other schools. Pre-law students should be encouraged to major in areas suited to their own interest.

Practical business experience would have been of considerable assistance to me in law school and as most students entering law school after graduation from college would have had no opportunity to acquire it, I would think the first year courses could emphasize this more. The most important courses, Property, Contracts and Torts seem a proper base upon which to build but ~~it~~ would have been helpful had there been fewer hours in a year with more total hours over a two year period.

\*\*\*\*\*

XVI A. How to be a judge - a post grad course for 3-5 year out practitioners should be mandatory requirement for Bench.

XVI B Real Property a great history but not worth 8 hrs in first year. Almost all real estate law now is - a special course for specialists is needed after graduation finance oriented and the special course should be so oriented, along with "planning" - a dismal subject because it's so poorly done.

The highest purpose of the law is to improve the opportunity the individual has qualitatively and quantitatively. Everything I see done is in derogation of that principle where closely examined. Recent grads are off on a different track but equally falacious. Our society is sick and the principal profession at fault is the lawyers - then the politicians. I do not think lawyers qua lawyers have contributed to American Society since 1930 - when most needed we have failed miserably. Our Bar Associations persist - as to our colleges - to list numbers of lawyers (grada) in in impact positions and assume that proves we have contriubted. I'm only interested in whether the lawyer brought his knowledge to bear in the right way, on the right side and succeeded.

\*\*\*\*\*

College and university picture nationally very distressing (including University of Michigan) especially qua Discipline; admission standards, and supine reaction to militant and/or disorderly groups, campus unrest, etc.

\*\*\*\*\*

Since I have been a line officer with a legal specialty since 1956, some of these questions are not really pertinent. What is pertinent is that I feel the education I received at Michigan is at least the equal of any law school in the country. I have enjoyed a very broad practice and I have had to call on most of the subjects taught. I have had the good fortune to be a member of the U.S. delegations to the IMCO Legal Committee and the UNESCO/IOC Working Group on Legal Questions related to Scientific Investigation of the Oceans for several years. I have been the U.S. member of the IOC Group of Experts on the Legal Status of Ocean Data Acquisition Systems for four years. I have been a member of the IMCO working groupelaborating the convention on the Oil Pollution Compensation Fund (the companion to the '69 civil liability convention). I was the principle drafter of the recent President's Report on Pollution by Hazardous Substances (required by 33 USC 1162 (g)), and I expect to be involved in the elaboration of a convention under IMCO auspices on this topic. In the course of ouver eight years as a District Legal Officer

I have assisted several states in the drafting of state boating legislation. With regard to this sampling of my activities I found that my Michigan training was first rate in comparison with the other law school products, here and abroad. I do admire the British barrister's training to think on his feet and we could do well with some of that type of training in the U.S.

(letter to Dean Allen from same respondent) "The principal reason that I did not respond earlier is that I never received the previous questionnaire. Inasmuch as I have been transferred eight or nine times since law school, it is unlikely that you have ever had the right address at the right time. Since I am neither a joiner nor a decent correspondent, the fact that this second questionnaire reached me is rather astonishing.

My antipathy to questionnaires, while not violent, is deeply rooted in, amongst other things, some twenty-eight years of military service and the ungodly number that I have had to fill in. However, in your case I have made an exception although the form (as with all others I have been subjected to) leaves me frustrated.

While I don't want you to feel smug, during the past fifteen years I have been matching wits with lawyers from most schools in the U.S. and a respectable number abroad and have never once felt a lack of something in my legal training. Indeed it has been rather much the other way round. On the other hand I have developed some rather serious misgivings about the motivation of the majority of the legal profession (business is becoming a more accurate descriptive word) and the closed club game that we play. The place to initiate the necessary changes is the law school - providing that we really do want to change - and thereby change as well our rather troublesome "image." What are you doing along this line?

\*\*\*\*\*

I find in my practice that the training I received at Law School was the highest grade. Many of my friends are among the people I met and associated with during Law School. I hope the Law School will continue to maintain its high standards of excellence.

\*\*\*\*\*

My practice has always been in association with my husband's practice and firm - and on a part-time basis. I am currently inactive, though still formally associated with the firm.

\*\*\*\*\*

My undergraduate training was primarily in Political Science. I believe that, for private practice, a course of study in psychology, philosophy, English language and such courses would have been far more valuable. Particularly psychology. In my practice I have found that having some knowledge of human psychology comes in very handy and I had little formal training in it.

\*\*\*\*\*

My three years of law school constitute the most meaningful segment of my life. It was also a most enjoyable time and I would most certainly do it again.

\*\*\*\*\*