Class of 1968 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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I find a persistent, significant dissatisfaction with my present circumstances. I live in a relatively small town environment, which provides a pleasant situation outside of my work experience, but otherwise is unsatisfactory. Practically all of my practice is in litigation. I find I have to deal continually with judges who are of marginal intelligence, unprepared and unwilling to devote the effort to do justice to an issue. It is particularly frustrating to have thoroughly analyzed and researched a point (after considerable time, and expense to the client), only to have the judge not understand nor even make the attempt. I look forward to the times when my practice takes me into the metropolitan areas of the state. The higher quality of my fellow lawyers and the more professional approach to the practice is refreshing. I feel good, however, about my education, my classmates and UM law school.

Law School doesn't teach the young lawyer how to "do" anything and probably never will. I have never felt that the choice of courses was important. Learning to do basic research is necessary and law school does generally do that. Learning to think like a lawyer, i.e. as a problem solver--whether in court or not is crucial--some get it, some don't and it has very little to do with academic skill or achievement. Notwithstanding my lack of respect for substantive courses I would not simply recommend that the Law School become a trade school--as a practical matter it would fail. I continue to fear for and about the new graduate who starts his own office right out of school. Only in extraordinary cases will he ever be a "good" lawyer. As residency training is to physicians, 5 years in an established practice is the only way I know to really learn our craft. If law school can get students to express themselves clearly and succinctly, in print, we will do the rest.

I look back on my law school years with much nostalgia, but I really didn't enjoy it much at the time. The "Paper Chase" type of pressure tactics used by Arthur Miller (now a TV star) and others turned me off. I heartily endorse different types of teaching (clinical law, participatory learning), rather than old-stype Socratic lecture. I am now a college professor, and I am trying various teaching methods--I hope the U-M Law School is, too.

My Law School education taught me to analyze issues carefully and to question everything. Those are useful skills, to be sure, but I hope a little more emphasis today is put on writing skills, lawyering skills, etc. My professors were very intelligent men (all were white males)--some were exciting teachers, some were not.
While I was somewhat critical, above, relative to the "in class" aspect of law school, in other ways it was a great experience--what an extraordinary group of brilliant, interesting classmates to interact with on a daily basis. We were mostly males, ages 22-25, going through difficult material together, partying, playing sports, growing to adulthood, against the background of the Vietnam War. My classmates were, and still are, a classy group. We had a really great 10th year reunion--everyone had grown in interesting ways. As I write this, I can immediately think of several great "law school" stories involving my classmates. Maybe we should put a book of stories together for our 20th reunion.

My experiences at Michigan and the quality of my legal education were extremely helpful to me in my career. My thanks for a job well done.

Here are my personal thoughts:
I did not come from a family of lawyers. As a result, I really had no idea that lawyers get involved in so many aspects of government and business. Also, my part-time employment was not law related (it paid more to work in factories) and my recollection is that clinical-type practical experience was not pushed much during my years in law school. A system of personal career counselling or spot-seminars on the career choices within law would have been helpful. My personal situation turned out well but I consider a lot of it to be attributable to luck. The electives that a corporate house counsel, or an attorney with the SEC or other government post, would find useful, relative to someone headed for private practice, are different. On the whole, I feel Michigan gave me all the tools I needed, but maybe not enough direction.

You learn how to practice law from lawyers and from law school professors you learn the theory of the law. For the most part law school professors simply can't teach students what to do with clients and in the court because they have not recently, if ever, had the experience.

I was extremely naive when I graduated about how and why the system worked.
..who was paid how much for what.
..who is running things--maybe no one!
..what skills work in trial-hearings --law is a shockingly small part of it. Some is theater; some is characterizing-image--who is the horse's ass?; some is forcefulness.
..image--dress, confidence, mannerisms, what socio-economic class you appear to operate from.
I am currently switching from the practice of law to the business of starting businesses. I have earned more in business than from law over the past 6 years and find that if your work is really good you should work for yourself. Of course the difference between capital gains and self employment and income tax is a compelling factor.
The "in terrorem" approach to Socratic teaching utilized by some professors does not necessarily result in better-educated or better-prepared law students.

Legal education at U. of M. is superb, and its uncompromising commitment to academic excellence should be maintained at all costs.

The ever present threat of malpractice combined with the general view of the public that lawyers are an ever present nuisance (especially one's own attorney), and a generally low esteem rating that the profession seems to have, results to a large extent in defensive practice. This attitude, along with advertised rates-fees, has made it increasingly difficult to operate a high quality practice and simultaneously charge adequate fees which will cover increasing overheads (computers, rents, wordprocessing, good secretarial) as well as decent profits. Generally, it seems that the middle class, both individuals and small-medium businesses, simply cannot afford quality legal work. Further, their cost expectations are waxed by advertising of fee rates such as "closings: $150 and up" or "simple divorces: $175.00."

There is an only partially true proposition that seems canonized in the better law schools, and that is that the practice of law is a "profession." In fact, and unfortunately and unrealized to the young initiate, it is first a business, where the overhead has to be covered, which requires clients, which requires a lot of aggressive salesmanship, and connections do not hurt. It also mandates choices as to how time should be spent and how far to push a matter. Nowhere in law school was it ever discussed as to what were the economic realities of the issues, i.e., if it takes $10,000 worth of time to settle a $10,000 dispute, plus all of the client's time, and the attitude that "attorneys are the only winners," where do you stop? Whether this sort of thing is a law school question, may be unclear, but if the law is a "living" thing, this, and similar issues are integral to its current condition/health.

As I look back on law school, I believe it taught me how to think like a lawyer, but I believe courses of more practical nature should be encouraged and emphasized. "Hands-On" or clinical training should be required to a certain extent.

While there is nary a soul who does not want to make more money, we must all realize that we truly do live in a generally very affluent society, and by affluent I mean we have an awful lot for which to be thankful, other than money. I, for one, have a very interesting practice, and I truly enjoy working with most all of my partners and associates. That is very important. Now that even I must confess that I am middle aged, I truly do appreciate the finer things in my life: good health, a strong family relationship, excellent wife whom I learn to love more each day, etc. I do wish the pressures to put in billable time were less and that I could take more time to enjoy my health, my wife and my kids. However, it certainly beats the way most of the people in this world spend their days and weeks!

I am proud to be a graduate of U-M Law. I wish I had been a more serious student but some of us don't mature until we hit 40.

If there is a skill which needs to be taught in law school it is the absolute necessity of organization and preparation. Their presence can make good lawyers of average minds. Their absence will make a poor lawyer of the best mind.
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The law school curriculum should place a greater emphasis on the practical aspects of being a successful lawyer. Other than exposure to a variety of substantive law areas and teaching me how to think and analyze a problem, the vast majority of my time is spent on matters which I was taught (or forced to learn on my own) after law school. I learned a great deal in the first 3 years in practice, which I have built upon ever since. Also, law schools should better prepare new lawyers for court practice. I took Trial Technique from Dean Joiner my senior year which had a very significant impact on my early years of practice. Many lawyers today are not properly trained to represent clients in court, and often times a client's case (civil & criminal) is influenced as much by the lawyer and his ability as the facts.

I am concerned with an increase in incompetence and greed of lawyers which I fear has contributed significantly to the deterioration of our legal and economic systems. Greed has caused lawyers to abuse two facts of our legal system --the discovery process and the punitive damage remedy. Endless discovery proceedings that do nothing to narrow issues and only increase billable hours and outrageous punitive damage claims that appeal to the lawyer looking for the get-rich-quick "big" case have soured the public view of our profession. Add to this greed the incompetence exhibited by lawyers and judges and our system takes on the appearance of a politics-ridden crowd of money-hungry prostitutes incapable of resolving any dispute efficiently. Attend a bar association meeting -- the bottom line almost always appears to be income enhancement or income preservation.

Our economic system is stagnating in part because billions of dollars change hands in mergers and acquisitions without a single innovation being created in industry. The primary beneficiaries and, I fear, the primary proponents of the merger mania which lead to this stagnation are investment bankers, accountants and lawyers. Can law schools do something about greed? Probably not, but surely the expectations of law students can be lowered so that they will not view their profession as a ticket to instant wealth. Certainly the degree of competence can be raised and certainly something could be taught about the "big picture" of the legal-social-economic system so that lawyers will view themselves and their place in that system in the proper perspective.

I found the format of this questionnaire uncommonly awkward for a document emanating from the U of M Law School. It has taken me a long time to learn the proper place of lawyers, and of the practice of law, in the scheme of things. Lack of such a balanced perspective is one of the biggest problems we encounter in the development of young lawyers hired by our office. I know there is no way to teach this, but three years in the cauldron at one of the nation's leading law schools seems inexorably to fuel the myth of invincibility with no commensurate antidote. Send us more dynamic, positive, idealistic people any day, but preserve us from the dragon-slaying "miracle workers." It takes too long to de-program them and they cost our clients too much money.
1. Very fond memories of Michigan and Ann Arbor.
2. First year of law school remains single most challenging & intellectually satisfying of my educational career.
3. 2nd and third years, much less so.
4. When doing interesting work (which is not, sadly, all the time) the law is an excellent profession. After 15 years, however, I still wonder if it is what I'm really best at.

I find that law school graduates coming to practice law in my community are less prepared to practice law and less ethically conscious than in earlier years. I attribute the change to their graduation from newer law schools and their lack of opportunity to associate themselves with established practitioners. A basic law school education does not seem to adequately prepare graduates for the law. Yet in my community too many graduates are trying, many unsuccessfully, because of the lack of other opportunities. In my opinion this represents a danger to the community and to the profession.

I regard Michigan as a fine and important law school. The teaching of legal history and the philosophy of the law should be given a higher emphasis, which is to say it needs good/exciting teachers. Lawyers need to see their role more clearly and get away from acting like scribes or mechanics.

Many lawyers coming out of good law schools these days are surprisingly inarticulate and often don't write (or even spell) well. It is hard to see just how you can teach client relations and counseling, but it is a terribly valuable skill to have.

LITIGATION TRAINING NEEDED - from the basics of how to determine a prima facie case, how to find/identify proof for each element and how to get it into evidence.

A great profession, especially criminal trial practice, with generally good bar in local Seattle area - offsetting this is the toll, emotionally/physically, that a trial practice in high publicity, high exposure cases takes over a long period - ability to handle stress is necessity but rewards of the job are worth it. As a prosecutor the ability to take time off in a planned fashion has been very beneficial to me.

Law school (from what I remember!) was satisfying; however, unless things have improved dramatically in the last 15 years, it was woefully inadequate in teaching practical aspects necessary for a trial practice - perhaps because most profs had little or no trial experience (or if they had some it was 30 years ago!) - Need more intern-practical programs, mock trials w/mock-actor witnesses, mock juries, etc. would have helped a lot to at least give students an idea of the real world.

I thoroughly enjoyed law school. I learned basic substantive law and how to analyze and research legal issues. I was however totally unprepared for the day-to-day practice of litigation and client representation which I had to learn on the job.
As this will be one of the more unusual responses from the Class of 1968 (or any other!), some interpretive background is in order. My experiences and observations somewhat imperfectly expressed here may be unique to myself, but if not, pose significant problems for the profession. These, in turn, may be proper subjects for addressing in legal education.

As my responses infer, I made a major career change in 1980, leaving a busy and outwardly-successful two-man general trial practice in rural Western Pennsylvania for "semi-retirement" and a paralegal and administrative position with a law firm in Florida. By preference, no desire on my part to again be subject to the debilitating pressures of practice, and the (thankful) absence of reciprocity, I am not admitted in Florida.

The change was made after a great deal of thought and pro-con analysis by my wife and I. Happily, I can report that it has benefitted us greatly and allowed us enrichment in our lives that I seriously doubt would have ever been achieved had I remained in the practice of law. All of this has led us to be aware more and more of the seemingly greater than ordinary prospects for self-destruction by attorneys. In two distinct but in themselves representative (static rural Western Pennsylvania; rapidly growing "go-go" Southwest Florida) we have seen once good, thoughtful, and humane people consumed by their perceptions as "attorneys." In too many instances these situations have tragically detrimental impact on the individual and his/her family and a well-deserved lowering of the profession in the public eye. In those other situations where the individual has compromised his former qualities and remained functioning within the system, the profession suffers even more seriously from within.

It occurs to me that somehow the law can pervert those otherwise fine personality traits that lead intelligent and responsible people to it: self-assurance, self-respect, and enthusiasm. Conceivably, this is a "fact of life" and part of the "law is a jealous mistress" mistique, but I doubt it. I see fewer maladjusted, ego-centered, inhumane, and troubled people in other professions.

Thankful to now be "on the outside looking in" but still concerned for colleagues and the profession, I believe our legal educational system should make efforts to acquaint those interested in a legal education with the unique, intense emotional and moral demands of practice in its various forms and to develop programs for those already in practice to help themselves before self-destruction is imminent. There are those whose emotional background and philosophy ill-suit them for the practice of law, but far too many of them seem drawn to it by just those same qualities which will cause them anguish later. It would seem worth the effort to attempt to locate these individuals at an early point in their legal education and alert them to potential future problems. Those already in practice need guidance in self-examination to question what being "an attorney" means to them, what it should mean, what it can do to their lives, and whether it is best for themselves and their families that they continue.
The practice of law is totally time consuming. The work is never done. It totally dominates a lawyer's life. Doctors and dentists, especially dentists, appear to be better able to "turn" the work off after hours.

Law school was a stultifying experience devoid of intellectual interest, honesty and humanity. It did nothing to prepare me for practice, except to introduce me to the library and to sophistry in its ugliest forms. A law school should seek to promote justice in society, not prosperity for a priesthood. Justice was a word very little heard at U.M., and not understood at all. Of course, this also is true among practitioners.

Glad I went to U of M Law School
High Quality experience
Legal Skills necessary to be a successful businessman in highly regulated & taxed economy.
Ability to do my own business' legal work enabled me to start out in business with little capital. Otherwise the legal bills ("entrance fee") is prohibitively high.
Need legal skills including litigation, negotiation skills to conduct business.
My small company has myself and one lawyer on staff and still buys legal services from over 14 different law firms.

If someone today would repay me the cost of my legal education on the condition that I never practice again, I'd take the money and run.

The tide of new lawyers is a great disservice to the public:
1. Too many young solo practitioners are poorly trained and hungry resulting in much unfounded litigation and sloppy practice.
2. Economic pressures tend to militate in favor of law as business and not as profession. Tendency is too often to put business interest or lawyer ahead of interest of client.

Viva la Queens College (NYC) School of Law!

I did not like law school but I am now convinced that that was largely my fault, not the school's. I believe that law school was deficient in the art and ethics of advocacy -- both written and oral. It seems to me generally that American lawyers are trained to be problem creators, not problem solvers. So many lawyers seem to focus on advancing their own cause (and sometimes the causes of their clients) by emphasizing the insignificant and belittling the relevant. Those are the lawyers who earn our profession the contempt and mockery in which it is held. This is a result at least partly in the way law schools teach the law. However, greed and a win-at-all-costs attitude of human beings outweighs the educational system in its contribution.

I guess I don't think of myself as a lawyer (i.e. litigious nit-picker) so much as a reconciler. It is in that sense that I am satisfied with my job, but not with my profession.

I enjoyed my time at the University of Michigan and have fond memories of my fellow students, the faculty and the intellectual climate. I received a first-class legal education.
1. The Law School provided an excellent legal and general education.
2. The prestige of Michigan Law School has often and pleasantly rubbed off on me; both with lawyers and non-lawyers.

Lawyering is more demanding than I had hoped.
Lawyering is more rewarding than I had expected.
But those statements are true of every other aspect of adult life I have experienced.
One other point: the experience of competency is marvelously fulfilling. Every person should have a chance to achieve it.

1. If some of the answers seem "strange" it is because I only worked for 5 years after law school as an attorney. Since that time I have been involved first in professional sports and then in club management.
2. Although I was never dedicated to either the study or practice of the law, and, in fact, only worked 5 years as a lawyer, I do not, for a minute, regret having gone to law school. My overall experience at Michigan, both in regard to my legal training and the general campus and Law School environment, was very positive and I feel far richer for it (mentally and socially, if not necessarily monetarily).

What I like most about being a lawyer: freedom
What I liked least about practicing law: the lack of a sense of creating anything of lasting value
What I liked most about U of M Law School: uncompromising intellectual rigor
What I liked least: the coldness of the place

At the time I was at Michigan the curriculum was weighted too heavily to the corporate and business law practice.
Strong efforts should be made to train the caliber of lawyer at Michigan to also work for the individual client and other societal interest.

Efforts should be made to supplement your academic faculty with lawyers who have had numbers of years in private practice. People with 15-20 years experience who can give students a good sense of what goes on in a lawyer office environment on a day-to-day basis.

I look back on my years at Michigan with great fondness and believe I acquired a fine education. My only real regret is that I find the law to be such a demanding mistress, I have failed to pursue the arts and other worthwhile leisure matters as profitably as I might have.

More stringent requirements to enter law school should be implemented. The quality of the bar has deteriorated markedly in the past 5-10 years.
More practice courses should be offered--and not by adjunct professors but by experienced full professors, teaching full-time. The public deserves better than young lawyers learning at the expense of the client. Since clerkships are no longer required by the states, lawyers must learn to practice law at their expense--in law school, not at the public's expense.
U of M provides a solid academic base upon which to practice law, particularly in identifying and formulating legal issues (litigation). Practical, court-oriented courses are needed, however.

Main concern -- the growing dissatisfaction of the public with delay in litigation, "outrageous verdicts," uneven sentencing in criminal law. I'm in a small firm, conservative town, and practice mostly plaintiffs' P/I litigation. There are too many disincentives in the system to settle cases early and fairly. Example -- insurance defense (large firms) attorneys paid on an hourly basis. Other side of the coin -- the plaintiff's lawyer who seeks publicity, the Detroit area amount of verdict, etc. We need to develop a fee system which awards prompt resolution of disputes for both defense and plaintiff counsel.

I favor more course offerings in clinical areas (including interviewing, interrogation, strategy, etc.) and the art of negotiation.

My strongest negative toward the practice is how, at my current standing in a large firm, I have inadequate time for the purely intellectual, the purely reflective and the purely policy-issue matters.

Being a partner in a major law firm and raising children lovingly and responsibly is one hell of a challenge.

The law school could do a better job of anticipating trends and implementing courses in those areas, e.g. administrative law in our generation and computer and intellectual law today.

I did not enjoy law school much. Part of this was due to economics which left little $ for social activities.

The greater part was a feeling I still hold that the system was far too heavily oriented toward "high policy" issues as seen by learned commentators, noted judges and law professors. Many of the latter (not all) seemed to have great difficulty separating identification and analysis of issues from their personal views of the correct answer to the problem involved.

There was little if any attention given to how disputes are resolved in the real world; the relative cost effectiveness of informal resolution v/s making a "federal case" of every controversy; the economic realities of law practice and so on.

The teaching staff viewed (views?) the lawyer as a social engineer rather than a social mechanic who lubricates systems mostly and designs them rarely.

Although covered vaguely, trial specialization inquiry herein is limited. I favor certification of trial advocates by state bar association. Some of our younger lawyers and present clerks have mock trials much as our mock arguments in Moot Court. I hope U-M is doing same.

My legal experience was very limited. It consisted of 1½ years of corporate practice as a patent attorney. This occurred approx. 14 years ago. Since that time, I have engaged in a very satisfying career in the investment field (securities), including a 6 year period as a branch office manager for a large brokerage firm.
Ten years ago my comments for the five-year survey of our class argued brashly that Michigan Law School did such a poor job of preparing me for law practice, morally and practically, that I became a law teacher. I have been a teacher at the same school since that last survey, trying to make a public interest, clinical law school work. My view of my law school training must be modified to some extent in light of this experience.

I appreciate what Michigan offers in two ways. First, my appreciation of the analytical skills taught at Michigan Law School has increased. I acquired relatively high standards to measure legal argument by and my own abilities were improved. My own school has been unable to produce graduates which, on the average, can manipulate legal authority as effectively as the average Michigan graduate. This skill is as critical for public interest lawyers as for the least publically interested attorney. I am aware that Michigan achieves its results in large part by selecting students who already have proven ability in the skills Michigan teaches while we select students for value-oriented commitment. I find the tension created by this dilemma increasingly severe. Second, Michigan has made a significant indirect contribution to public interest law by teaching what it teaches well regardless of a particular student's career goals. Since quality legal education counts in all settings the few graduates who become public interest lawyers constitute a valuable contribution.

However, my earlier judgment still stands that Michigan, not alone among law schools, is completely indifferent to the legal needs of the public. As long as fulfillment of social responsibility is measured in terms of the number of graduates who are accepted by elite employers, judges and large law firms it will continue to be morally bankrupt. Law schools like Michigan do not produce lawyers for the public, but for the well-paying public. Law schools like Michigan do not care about what graduates do, but about where they are (as this survey makes clear once again). I am not misled by the questions concerning lawyering skills. These questions only ask whether graduates were well-prepared for the kind of practice Michigan orients its students to. Michigan does not send its students into community law practice or other practices which seek out members of a community who most need lawyers. Hence, the answers will only confirm decisions about the purpose of legal education which are already embedded in the curriculum. On the other hand, I do not see questions concerning how many pro bono cases my classmates have handled this year, or whether my classmates felt they were making a contribution to the community in which they live (and whether they graduated with the skills to do this or an understanding of what needed to be done). I hope that Michigan Law School will be different in ten years, that it will have developed a better sense of its professional responsibilities. Based on the progress I have seen since I last wrote the hope I have is small.
Law school must emphasize trial practice and courses explaining what being in, or running, a law office is really like. Also should emphasize extreme importance of learning how to deal with courts and clerks administrative procedures far more than was ever touched upon when I was in law school.

I found that while my Law School education was very sound from a textbook standpoint and while it certainly taught me to think, it was lacking in practical aspects such as drafting of pleadings and in trial practice—examination of witnesses, arguments. The procedure course I had, upon reflection, was too broad. The history of a rule is not very important when you are dealing with the everyday effort to use the rules in your practice. The tying in of the rules to practical experience in pleadings should be attempted. Some attempt to get students into attorney offices during Law School would be very helpful. It would give students a sense of where they were headed.

All in all an emphasis on the practical aspects of practicing law should be taught.

I am president of a 53 person firm and spend a great deal (1/3) of my time on administration. The thing that upsets me most today with young lawyers is they think the world owes them a living. U of M graduates are no different—better or worse—than other schools' graduates. They want money—not to give anything back to the community or work on social issues. The "work ethic" just doesn't seem to be there anymore. In my brief 15 years I have truly seen what I read somewhere, namely: "The law used to be a profession—now its just a business."

I got out of law school what I put in. Unfortunately I didn't put much in.

It is a mistake for a law school to try to teach the mechanics of practice. Law clinics are a good vehicle to put into practice the substantive law that has been learned—but the substance must be learned first.

Before a person can practice law they must know the law. The idea that minorities need the help of an enlightened ruling class to get ahead is silly. Consideration of race, gender, etc. in law school admissions or hiring implies that those of minority races "need" help—this is racist and simply wrong. The women and minority lawyers, citizens, clients don't need this elitism.

I was very much intimidated by the law school atmosphere. That combined with the large size and a lack of maturity made my experience a less than totally enjoyable time. I didn't appreciate the school's true national reputation until I moved to Colorado. I also didn't appreciate how much the process had really soaked in, until I got serious about passing the bar and competed against other lawyers. Somehow the competition for grades never motivated me in law school as much as the competition of winning and losing in the courtroom.
I have generally enjoyed the practice of law. Having spent almost all of my career (until just recently) in public service, I've also felt that the legal background was particularly useful in approaching social issues and managing multidisciplinary professionals. Nonetheless, I honestly attribute little of this to my actual law school training. Other than honing skills such as spotting issues and instilling one approach to problem solving, namely, the ability to see and weigh more than one potential solution, I continue to believe that the curriculum provided little useful preparation for life in the real world. The Law School should instead tilt more of its courses toward preparation for actual practice, in the form of a clinic program, much as medical students are trained in hospitals for actual patient care. Academia of course has its place in providing a perspective, but in my experience as a senior government executive and policy maker, professors I have worked with have generally proven to be rigid idealists with little grasp of the practical implications of their ideas. In addition, more must be done to graduate young attorneys with better writing skills and commitment to learning the skills of this profession. One step toward this might be placing more value on education, rather than the Socratic dialogue between the one who has already had the course (i.e., the professor) and one who has not (i.e., the student). The latter is, of course, in no position to really learn until he or she has mastered the basics.

It is significant that the list ..... (of skills and recommended improvement of training law students) omits, as does law school, the practical introduction to the courts: how to file a case/ where the courthouse is/ who are district vs. circuit vs. federal judges/ etc.

..... Never underestimate the value of intellectually stimulating (and perhaps not very practical courses. I hope you still require that students take at least one or two such impractical courses.

I enjoyed law school very much. The faculty was intelligent and interesting. Most courses were very worthwhile. Many of my classmates were serious, hardworking people.

Although my view surely is influenced by my own 10 years of teaching, and 7 of teaching American Legal History particularly, I do believe that Jurisprudence, American Legal History, and other "perspective" courses are the most valuable ones taught in law school. In my view, you should try to resist the surging demand for immediate "relevance" and for skills training in the curriculum, with which much of this questionnaire is concerned. I realize however, that mine is decidedly a minority opinion. But as Professor Kamisar used to say, nearly every day, "Which way does that cut?"

By and large I did not feel that Law School was a very meaningful experience. Intellectually, it was dull. The courses were pedestrian and only modestly related to real life; however, the method of thinking we learned was of great importance.
I am the resident partner in London of a New York law firm. My practice is corporate, tax and international trade. I think that anyone who practices in a small branch office (wherever located) must be a generalist. This is certainly true of a person who practices in a foreign jurisdiction.

Basically, I am against mandatory courses. The problem is not with the law schools, the problem is with the organization of the practice of law in the United States. Barristers (court lawyers) and solicitors (office lawyers) are different people that use different professional skills. As you know, most countries have split bars whereas the United States has a merged bar. I think an early decision as to whether a person is going to be a litigator or office lawyer is essential. I would consider it to be gross negligence on my part to appear in court (even though I am professionally permitted to do so).

Try to figure out a way to get only intelligent and competent people to serve as judges. Most judges are political hacks who cause more damage to the image of the legal profession than unethical attorneys. Try to develop some humanism in new lawyers. The "games" involving litigation (and condoned by judges) tend to ignore the main goal of resolving inter-personal problems and conflicts.

I continue to benefit from the unequalled quality of the thought and legal theory taught at Michigan. Law School cannot prepare a student for all he/she will encounter, but as long as the student's theoretical legal abilities are strong, the student can learn the mechanics of the practice. While increasing "mechanical skill" courses like legal research, drafting, etc., therefore, please do not ever sacrifice the ability you impart on students to truly understand the theory and operation of the law.

It has been very difficult to leave the confrontational and combative training I receive at Michigan at "the office" and not bring it home, subjecting my family to it.

I believe there is a serious surplus of law schools in the U.S. today. Many of them turn out poorly trained lawyers who create a lot of useless litigation. As a business executive now I am greatly concerned about the use of lawyers and courts to solve problems that should be solved by commercial means. I think many lawyers in private practice who practice "corporate" or some other form of business law or are involved in business litigation, have a very poor understanding of good business practices and end up encouraging litigation and controversy.

I left private practice to become a businessman because I felt I had lost the ability to do anything creative and as a good corporate lawyer had become narrow and negative.

On the other hand, I feel that my legal education and ten years in private corporate practice have given me a unique ability to be a productive member of top management of a very large corporation.

No easy answers!
I see that Michigan's strength is in exposing the student to excellence in legal thinking and in analyzing legal problems. I think that the curriculum should have a few more "trial" type courses than were available in 1968. I think that Michigan shared the focus of the big city Wall Street type firm in the focus of the curriculum. On the other hand I feel broad exposure substantively should be the rule in law school. As a criminal prosecutor (considered by many a narrow specialty) I have had to understand Wills and Trusts (attorney embezzling from an estate), UCC (insufficient funds checks), Corporations and Securities (fraud cases) etc. We should continue to force the student into a broad exposure of "basic" substantive law. I say "force" because some students think they know what they need in law school. I prepared for a Wall Street type practice, but ended up not liking it and became a deputy district attorney, which I do like. Who can tell.

Thanks for the opportunity to reflect on law school days and my years since then.

I'm not sure about specific impact certain courses had to my subsequent practice but I can't discount the possibility of subtle efforts, even for those regarding subjects I now rarely encounter -- corporations, taxation, etc. An equally significant component overlooked by the survey is the relationship with and effect of faculty upon students.

....I believe that course selection and emphasis at the Law School were very good. Some new approaches may be in order, such as elective training in law office administration and economics, but not at the expense of fundamentals.

The overall excellence of my law school training has become readily apparent in the course of my practice.

My career has suffered substantially from emotional immaturity which my excellent coping skills disguised until mid-life (40!), which in turn led to a divorce, rupture of a growing partnership, and a financial set back. I dealt with the problems eventually, but I know my case is similar to many lawyers.

Lawyers need good emotional maturity to keep their own problems out of the way of solving clients' problems. The law school should stress the need for emotional health, and set up a process for students to explore and develop their own emotional mental health and/or maturity before they are set loose on the world.

Greed in the profession continues to permeate the litigation process in which I practice. I doubt this is peculiar to lawyers. Yet, I am disappointed that lawyers' ability, more and more, is judged by their income.

Fresh lawyers out of law school expect ever increasing income for less effort.

"Running time" on well-healed clients is rampant. This, along with absurdly high jury verdicts, will kill or severely injure the golden goose w/in 10 years.

1. Law school was good but life has been more interesting.
2. Most lawyers are too pompous, etc.
Our legal system is anachronistic (tort, family), complex and unfair (tax, administrative), and not understood or respected by the average citizen. Lawyers profit from this situation, while the public bears the expense (automobile insurance rates, increased products costs). The public holds lawyers in poor esteem because lawyers receive a disproportionate share of economic wealth vs. their contributions to economic prosperity.

Our criminal law system has broken down. Complex procedures and rules, expense, delays, etc., plea bargaining, make criminal justice unfair, arbitrary and again the public loses respect and confidence in the system. (I don't know if this can be corrected while preserving other values that protect the criminal, but I think the present situation is out of balance.

Lawyers are responsible for all of the above. Lawyers are leaders; they comprise most of our legislators; they comprise special interest groups that effectively lobby organized and progressive change in the system. (No-fault insurance).

Bar Associations "standards of ethics" aren't ethical at all; they don't serve the public, but rather the lawyer.


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I believe my Michigan Law School training was sound. I am grateful for it.

I believe there is a tendency to overemphasize the importance of clinical experience as being an important responsibility of law school training.

My view is that such experience comes quickly after the commencement of practice, and is readily acquired out of the law school setting. More academic and substantive training is less easily acquired out of law school. Thus, I would recommend against compromising substantive learning by time spent on clinical programs.

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I found law school to be challenging but not uplifting or inspiring. This contributed to a sense of boredom and malaise about it by my last year. However, helping people resolve actual legal problems facing them in their lives has been rewarding in terms of personal satisfaction that I was applying a personal skill to a purpose whose immediacy was real rather than theoretical. I believe law school courses would better prepare students for the practice of law by incorporating methods related to problem solving experienced in the practice of law in their particular areas.

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Although I feel my legal education lacked practical experience and made certain assumptions as to the type of practice graduates would have that certainly did not apply to me, I very strongly feel that the intellectual challenge was most helpful. I am glad I attended the U of M Law School and certainly have found the practice of law a rewarding career.

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This questionnaire is absolutely absurd. You wouldn't want my generalized impressions about that experience and I don't have the time, interest or memory to fill out your microscopic examination of my classroom progression.

Best wishes.
One reason I deferred responding to this questionnaire earlier is that it does not seem to have been written by someone who has actually practiced law—a fault which, in retrospect, characterizes the law school experience itself. Perhaps the questions fit your purposes, but they don't seem to square, in many respects, with the way most lawyers in real life practice their profession.

It follows from (1) that the Law School should spend more time developing practical skills—and I don't mean practical knowledge. Beginning lawyers, myself certainly included, do not have the ability to write an adequate business letter. Most do not have any idea of how to negotiate a real-life dispute. I value greatly the logical skills I learned in Ann Arbor, but I regret most that there was not much more emphasis on writing real letters (on ordinary problems, not constitutional law issues) and negotiating real disputes such as a lawyer meets every day.

I am to the left of Yale Kamisar on freedom of expression and speech (having once been a journalist) and believe there should be no control of pornography, except to minors; I favor a lot of social programs but think they have been mismanaged and even used by so-called "liberals" as a way of keeping the poor down instead of giving them a way up; I am against the ERA because I think it's meaningless and has become one of the worst single issues around and a tool of political blackmail; I am a registered Republican who voted for Reagan and will again as the lesser of two evils; I liked Richard Nixon; I favor SALT but don't misunderstand the fact that Eastern bloc countries have a background different from our Judeo-Christian ethic—all of which is to say that I suspect I am all over the place on issues as I suspect many of my classmates from 1968 are also. About the Law School—I don't like the clinical approach to law. We need lawyers who know how to think, resolve problems and do research—they will mature into good lawyers. If they know court forms in Ann Arbor and play at being lawyers for 3 years they will be good prospects for Hyatt Legal Services. We need good thinkers in the profession. Exposure to other disciplines in law school is good and should be encouraged, but the emphasis should be on developing good legal thinking, not changing the world or society or how much pro bono a Wall Street firm can afford—after graduation, a lawyer can develop and mature. After about 5 years practice a lawyer should then be permitted to do pro bono work (I do a fair amount myself) but only from an established base of understanding how the law really works. And there should be more accounting emphasized to understand commercial activities of the rich and poor alike—I wish Prof. Polasky had offered more courses in this area.

After 15 years not much remains from law school. Although I did meet my wife—still married, who was an undergraduate. What remains from Education is alternately the great teaching, even if you don't remember what was learned you remember that you were in the presence of a good mind that forced one to think.

Law School is professional school and it should strive to turn out highly competent practitioners. This is not bar passing skills, nor is it law school exam passing skills. It is the
overall ability to be a competent, ethical problem solver, but a problem solver who retains some of the "liberal arts" broad view of the world so that he's not a mere technician.

Perhaps law school should offer more written--take home--essay style exams to stress the need for clarity of expression and the fact that real lawyers don't solve problems in a closed book exam room (the first year exams may require a more traditional approach).

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I am not fond of the ERA because of the use to which many of the state ERA's have been put. The elimination for example of the option to send a child to an all boys or all girls public school has virtually been relegated in those states to religious schools. Diversity based upon gender difference is not all bad. The Constitution adequately permits interpretation equivalent to most of the ERA supporter desires and in my opinion is the preferable way to go.

Unfortunately I have watched so many abuses within the Legal Services construed as to not be very supportive. It has and can be used to harass legitimate small businessmen who cannot afford the misadventures of a protracted law suit. In addition some of the attorneys working in these programs project a "pro bono" arrogance not engendered to facilitate a professional relationship with opposing counsel.

To elucidate slightly on background, I spent 5 years as a member of the military as an attorney; 5 years as an associate at one of the nation's largest law firms (litigation, business finance, international and real estate); 4 years as a senior attorney and counsel to a subsidiary of a Fortune 10 Company and am presently Manager of Major Projects Marketing, having been recruited by a client to switch from the legal to the business side of the house.

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Law School could do a better job of training lawyers in more effective ways of resolving disputes; too much emphasis is on confrontation.

The U. of M. Law School reputation has opened doors for me all over the world; it provides for instant credibility.