Class of 1972 Fifteen Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_reports
Part of the Legal Education Commons, and the Legal Profession Commons

Recommended Citation

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.
I enjoyed law school immensely. I worked extremely hard and did well academically. Michigan in 1969 was still a performance-oriented graded environment. Since then I suspect the School has succumbed to the pressure of students to avoid grading and evaluation. In 1969 the School gave people with talent a chance to excel.

The pressure on the School to provide "skills" courses is unfortunate. I fear the School provides low-quality experiences and field trips at the cost of high quality analytical training.

The biggest benefit of law school to me has been the ability to think logically and to write clearly. I really learned these skills in law school and they have helped.

I am currently an Adjunct Professor of Law at the Indiana University School of Law (Bloomington) where I teach the seminar on Estate Planning (since 1977). My suggestion for "real world" teaching methods which could profitably be applied at U-M are touched upon briefly in my response to question B-11 (substantive areas or areas of skills training recommended that Law School add more courses).

The notion current in law school (and perhaps implicit in your questionnaire) that life is a choice between social-consciousness and traditional, business-class law practice is simply wrong.

I happen also to devote time and energy to a charitable organization -- but that's social work, not law.

For 13 years I was a litigator in a large law firm. In the early years, when the learning curve was steep I found it interesting and challenging. As I grew older and had become what I set out to be, I became totally disenchanted with the entire dispute resolution process in this country. It is grossly inefficient, it is unconsciously expensive, and lately it seems to be rewarding the unethical. Moreover, the profession seems to be breeding the type of attitudes and personalities that drove me from the business. The assholes seemed to be taking over -- so I got out and am now having a satisfying career in business.

I am deeply appreciative of the discipline I learned at Michigan Law School and the relationships I began (and today, still nurture and cherish).

It was stimulating and challenging, although certain professors
I found my judicial clerkship (State Supreme Court) to be 110% exciting and mind-expanding. Regretfully, the practice of law fell far, far short of that mark -- and hence I left the practice.

I greatly enjoyed my time at U of M. I either learned or realized I had analytical skills, which proved useful in practice.

The substantive material covered in law school is, with certain exceptions, of little use -- if for no other reason than you tend to forget it.

It's too bad you can't return to law school later in life, when you would and could really appreciate and enjoy some of the courses.

Finding myself as a lawyer took several years. I attribute most of this to: my pre-law school background (living at home while attending college, and therefore spending time at law school separating from family and finding my own identity instead of concentrating on studies and targeting career goals); my age at the time I started law school (age 20); the change in life style from New York to Michigan; and the expectations or lack of concrete career expectations because of my sex (female). However, I attribute some of this to Michigan Law School. If Michigan (and other law schools) has not addressed the special problem of lack of identification with career goals at the time of entry into law school, then I think the school should. Those who have this problem tend to be female, or from a minority group, or from a low income background .... although by no means is this necessarily the case.

Michigan might have helped, especially if someone, perhaps an Assistant Dean, had called me in and asked about my goals. Learning of my vague comprehension of where I was heading, counseling might have been prescribed. Contact with established lawyers might have helped. That could have been arranged. Today, of course, this is so much easier. For instance, I now serve as a mentor for many women law students and young lawyers.

As I said earlier, you may already be working on this. But there is always a lost soul or two in the first year class. I urge you to think about how to reach out to them and save them years of lack of focus.

By the way, to end this on a happy note -- I am currently, and have been for several years, a very happy lawyer. Notwithstanding a lack of good involvement in my law school years, Michigan Law School greatly contributed to this happy result. I can still hear lessons, not fully understood then, which play a part in my analysis of cases. I am grateful I got
my Michigan education.

You may be interested to note that one of the reasons I was able to become highly productive and happy as a lawyer was that I did find a female mentor ... one of the early female graduates of Harvard Law School.

1. I don't believe law school prepared me for the practice of law.
2. There was too much emphasis in law school on the big money in the big firm in the big city, and virtually none about the quality of life in smaller communities or opportunities with corporations.
3. Law professors were virtually useless as guidance counselors.
4. The one item you left out of question #16 is how much you enjoy your career as a lawyer -- and another is knowing what you know now, would you choose law as a career -- my answer is no.

I made a poor choice in attending Michigan Law School. It focused entirely too much on training students to be law firm based commercial attorneys. The courses in administrative law and regulatory law were weak. There was nothing on the legislative process and the clinical law program was weak. I loved my term at the Center for Law and Social Policy.

One experience sums it all up. I wanted to organize a class in juvenile law. Despite the presence of Dean Allen, there was no course on the subject at MLS. So, I found a nationally known private sector juvenile lawyer and a lawyer of the U of M School of Social Work. The idea was to have a class of one-half law students and one-half Social Work School students to take classes and take cases at the local juvenile court (as teams). All I needed was a professor at the Law School to sponsor the course. I went to 7 professors before I found one to do it. All the rest were too busy writing text books to teach. That is typical of what I found at MLS -- prestige and poor teaching. The general arrogance of the professors was impressive but it didn't make one learn how to be a lawyer for real clients.

As a result, I haven't yet given any money to Michigan. I am an extremely active alum of my undergraduate school -- Stanford.

To me, the true value of my education at the University of Michigan Law School must be measured as a whole, and not by a particular substantive course or the impressions made by a particular professor. Law school honed my analytical skills, and imbued me with the confidence to tackle any legal issue. The areas in which I specialize (employee benefits and ERISA, taxation and business planning) are in a constant state of flux, and present new challenges each day. The outstanding faculty and the quality and competitiveness of the student body left me well-prepared to enter the legal profession.

I've gone back to school to earn a Ph.D. in English and have a
great assistantship appointment.

I like the people in the English Department (MSU) and get along with them much better than I ever did with members of the bench and bar. In retrospect I like practicing law even less than I did when I was doing it. I have had a very painful marital separation.

--------

The Michigan Law School does a wonderful job of training students to think like lawyers, but it does not even attempt to train students in the numerous other skills required to practice law, such as writing, speaking, dealing with clients, etc. In my view, much of the public dissatisfaction with lawyers results from the lawyers' lack of training in how to be lawyers.

--------

My answer to D1 (activities) (nothing checked) makes it sound like I am a Philistine. My hobbies are all outside of the legal profession. I run (30 miles per week), raise orchids, and write programs for personal computers. I enjoy reading Scientific American and science books. Generally speaking, I don't want to think about law when I'm away from work.

The toughest aspect of legal work is getting business. Perhaps the Law School could have prepared its students better on this subject.

--------

In law school I intended to practice international law, and took several courses and seminars in this area. I was fortunate to find a position in Europe in a small American law firm -- probably due to the U of M Law degree -- where I worked for 5 years in the international business and tax area.

I then decided to return to the U.S. Since my experience was too narrow for most stateside positions in the non-international area, I took a year out to study tax law in the L.L.M. program at New York University. This program has perhaps given me more to allow me to analyze client problems than my 3 years at U of M.

At U of M Law School back in 1970-1972, there was too much emphasis on "issue-spotting" rather than analysis or problem solving. Students have to learn not only what the issues are, but how to find solutions ... and how to present all of this to clients in a cogent fashion. "Business planning" courses, which integrate corporate, tax, securities and other areas of the law which are relevant to many everyday situations, would be very helpful in bridging the gap between law school and reality.

--------

Some isolated and unrelated thoughts:
1. Practicing law has a great capacity to cause one to feel ebullient or depressed, highly competent or barely adequate, well composed or exceedingly angry - all because you prevail or don't with respect to all or some aspect of a lawsuit.
2. The sheer demands on one's time and energy, just to feel prepared to "go to court," has almost no comparison to any other
aspect of life when evaluated over a period of years.
3. Resolving social problems through the use of legal processes
and in adversary forums, while not totally effective, is
necessary to preclude the wholesale denial of rights,
opportunities and equity to the disadvantaged and poor in our
country.

Law school was one of the most alienating experiences imaginable.
I cannot recall any effort by administrators or teachers to
demonstrate concern for individual students.

Very few classes bore any relation to the real world (David
Chambers' classes were an exception).

As a law student, I felt that most of my law professors were
untrained in the techniques of teaching, and to compound matters,
were often highly arrogant. This was something I simply
tolerated as a student. Now, from the perspective of age and
life experience, I find that set of circumstances to be
completely intolerable. I believe that law professors must bring
more basic humanity and teaching ability into their classrooms.

Law School:
A. Two "classes" of students: 1) Law Review; 2) all others
B. Intimidation technique used by professors ineffective and
counterproductive
C. Real value of law school was learning "how to think" and
analyze problems.

After Law School:
Prestige of J.D. from U of M Law School very important to career
opportunities.

Personal:
Happily married for 15 years to woman I met at U of M who
received Masters degree in 1972.

If you have any contact with Roy Proffit, please thank him for
encouraging me to return to law school after completing my
military service.

In short, I came to agree that "In a hundred pounds of law,
there's not an ounce of love." I've left the law to those who
enjoy rote routine and relish details.

My new career, in marketing for American Express, gives me all
that law did not: intellectual challenge, constantly changing
problems/scenarios, and peers who are very, very bright.

I don't regret having gone to law school -- it's a very
worthwhile background -- but knowing what I know now, I would not
do it again.
Thanks for listening!

I was about a C+ average student in law school, because I didn't study or go to class prepared enough. I thought if I worked too hard or was a "grind," I would be "railroaded" into a huge corporate law firm and become a gray, colorless drone, probably a Republican. I was anxious to escape what I perceived as a very protected, suburban existence, mostly concerned about material things and money.

I wanted to be a criminal defense lawyer, challenge the "system" and protect people's constitutional rights. Though not extremely leftist, I went to U of M undergrad as well, had participated in student demonstrations, went to Washington for the 1972 or 1973 mobilization march and "participated" in the law student "Black Power" strike by not going to class. Prof. Kamisar was my favorite professor of course, but I listed contracts first on question 10, because of Professor Robert Harris' (then mayor of Ann Arbor) realistic, socioeconomic, political approach to what was really behind the judges' decisions we read about, and not merely what they said about the cases. I've never forgotten him, and use his insights, or at least methods, daily in my work.

I came to Denver in December, 1972, could not get a job with the public defender system in Colorado, which was the principal reason I moved here, and so got a job with a district attorney's office in a suburban county north of Denver, because the D.A. was a Michigan Law School grad. Though Professor Kamisar, if he knew, would have been horrified, I tried to keep alive the spirit of protecting people's rights in the D.A.'s office, though the natural tendency was to identify with your "clients," who were the police.

Being a prosecutor got me trained in litigation and its discipline. I have since been in private practice with three different firms, and for the last 6 1/2 years, primarily a defense lawyer for a self-insured county government. I was recently a finalist for a state district court judgeship, actually 4 of them, three at one time, one at another. One of the three people appointed the last time was a Michigan Law graduate, about the class of 1964, named Jack F. Smith.

Looking back on law school, I'm sorry I didn't bite the bullet and work harder. I think my life would have been easier. Nevertheless, I am constantly struck with how much better trained and prepared I am than other lawyers I practice with, or against. Whatever the Law School is doing, or was in 1969-72, it was doing a lot right, so keep it up. Maybe some more trial practice classes would help. I'd like to teach one.

If I have a fantasy, it's to come back to Ann Arbor and teach, or at least talk to students, at the Law School. I'm turning 40 next week, and I wish I could afford to return for the 15th class reunion. In conclusion, I didn't appreciate the Law School
enough when I was there, but it has shaped my attitudes and my
life ever since.

---
Law school trained me well generally, but not for any particular
job.

Law school was a grind. But I don't know of any way to avoid
that. I wish I knew then what I know now -- how interrelated
different areas of the law are, and how you wind up facing
questions you never thought you would see again after law school.

---

The use of what law professors call the "Socratic Method" is
neither pedagogically useful nor intellectually stimulating. (In
fact, I recommend that you distribute copies of the Meno to each
professor in the Law School so each of them may see what an
abominable mockery they have made of the Socratic Method.) The
Law School method is a transparent excuse for lack of
preparation.

As a corporate lawyer, I continue to be astonished at the lack of
preparation law school provides. Business Transactions was
offered only sporadically, and by going through in two years, I
missed it. Not only was contract drafting not offered, I never
saw a contract while I was in school. The only time acquisitions
were discussed was in Corporate Taxation. I can't believe that
no other U. of M. graduates become corporate/commercial lawyers.

---

U of M does not seem to produce many lawyers interested in public
service. It seems to remain a training ground for corporate
attorneys.

The class opportunities are there; it's the students that attend
that produce this result.

---

I work specializing in research, legal and non-legal, for
litigated and regulatory matters. I have groped my way to the
techniques of information analysis and acquisition, and believe
that I would have benefitted from an upper-year, elective course
on research. (Looking back, though, I doubt that I would have
elected it at the time!)

---

Don't forget that one-third of the Class of 1970 was drafted into
the Vietnam War during 1968 (including me) and many of those
returned to law school in 1970 as second-year members of the
Class of 1972 (including me). Spending two years in the war
between the first and second years of law school had a profound
effect on many of us (including me) and that effect will no doubt
be reflected in your survey results.

---

1. Based on several years of recruiting at various schools,
Michigan Law School has perhaps the best combination of students
with intelligence and a balanced view of themselves. It may just
be Midwestern values but keep doing whatever it is you do to
select a class of good people.
2. The business world (including law firms) is going through a dramatic restructuring to become more competitive and efficient. Government and Academia are probably the areas which are least skilled at how to restructure. The key is to produce the product which is desired in a more efficient manner, not just cut out products to balance a budget. It is difficult enough for attorneys to perform this task. I expect it is even tougher for professors to manage themselves in such a manner. Nevertheless, the Law School should address the issue. Just because the product is good and the goal is worthwhile does not support continually increasing taxes or contributions. Dean Sandalow at one meeting could not explain very well why the Law School's budget was increasing much faster than inflation. I hope Dean Bollinger can keep that management concept of efficiency while also preserving Michigan's excellence. It is a challenge for every aspect of the United States society to address if we are to utilize our resources properly and remain a great nation. Creativity and energy bring new answers to problems. We must all strive for such performance in an ever-changing world. Change must be viewed as an opportunity, not as a threat.

--------

I have a small firm practice. I was a solo practitioner for a while and brought in a partner just 6 months ago.

Most of my law school classmates were employed by large firms and have remained with these firms. I worked with a firm of only 4 lawyers immediately after law school and became a partner in three years. We expanded to 10 lawyers, but I left the firm and worked for an elected City Attorney for 4 years. I left the City after a 4-year term and worked for a firm of approximately 18 lawyers. After a couple of years there I left and began practicing by myself. I have been practicing as a solo practitioner for two years and enjoy it more than anything I have previously done. I suspect that my income has suffered but I think I have found a more satisfying practice. The only problem is that I have too much work and I needed to bring in a younger partner 6 months ago. I see a great deal of growth potential.

The current question I am wrestling with is how do I maintain a small practice where I am comfortable and still do high quality, sophisticated, work that requires support?

I do believe very strongly that I received a wonderful legal education at Michigan. Please do not abandon the concept of teaching law students to "think like lawyers" and to recognize the issues. Practical/clinical programs are fine, but they are not the Law School's first priority.

--------

As others, I wish I'd known what areas I would practice in -- for example, U/M had a Bankruptcy expert in Prof. Kennedy, but I didn't know I'd be working in that area.

--------

My law school experience was not typical. After completing my
first year (in 1967-68) I became a high school teacher and returned to Ann Arbor each summer, thereby completing my 2nd year over three summers. Then, returned to Ann Arbor for my third year, in 1971-71.

I will always be grateful for the cooperation I received from the Law School in allowing me to structure a "5 year plan" to complete my legal education.

1. U-M Law School provided for me the intellectual stimulation and training I needed for law practice and business career. I hope the School continues to focus on legal scholarship rather than place too much emphasis on "how-to" courses.

2. From my roles as private firm practitioner, in-house counsel and business manager, I have observed the steady deterioration of the legal profession as a keeper of the public trust. Far too many lawyers and their firms view law practice as a way to make money and little else. Would like to see U-M take a leading role in restoring the credibility of the profession.

My view is an elite school for the elite. I never felt a part of it. I am not a law professor or judge or name partner. Michigan was for the kid in the front who raised his hand, got an A, made Law Review. My own experience was not satisfactory and I offer no support.

The excellent substantive legal education I received at Michigan Law School enabled me to benefit more than most from my later experience as a lawyer.

I am a proud alumnus of the Law School, who looks back on an excellent education and a wonderful total experience while I was there.

Knowing what I know now, there are several things I would have done differently -- as perhaps most feel. I think I could have benefitted from some career, or even course selection, counselling. Case club advisors were most helpful, as were the faculty, but I do believe a more structured and specific form of academic and career counselling would be of great help to most freshmen, as well as to some upperclassmen. And, as mercenary as this may sound, I believe exam counselling/preparation would be most helpful, as law school exams are not the same as undergraduate ones. Faculty involvement in both of these areas would be important.

Easily the best experience of my life to that time. Wish I could give more money and time to the School.

I feel very loyal to the Law School.

I may be in the small, small minority, but I enjoyed much of law school a great deal. The "why's" may be useful to others, if I could only categorize them. In part:
1) undergrad degree was in Science, so law school was brand-new (reading "stories" in cases, public policy debates, etc. compared to numbers and equations -- wouldn't that change thrill you also?)

2) intellectual stimulation of much of the course work
3) fine personal relationships with several professors who were educators, role models and friends outside of class
4) wonderful roommates
5) a "breathing spell" during second year, second semester when I went to Washington, DC for a 12-credit clinical internship (this made the 3rd year so much more interesting, in part because I saw much more of the practical consequences of the policies/laws/cases we were studying)
6) it may also seem so good in retrospect because I've forgotten the bad times there.

---------

I have been for fifteen years and am now thoroughly enjoying the practice of law and my family. Thanks.

---------

I cannot describe how distasteful I found the law school experience to be. I disliked the succeed-at-all-costs atmosphere and despised the intellectual snobbery of the faculty. I am grateful only for the few good friends I met in law school, all of whom share my opinions.

---------

The extra sheet is superfluous -- three glorious years -- I expect to be President of the U.S., but then, that's a fitting ego signature for any Michigan grad, me thinks! I applaud your efforts, keep the standards high (thus appreciating my degree), and Go Blue!

---------

Between college and law school I spent 3 years doing non-academic things. I recommend a break. The result was a positive feeling about myself and about being back in school. I am one of the few people I know who truly enjoyed law school.

Some random observations about legal education:
1. Try to develop some courses or seminars which stress the inter-relationships among several disciplines -- i.e. look at the "cases" from a client's perspective. e.g. the client comes to his lawyer with a problem to solve, just a tort or a contract. The solution may require tort and contract analysis; anti-trust and tax considerations; international law and foreign law; choice of law and civil procedure considerations leading to negotiation/alternate dispute resolution/litigation.
2. Stress the basics, the building blocks of legal thought and analysis.
3. Continue to emphasize research and writing.
4. Look for good teachers who have done more than teach.

Students are hungry for opportunities to hear first-hand of the practice of law, in all its diversity.

---------

I am very proud of my law school. I do, however, find that its
reputation is not well known in small communities on the east coast. I wish more publicity about the quality of the Law School and its professors were available to the general public on a national level.

U. of M. is a fine law school. Keep up the good work.

I have found the practice of law, and more specifically litigation, to be enjoyable and satisfying. In addition, I have been happy with my quality of life in a mid-size city. The expectations which I had in law school have been met. I have had only one job since law school, and my present intention is to remain in this position.

I feel that my years at Michigan Law were extremely valuable. I have recommended Michigan to many college students considering a career in law.

I look back at my experience at Michigan with mixed feelings. On the positive side, I recall with pride the excellent facilities, a remarkably talented faculty and the rigorous intellectual discipline which to this day serves me in the practice of law. I also recall fondly the pleasure of living in the stimulating Ann Arbor environment. Unfortunately, however, I remember feeling that I was just another name on a seating chart in a huge class and that the institution failed to respond to me as an individual -- building and enhancing my strengths and helping me to overcome my weaknesses. While I am sympathetic to the view that the Law School may best serve its students by approximating the world outside where one essentially has to make it on one's own, I also believe that it has an obligation to nurture all of its students, and not just the brightest and best of them, in a way that I felt lacking to a significant degree at Michigan.

As might be gleaned from my responses, I am somewhat ambivalent about being a lawyer. There are too many of us and too great a need for lawyers. Most of my career has been devoted to litigating against governmental bureaucracies, primarily the Federal government. As a result of this I am very disenchanted with how our government operates, including the priorities of the current administration. Nevertheless, I am proud to be a U of M alumnus. I derive a great deal of satisfaction from helping individuals, but am disappointed in our governmental agencies, which require these individuals to find competent representation in order to avoid arbitrary and capricious victimization.

The Law School should consider an extensive, required trial practice course so that on graduation an alumnus could try a case. While the case clubs were pretty good for appellate work, it gave no feel for trial work. Every graduate should have the confidence that he could go into court and do a decent job at "Michigan standards" whether the graduate's goal is law, business or anything. This could also add to the special nature of being a Michigan Law graduate and help raise professional standards.
Such a program might help to bring together a lot of the compartmentalized study of law school and make it more of a professional school and not just another graduate school. When I graduated, I didn't believe I really knew what a lawyer was or how law was or should be practiced. It didn't escape my notice that law graduates were sort of cut loose and abandoned whereas the med school grads seem to have a lot more professional identity. As a matter of fact I felt that while in the Law School it was just a collection of courses going toward a degree but nowhere in particular.

I am part of a corporate legal department. It is my continuing perception that the U of M Law School is biased against this type of legal practice. Big firm, private practice is the norm held up to the students -- even though out of a class of 350, no more than a fraction, certainly a minority, can expect to spend an entire career in such a setting.

Secondly I am disturbed about a legal system that allows lawyers who desire to promote their own personal views and theories to manipulate the rest of society. There is virtually no cost to these lawyers and a tremendous cost to society which opposes them. I would like to see the Law School speak out against this abuse of professional responsibility.

As I understand it, the school is vastly improved pedagogically since '69-'72 -- more integration with other disciplines, more political realism, less reification, etc. I wish I could do it over.

1. I would have preferred smaller classes.
2. I spent a semester at the Center for Law & Social Policy in Washington, D.C. I found it less useful than my summer job (after my second year) and less useful than a semester of classes.

Note: The connection between #1 and #2 above is that, due to the semester away, I did not have time to enroll in any of the courses with small enrollments (other than the one required seminar).

I also teach a 3-hour course at State Univ. of New York at Buffalo Law School in Handicapped Law. This is my most satisfying endeavor.

More emphasis was needed on things that affect those not destined for corporate litigation New York-style law practices.

Given my previous training (education & experience), law school was very little value to me for law practice or work in government -- except for the credentials it provided. The most disappointing thing about law school was the very poor pedagogical methods of most profs -- allegedly "Socratic." (Socrates would not have recognized it at all.)
I cannot say that I enjoyed law school. It was stressful and often aggravating working long hours and finding that a 3.2 GPA was about the best I could achieve regardless of the intensity of my work.

However, since graduation, I have found my U of M experience to have been highly relevant to the "real world" and excellent training for my current hectic business travel and negotiation schedule. I do litigation and appeals as an adjunct to my business management duties and continually draw on my law school training.

Overall, I feel Michigan was an outstanding law school and institution. It has always been, to me, a source of pride. It gave me an excellent foundation from which to build a meaningful professional life and place in the community. One specific criticism, however. Fifteen years ago, law school did a much better job training litigators, as compared to those desiring a non-litigation commercial practice. This causes a more extended legal apprenticeship for non-litigators. If this is still the case in the Law School the bias toward litigator should shift somewhat.

Overall my law school experience was a quite satisfactory one. Perhaps it could have offered a vehicle to acquaint students -- who lacked a legal background or access to practicing attorneys -- with the variety and real nature of the career options available. Possibly an ongoing speakers program intended to impart this practical, non-academic knowledge would be useful, i.e. invite attorneys in (one a week) to talk about their practice and answer questions. This would have great benefit to some students and would complement the very strong academic program.

I believe that there are too many starving attorneys. Should the law schools be either limiting their sizes or advising law students of their opportunities for job placement?

I have no criticisms of the Law School to offer. The best lawyers I encounter in this firm and elsewhere are the Michigan grads. We were well-educated and well-prepared. I would not change anything. Thank you for 3 of the best years of my life.

Law school was a tremendous learning experience and maturing process. Most of the professors were excellent teachers and provided me with an excellent basis upon which to build a career. People like Professor William Pierce for whom I worked after my first year helped immensely by taking a personal interest in my development. I simply hope that the professors at the School today are as professional and hard-working as those professors who taught me.

Living in the Law Club for one year provided me with a number of life-long friends from all over the country. That experience was
invaluable. Thank you, John Cook.

From my perspective as a practicing attorney in the private sector, it seems the School could do more to prepare the graduates for the actual practice of law. As someone once said, Law graduates are trained to be magnificent appellate court judges but very poor lawyers.

-----

I found life after law school (business related) to have been only partially connected to skills honed at law school. After first year, intellectual analytical skills should give way to a more practical approach (a la medicine). What is needed is a hands on approach, which has more to do with the art of "lawyering" as opposed to knowing the law. Internships (law firm and judicial) should become a necessary adjunct to the more formalistic, intellectual aspects of law school teaching.

-----

The most important benefits of having attended the Law School? Having had the opportunity to spend three years at a great university. Being a graduate of one of the top-ranked law schools in the world with all the prestige and sense of confidence that endows.

Major regrets? That I did not contribute more to or draw more from the very real energies of the Law School. That the Law School, as good as its reputation is, seemed to fall so far short of what I had hoped the study of law would be. That the beauty, the passion, and the grandeur of law hardly ever visited the classes in which I found myself. That I was unable to take intellectual sustenance from the Law School and turned, instead, to other parts of the University.

Having said all of this, let me conclude by noting that the practice of law, as prosaic as it often is, also presents moments of the highest, most intense poetry. I love the law and the life it has enabled me to lead. Coming full circle, then, I must thank U of M Law School for having helped me become that which now seems so dear. Perhaps the study of law cannot be better than it is.

-----

The relationships between people are getting worse and more distant. Nothing we are doing as lawyers seems to improve the situation.

-----

I imagine that most graduates of the class of '72 have enjoyed a challenging and rewarding career; no doubt the Law School is in significant measure responsible for this in more than the strictly technical sense of conferring a degree. It conveyed a sense of the lawyer's world and wrapped us all in a studious atmosphere. It taught us basic substantive law. You will receive many positive appraisals. I join that chorus.

Let me also strike one of the handful of discordant notes you are likely to receive and urge you to reassess the curriculum, its
purposes and the relationship among courses. Looking back at a
15-year career in trial advocacy, much of it accompanied by
supervisory responsibility, I must tell you that, in my opinion,
the School and others which rely so heavily on the "casebook"
method of teaching over-emphasize abstract thinking about legal
issues over the disciplinary value of case-style work -- the
"nuts and bolts." There is a world of difference between
"thinking about" and "doing." I found that students fresh out of
law schools with a strong clinical approach fared much better, at
least initially, than those, like myself, who came from one of
the traditional schools.

I was actively involved in the School's Legal Aid Society during
my second and third years and served as a senior judge in the
case club program. Every effort was made to get the most out of
the School's program and I received one of the approximately 30
prizes awarded to graduating seniors. Probably one of the better
students. Joining the U.S. Department of Justice, however, I was
unprepared to be a practicing trial lawyer -- had to unlearn many
ways of thinking about legal issues as taught in law school.

Traditional methods of teaching law may serve extremely well the
perhaps majority of students who as lawyers rarely, if ever, make
contact with a trial situation; but those methods serve only
moderately well the many students, like myself, who immediately
enter into relatively demanding litigation. I owe more to a few
senior attorneys at the Department of Justice who helped me
through the first two or three years than to the School,
although, as I've said, the latter's contribution is significant.
But the School still could do a better job of teaching the more
prosaic arts of litigation -- after all, trial lawyers are the
legal "engineers" whose work provides the essential substances
with which the body of the law grows. We are facing an
increasingly litigious, fast-paced society with which beginning
lawyers should be prepared to deal.

During 1969-1972 the curriculum of the Law School (aside from the
case club program) consisted of approximately 100 courses, only
three of which were clinical in nature. My copy of the catalogue
for 1971-1972 shows that no Practice Court was offered during the
senior year. I'll never know whether taking the few clinical
courses or whether earlier participation in the Practice Court
would have made a critical difference to my performance as a
trial attorney during the first few years after graduation. I
recall being sorely tempted by the smorgasbord offered by the Law
School in the substantive areas and of feeling as if I were being
"steered" into them simply by virtue of their disproportionate
number. It appeared that my three-year participation in the case
club program and my work in the Legal Aid Society would provide
sufficient practical experience. That was a mistake. One might
reasonably conclude that a student at the School who wanted to
become a trial lawyer faced an almost Hobson's choice.

I understand that most doctors of medicine and of divinity must
take part in an intensive internship program for at least one year before graduation. Perhaps the current structure of the legal profession makes such an approach unworkable for the training of student lawyers, although internship was the primary method by which law was taught over much of the history of the legal profession in this country. I don't expect a graduating senior of the Law School to behave like a seasoned trial attorney. But it may be within the Law School's power to restructure its curriculum to provide an alternative clinical legal education track for those students who would prefer that approach based on career objectives or habits and training. Perhaps the first year of law school should remain as it is for all students; the clinical education program would then take effect beginning in the second year. I would suggest that, in the initial experimental phase, the School offer alternative parallel versions of the 10-15 most popular elective courses for second and third-year students with the emphasis on specific case-type assignments involving the different phases of litigation -- client counselling, discovery, motions practice, negotiation, trial and appeal. Each optional, clinically-styled course would offer different counselling, discovery and motions situations, so that any student electing the entire group would experience a broad cross-section of the kinds of problems faced in trial practice.

Basic substantive law would continue to be taught, but in a lecture format to speed the learning process; much of the extra class time now spent pursuant to the slower Socratic method of teaching would be devoted to research, writing and presentation by the students within each of the substantive areas. New course materials would have to be written and additional staff probably would have to be hired. If the initial limited offerings proved to be popular and successful, the clinical track could be expanded gradually in a way that maintained the quality and minimized the additional cost to the School.

I believe that such an approach would be welcomed by many of your best students. They and the legal profession would benefit from a program more closely tailored to individual needs. At the same time, participating students would not lose sight of the importance of abstract thinking about legal issues as part of the daily practice of law.

Please give my best wishes to former Dean St. Antoine and former Dean Sandalow, one of my favorite law professors and an extremely enlightened, gentle and humanitarian man -- whose comments in a recent edition of Law Quadrangle Notes nevertheless suggest that he probably would be in strong disagreement with the proposal described above! Qui Pro Domina Justitia Sequitur.

If I had been less passive about my legal education I would have talked to lawyers (before going to law school) about what their various law practices were like, what was important to them in their practice, what courses would be valuable, what experience
would be valuable. I would have taken charge of my education, e.g. in property class, where my professor covered only half the material. I would have covered it all on my own. I would have sought more practical experience, like trial practice and negotiation.

I look back fondly at my years at Michigan Law School. Not only was the training and educational experience excellent and intellectually rewarding, to be a graduate of Michigan Law School brings a great deal of respect from members of the legal community, wherever that community may be.

This was an excellent questionnaire. I think U of M equipped me just marvelously for a career that has had 7 jobs in urban and rural settings in the South and the Northeast. I now live and practice in rural N.Y., have a farm and a wonderful practice. I'm thankful for my U of M experience.

Well-satisfied with legal education.

Ironically while in law school I received poor grades in federal civil procedure, torts, and evidence. I am now a successful litigator and have had no problem at all in these areas. (Quite the contrary, in fact.) Also, over the years I've taken three states' bar exams. The last was in 1985. I only studied 20 hours, and got a very high score. (I passed all three exams.) My conclusion from these two facts, as well as other experiences over the years, is that the law school process trains the mind to function in a rudimentary legal way; the specific courses taken are not that material, but practicing the profession is really what makes one an effective attorney.

One conclusion from all this -- Is three years of law school really necessary? Why not get a head start on what really makes one a functioning, effective practitioner?

I am making more $$ and working harder than I expected. I have doubts that lawyers accomplish much for society or even provide much useful assistance in the workings of our economic structure.

I do find practicing law interesting. However, I will probably "retire" in another 8 years or so, at 50 years old, and manage my personal investments, etc. I do not believe that I want to work as hard as I must now work in my "old age."

Most of the lawyers in our community are very honest -- hence the #4 rating.

Life is good. Law school helped.