Class of 1969 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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Have been in restaurant business and private practice in small town (40,000) for 3 months - so I'm probably not much of an indicator.

It is quite difficult to isolate particular parts of one's law school training which are now more valuable than others - the entire experience of law school itself -- the disciplining of intelligence, the case method, the contact with professors and other students -- all combine to make it a total experience that I believe to be invaluable.

The Law School (and undergraduate schools) should inquire into the impact of student/NDEA/state loans on career patterns, etc. post-graduation. For many students, the monthly payments limit the career options, at least for the first 3 years or so.

I believe that the curriculum is of extreme importance. It strikes me that many of the courses I see offered are faddish and are but sops to appease whatever group happens to be popular at a given time. The school should be training legal advocates--with knowledge in all areas of the law that one encounters in practice. While other courses may fill in students' time, the core must be strengthened. I believe too many electives are being offered.

Moreover, in some areas I have found my fellows woefully unprepared--
(1) writing and oral skills - I have had to deal with Michigan graduates who would be hard pressed to compose an intelligible and intelligent sentence. (2) Business practice - we have prepared people to advise clients, when they are unable to understand an insurance contract - which is the basis for protecting any corporation. For this reason I have been asked to author West's New Ohio Practice Insurance Volume and am teaching an Insurance Law course.

I think surveys of this type can make a valuable contribution to developing a better Law School curriculum.

The University of Michigan Law School provided me an excellent law background which has greatly benefitted me in the practice of law.

My experience is that Michigan is well recognized among the people I work with as one of the leading law schools.

Supervised legal writing for all students would always be beneficial. A seminar or course giving greater attention to accounting would be helpful for all students who want to become business lawyers.

I practice law in the Litigation Department of a large law firm. Often, the cases on which I work are complex and demanding intellectually. Thus, I remember with particular fondness those courses which demanded rigorous analytical and logical thinking. Professors Palmer and Kohn, among numerous others, teach that kind of course.
There is perhaps one glaring omission from the survey. Question Roman Numeral VII, Sub B, comes closest to asking what the law school accomplished in determining where I am now practicing law. I felt the law school and its entire faculty were geared to the top 10 percent of the class and ignored the remainder of the students. Those of us who were interested in being practicing attorneys felt the law school was a complete waste of time, both intellectually and professionally. The course that I chose to follow, perhaps, had the original doors open because I went to the University of Michigan Law School, but not because of any efforts made by any personnel of that school. It is interesting to note in comparing my experiences with experiences of others who have gone to "prestigious" law schools that they found the orientation of the school strikingly similar. Perhaps it is impossible to ever orient any portion of American life to deal with all the people in a given community. If anything best describes my feeling, it is: "What do you call the person who graduated last in his class at medical school?" Answer: "Doctor." While in law school I was attempting to become a professional lawyer and felt that law school added nothing to that experience.

Do something to restrict admission to the study & practice of law, especially via local & night law schools. There are too many lawyers, not too few.

I suspect your survey will show non-law firm types making more money - I think the practitioners have more fun.

I have found the training I received a valuable asset, although I am not currently employed in the legal profession. My area of responsibility (Industrial Relations) requires me to draw upon my legal training both directly and indirectly and I also find it an asset in my non-work daily responsibilities associated with the common task of living. My major criticism while attending Law School was an orientation toward training graduates to be either judges, professors or legal scholars. As a result, it seemed as though those whose primary orientation was toward other areas was a part of the curriculum more by happenstance than by design. I believe greater emphasis was and is needed in legal writing, advocacy and pragmatic problem-solving. Also, more feed-back is required on performance than one exam at the end of a course when the results are then fait accompli.

I'm interested in any information that is available relating to the success of black law graduates from the University of Michigan and problems, if any, they have with bar exams and jobs. I request this in light of the fact you are seeking the same kind or related information regarding females.

You may note that I checked four boxes in Question III even though it appeared to call for only three answers. My reason is that these four sources of income were the total means of my support in Law School. Commercial NOW U of M student loans and my earnings from part time and summer jobs were less significant than the U of M loans and scholarships.
This questionnaire is unusually easy to fill out, but I question whether it elicits sufficient information to make an adequate assessment of the curriculum as it existed for our class.

I. The most important adjustment I would like to see in law school education is a meaningful combination of the theoretical with the practical. At Michigan I received an "A" in contracts, but never wrote or even analyzed an actual contract. While there is a very basic need for law students to learn the fundamentals of issue spotting and analysis that are taught via the case method - they must also be guided in applying this to actual practice situations. In this regard, I found one of my most rewarding courses at Michigan to be Trials and Appeals where students had the opportunity to take a case from start to finish. When I left there was talk of phasing the course out because Judge Joiner had left. I hope that the course is still very much a part of the curriculum.

2. As for the questionnaire, you have only asked about current occupation, and have not really (other than in IV D) explored what people did immediately after law school. The importance of clerkships and many other intermediate positions should be an important consideration in career planning.

I believe a trial practice course should be mandatory for at least two reasons: 1. All documents, counsel, etc., must be prepared and delivered with a view towards preserving a client's rights and enforcing them in court. 2. I did not take such a course and am having to learn techniques, etc., without the help (minimal thought it might be) of such background, and I would feel much more comfortable if I had some prior experience in a courtroom.

The biggest deficiency of the Law School was the failure to utilize the drafting of legal documents as a teaching technique instead of merely teaching theory. We never drafted a will in our Estates course, a contract in our Contracts course or a pleading in our Civil Procedure course. Use of such devices would have been of great assistance in later practice and in teaching the legal concepts.

I enjoined my three years at Mich. The one bit of knowledge I felt I lacked when practicing at first was as to how the game is really played outside. It was very frustrating to have a secretary know more about filing complaints & serving people than I did. Also, I spent two years in the service before I began practicing. During those years I forgot a lot. So, many of my comments herein should be viewed with that in mind. When I left Mich. and took the Fla. Bar I felt I was well prepared to take it.

Oh yes, one other matter - students should be acquainted with the various form books such as Rabkin-Johnson & the various pleading books. When I left Mich., I thought you had to make up everything from your head and Corpus Juris & the cases. That is not so 85% of the time. Finally please excuse all grammatical errors - it is very late at night.
Michigan did not offer a course in government contract law. While I'm not sure that I would have taken it if there was such a course, it is a field that deserves consideration as either a separate course, part of a course or seminar. Thee book I am familiar with is Government Contract Law by Ralph Nash and John Libinic, Jr.

Law School curriculum at Michigan fine.

In retrospect, I feel 80% of law school was spent in a totally unrealistic and unpleasant environment. The personal manipulation by certain professors of students was childish, counterproductive and not especially becoming adults. I also feel, having tried about 50 cases, that U of M does not attempt to teach how to handle facts -- in my cases facts have always determined the law.

I feel, as I suspect most of my contemporaries feel in private practice do, that I have learned far more in my 5 years of work than I did during my 10 prior years of formal education. Most of this learning in private practice has been by osmoses, but I have had the good fortune to receive personal critiques of my written work by senior partners. These critiques usually involved a line-by-line review of contracts, other documents and instruments, including wills & trusts, and to a lesser degree, briefs. Of course, law school gave me the ability to absorb the training in the office. But more individual attention to my written work - other than memoranda - would have made me a more accomplished practitioner in a shorter period of time after leaving school. Such attention should supplement, not diminish, the traditional, rigorous classroom instruction, particularly that given in the first year.

I don't wish all the comments I have made about writing to be taken to downgrade the importance of first year courses and later statutory courses.

There are apparently too many students graduating from law school for the present market. Programs must be developed to make it possible for lower middle income individuals to obtain representation from a lawyer of their choice. Our system will continue to be under stress unless the average person can feel that he can obtain counsel.

(If you are a women and working in the field of law)

As values change, it might be interesting to seek answers to VIII B-D from males. Those questions seem important regardless of sex, because law is a demanding profession regardless of sex.

Courses in corporate law should be more oriented toward real business situations - more emphasis on drafting of agreements & on negotiating agreements.

My general feeling is that the law school program should be extensively supplemented by clinical experience and more directed studies. Some degree of experience with the practical aspects of the law should be required of every student in order to prepare him or her as a lawyer, inasmuch as the laws of this state do not require such experience for licensing.
I think my law school education has prepared me well for the type of general practice that I am in. I have had to learn much about procedure in California and think it is impossible to learn such in school. I feel now as I did when I went to law school that practicing law affords me the opportunity to participate in and feel part of my community.

I began working as a law clerk two months ago. Before that date I had not worked as an attorney except during infrequent periods while a Vista volunteer in New Mexico (1969-1970). Since that time I have worked as a Vista supervisor in Tennessee (for 1 1/2 years) and spent 1 1/2 years in Israel working and studying.

I am not certain that I shall remain at my present job for an extended period of time; however, I do plan to take the NJ Bar Exam in February (I passed the New Mexico Bar Exam in April 1970). For the first time since graduation I am "giving law a chance."

Concerning the legal program at the U of M: I was quite impressed with it. The course selection, the faculty and the student body were exceptional. It is probably true that I would have done better and worked harder had I not entered there immediately after college. The legal education was not important or significant to me at that time. Following a year or more of work or travel, that same education would have been more meaningful.

My experience has shown that I was not properly prepared to draft adequate contracts and agreements. Moreover, far too many other attorneys are likewise ill equipped.

There is need for the case study method to be supplemented with a variety of practical experiences which a new lawyer is likely to encounter. Illustratively, a student in real property should attend a closing conducted by knowledgeable practitioners. The course in Trusts and Estates should include the drafting of instruments for review and criticism by the professor. A criminal law student should go to the courthouse accompanied by a prosecutor or public defender to see how bail is arranged, a plea bargaining conference, etc.

Such carefully supervised exposure to real-life situations should be planned without sacrificing or abandoning the excellent benefits to be derived from the case study system which should continue to be the mainstay of the law school curriculum.

From talking with other attorneys, I believe that other law schools provide a better grounding in the techniques of legal research in the library. My own legal research training at Michigan consisted of lectures by older students when I had just begun my studies and was unable to yet appreciate the importance of the reference works to which I was introduced.

The information above is slightly misleading, since I spent '69 to '74 working for a legal services back-up center & specialized in health & welfare law and the constitutional litigation which those fields contain.
After graduation I spent approximately 2 1/2 years as a Special Agent with the FBI and have been in private practice now with Bodman-Loughy et al for almost three years. Thank you for taking the time to advise me when I was at Michigan (we discussed the FBI).

Far more practical work is needed in legal education. We never learned anything about preparing contracts, litigating tactics, etc. I enjoyed law school but wish it had been better.

Based on my personal experience and observations, motivation and character are the two most crucial elements of a successful legal career. It is too bad this couldn't be measured by this survey.

Recently a law student who was being interviewed for employment with my firm stated that his first year of school (at an Ivy League law school) was a waste of his time, as he wanted to be a tax lawyer, not a negligence practitioner or criminal lawyer or whatever. This started me thinking about my courses at Michigan, and the conclusion I reached is that, while I do utilize specific bits of learning from specific courses very often in my daily activities, the importance of my law school education lies more in its structuring of my thought processes. An oft-repeated cliche, of course, but I've found it really is true in my case.

I feel that my law school course work laid a good theoretical base for my work and introduced me to legal reasoning and problem discovering processes. There is little I would suggest subtracting from my course selection. I do feel, however, that my background was weak in the practical aspects of the legal trade. Other than as seen in individual issues discussed in cases, one never was presented with the opportunity to prepare a contract or lending documents, to sort facts and amalgamate them into a complaint and supporting affadavits, to analyze the title to property (whether with title insurance [itself an ignored topic] or abstracting), or of actually choosing the best means of protecting a theoretical creditor - and then drafting the necessary documents to accomplish the protection.

The only comment I wish to make here is that there could be an improvement in the Placement Office. As a third year student who desired to be located after graduation in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, the only law firms I interviewed at Michigan, through the Placement office, were large Wall St. law firms, which I did not want to join - I think a greater attempt should be made to solicit law firms in New York City of a smaller size and also the law firms to be found in New Jersey. This is the only criticism I have of the law school - but I must add that being a U of M graduate has opened, many, many doors for me and has been invaluable in my professional career.
I think that giving me a broad understanding of many areas of the law was the best thing that law school did for me. It did not actually prepare me to practice in a practical way but I think that must be done on the job after graduation.

I'm not the typical graduate for which this questionnaire was developed. Upon graduation from law school I translated one month for the Pan American Union, one year as a Fulbright scholar ($175.00/mo), 2 years with U.S. Aid ($1,250/mo), one year as a high school teacher in C.R. ($225/mo.), and now I have completed my first year in para-legal work - I'm not allowed to practice in Costa Rics, but come very close to it.

Questionnaires like this are certainly worthwhile.

I think your form should ask a couple of other questions:

Is the work fun? It is.
Are you becoming a good lawyer? Yes.
Are you bored or lazy? No.
Are you learning more now than you did in law school? Yes.
Did you enjoy law school at the time you were there? Yes.
(I don't know if this data is significant for your purposes...
1st job out of law school, 2 years, clerked for judge, salary 19,600.
2nd job, 2 years, staff attorney, Legal Services, 13,500. Present job, Director of Litigation, Legal Services, 17,000).

More law school courses should be offered covering all aspects of litigation.

Despite a noticeable (although decreasing) pro-Harvard bias in the Boston area, I have never regretted my decision to attend the U. of M. Law School. It was a most gratifying educational experience in all respects.

Why not a study on what the law graduates who are not practicing law think about the law curriculum. Many law grads like myself are terribly dissatisfied with our law school experience - so dissatisfied that we could not tolerate the thought of continuing w/ on with law.

I had a corporate law offer and turned it down since I could no longer stand the thought of spending my life emmeshed in trivia.

I seriously believe a pilot program of a basically different approach to law school education should be attempted stressing basic principles, out of horn books not through the case method. Only one or 2 courses on case method are necessary - beyond that they're destructive since they encourage concentration on specifics rather than general principles.

Why aren't there any questions with answers into which poverty law (legal services for the poor) fits? Does this reflect a prejudice at U of M Law School that poverty law is not the real practice of law? After all, there are other areas of legal services work besides welfare law. How about getting on with teaching budding lawyers the responsibility of achieving equal justice for all, instead of the traditional emphasis on law as commerce?
I took a year off for extended travel, summer 1973 to summer 1974.

Almost four years of my post-law school practice were spent in the Judge Advocate General's Corps of the U.S. Army.

Course on professional responsibility should be required, if it is not already.

I feel that the foundation given at the University of Michigan Law School was excellent on the whole, but I do think that a bit more emphasis could be put on the "practice" side of law, that is, advocacy, the conduct of a trial, the drafting of pleadings, the drafting of a contract, etc. Perhaps, though, a person does not get much out of such exercises until he is faced with the necessity of performing in actual situations. Please know that I enjoyed my years at the law school and I think that the practice of law is about the best thing anybody can do. It's fun.

Please see my answer to Question VII. Though I understand that the Law School has made significant progress in the indicated areas, since my departure, I feel that trial-oriented and actual practice-oriented courses are indispensable to a legal education, and that the Law School did not present me the opportunity to prepare myself, at least minimally, in these areas. For example, I was graduated a semester early (December, 1969), due to summer school attendance, and had no opportunity whatsoever to take a Trial Practice course, when I knew at that time that trial work was my overriding ambition. Such imperfections ought to be corrected, even though the law school classes now, as then, are large. Otherwise, I have very fond memories of my undergraduate and law school years in Ann Arbor, and feel fortunate that I was able to attend a truly great law school.

I feel that little if any time is devoted in the Law School curriculum to those areas which, while they do not deal with substance of legal training, are of great importance to a practicing attorney. Some exposure should be given in the area of interpersonal relationships; both between attorney and client and between attorneys. Also, some training in office management and procedures would be most helpful. While an attorney may be very well prepared by his legal education with regard to substantive issue, unless he can interact with a wide spectrum of people on a day-to-day basis, his training will be of little practical use.

After law school I took a job in the General Counsel's office of the Department of Transportation, working in all facets of administrative law—from writing regulations, through writing legal memoranda, and on to representing the Department in administrative adjudicatory hearings. I then became associated with firm of Shea & Gardner in Washington, and practiced transportation law; during that time I did a considerable amount of pro bono work in the field of voting rights. I then joined a newly created policy-study program at the National Bureau of Standards which is designed to "experiment" with various governmental actions to determine their effect on technological innovation; this has proved to be a compatible marriage of my technical background and desire for a higher level of abstraction within the law than the run of the mill practice
afforded. I suppose that ultimately, perhaps in the near future, this will lead to an academic career. Throughout my days since law school, I have wished that more courses were available which provided insight into alternative political approaches for solving the problems society faces; this would extend from more constitutional theory on on through to alternative designs of administrative agencies. I think it would provide a very helpful background for the type of legal work done in Washington.

I found nothing wrong with my education which I deemed to have been a 3 year education on logical thinking but not enough was taught to us about ethics. Winning a point was the only objective i.e. we were taught to think if you win then you are right = Justice NO this is wrong - Mssrs. Haldeman, Erlichman, Mitchell, Mardian, Dean, Liddy, Caleson, etc. also thought that winning = Justice.

Law school should be completely revised so that entire third year is spent on practical application so that not only do you know the law and how to find it, but what to do with it. Too many lawyers spend the first few years learning how to practice, often at the expense of their clients. Upon graduation, one should be a lawyer, not just a legal scholar.

My experience after graduation from Law School has included much litigation and trial practice. Although I did take all of the courses offered at school in this field, I felt deficient in any skills needed to do an adequate job in court; consequently, my recommendation is that legal education provide greater emphasis on practical application of the formal instruction given a student in Civil Procedure, evidence and Federal jurisdiction. I believe some experience in drafting legal papers, investigation of the factual background of a given case and problems a trial lawyer faces before and during the actual trial of a case would be beneficial and help prepare a student to competently represent a client in litigation.

In my opinion, the course in civil procedure would have more meaning if offered in the third year rather than the first.

Good luck on the survey. I'm looking forward to a copy of the results.

1. This survey is a good idea. The form, however, is poorly laid out.
2. Practicing law is a lot more fun than law school, which I almost flunked.

I cannot answer question VII: (course election increase or decrease) and my income in question IX is so low because not until tomorrow (12 Nov 74) will I begin my career as an attorney. Upon graduation from Law School, having been assured by my draft board that I was certain to be drafted, I volunteered and served 30 months in the U.S. Army. Upon discharge my wife and I decided that she should have the opportunity to finish her degree in Art History. I took a job for one year in an auto plant and
she taught and with what we saved plus a fellowship she won we spent the past year living in Florence, Italy. Before departing I took the August 1973 Bar Exam but I will only begin to practice law tomorrow with the Securities Division of the State Dept of Commerce. My salary will be $11,900 per year.

I feel that Michigan Law School gave me a quality education and it has been of great benefit to me in my pursuit of a legal career.

An analysis of my answers to the foregoing questions will show that I work for the international subsidiary of the third largest automotive company in the world and that, with the exception of one year of post-graduate study, I have spent my entire professional career since graduation with that company, either in Detroit or abroad. As of today, I have been overseas for two and one third years and I am finding the job somewhat repetitious and less challenging. Combined with that is a tremendous cut back in new activities and a general reduction of budgets, salaries, etc. These factors have made me think that now might be the time to change what I am doing and perhaps go into private practice, if I can find a law firm which can utilize my skills in the areas of international trade and investment. Alternatively, I am contemplating returning to school to obtain a master's degree in business administration and go into management on the international size.

My practice consists primarily of trial and appeal work in both state and federal courts. Most all of the skills that I use have been learned on the job. Without major restructuring, law school cannot provide any practical program which could supplement learning by experience. Moreover, it may not be desirable to design a law school course which serves merely as a craft or trade apprenticeship. But more emphasis should be placed on teaching professional & legal ethics.

Questions about job satisfaction and future expectations might have been interesting.

Some survey questions could have been better phrased -
Should I have answered IVF even though I didn't answer IVE?
IVC might be tied into answer 4A - unclear who's an "employed lawyer"
I was "raised" in 5 or 6 different places and found it difficult to answer II.

I feel that law school should be (and, perhaps, may now be) much more practically oriented than it seemed to be when I was in school - more courses in procedural matters, how to file, what steps to take, where to go, etc. Also, a good trial practice/strategy course or program should be required or strongly encouraged for those who may do trial work. Instruction should be given in how to take depositions, assess a case for settlement, conduct settlement negotiations, etc.

I would appreciate receiving a synopsis of the result of this survey.
Perhaps it is too much to ask, given Michigan Law School's traditions, but there are civil rights and other public interest lawyers in "private" practice of one kind or another for whom this questionnaire is sorely lacking in relevant inquiry. I remarked to a classmate whom I haven't seen since graduation, who has a largely Title VII employment discrimination practice in Atlanta, how surprised I was to see him in such an endeavor. He was similarly surprised by my position as Deputy Director of the Lawyers' Committee. We both remarked how we had an interest in eliminating race discrimination before and after law school but never had even known about or expressed our mutual interests at law school. We concluded that Michigan Law School must be a stultifying place for interchange and expression of ideas and action; but, fortunately, not so stultifying as to make its graduates something less than when they come...just not much more. I do hope this questionnaire does not indicate that things at Michigan are still the same.

A great deal of my time at work involves advising my corporate client on federal regulations issued by the FTC, FCC, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Federal Energy Administration, HEW Bureau of Radiological Health, etc. I don't believe any courses at law school cover this area. I think Administrative Law courses deal with procedure in challenging an agency, rather than advising a client on compliance with regulations in force.

I apologize for returning this questionnaire months after it was sent to me. I was out of the country for several months.

I feel that I received a good legal education at the U of M Law School. It has many good instructors and proper facilities for a law school, (and I am aware that these are being expanded). I appreciate the legal education I received at U of M.

One point I feel strongly about, which perhaps by now has already been incorporated more into the curriculum, that is, law school courses - all of them - should focus more upon professional responsibility. In saying this I would note that this is not merely the U of M Law School's concern, but is a matter of nationwide concern.

My experience, including observations of younger Michigan grads, indicates that personal effort of the student is still more important than curriculum changes.

I find the pressures of private practice, while tolerable, far in excess of what I anticipated or was prepared to expect from my law school training. The amount of professional responsibility toward clients ingrained during law school does not prepare one for that occasional loss or worse the fear of that occasional loss.

the important factor, rather than ability of the teacher or pedagogical method(s) used (although a few items relevant to the latter are mixed in). I would take course "coverage" as a relatively low priority item in determining the quality of the educational experience.

2 1/2 years non-legal work by choice, 1 year world travel - legal practice since November 1972.

Michigan gave me a superb legal education which has served me well since graduation.

My only complaint is that too many faculty members view grade point average as the sole (major?) test of intellectual ability and human worth. Keep up the good work. I am deeply indebted to all those who taught and helped me in law school. It was a wonderful experience.

Beat Ohio State.

When I attended law school, it was possible to go for three years and know next to nothing about how to be a lawyer. The assumption was that a firm or corporation would show you that. My first job was with a community project working with migrant workers, and I still resent the fact that law school prepared me so poorly in any practical way. Perhaps there are more opportunities for clinical & trial work in law school now. I hope so.

Good luck!

Most good law schools seem to product equally skilled lawyers. The most valuable aspect of having obtained a degree from Michigan is that the law school has the prestige it does. This, alumni contacts and the factors mentioned in Question VII B have been for me the most enduring contributions of the law school.

Come on - what's the story here - get with it!

My apologies for the tardy response. However, as can be seen from my responses, they may not be compilable in a statistical sense. Most of the aberational responses are attributable to my switch in circumstances in August. However, the perhaps somewhat odd response to item VII is the only way I can adequately begin to express my firm belief that, as many have been urging, a full year of law training ought to be provided or arranged by the law school, in so-called "clinical" or other "practical" areas, but (in contrast to the common urging) this should be in addition to the 3 "normal" years (and not in lieu of one of them) and should bear some minimal salary (say $10,000 in today's money) - that is, a true internship analogous to the practice in medicine.
I appreciate the opportunity to participate in your questionnaire and am eager to receive a copy of the results. However, the information supplied by myself is somewhat misleading as I have just completed a 4 year tour as a legal officer in the Coast Guard and am currently (but temporarily) employed as an attorney-advisor in the General Counsel's Office of the Department of Transportation. I plan on resuming the private practice of law early next year and this obviously will have an effect on the information you solicited. Nonetheless, I supplied responses based upon my current situation. Please note the change in my mailing address.