Class of 1978 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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Most remarkable difference between law school and law practice is the minimal competence and ethics of judges at below federal court and appellate court levels (and those I've excluded don't meet generally high standards, either). Law school should attempt to train judges, to teach courses for prospective judges, to encourage students to aim to be judges. Judges distort and disregard laws, discriminate against defendants, and often discredit legal system. Concept of justice and equality should be stressed in law school. Got that from my excellent profs, e.g. White, Vining. The intellectual character of law should be stressed less. More emphasis on interpersonal relations (e.g. Vining, Chambers). Much more emphasis on the actualities of legal system of today: that so many rights and benefits (and not just to poor people) come from government. Therefore, almost all lawyers' work is of necessity political (tax law, land use law, antitrust, corporate litigation). The law school is great on substantive law. Some profs are great at "how to be a lawyer," e.g. White. But the first-year is based on unreality, as the 19th century legal and political system. First-year curriculum should be revised. I think courses and interviewers and counselling were already by time I graduated. Presumably many U-M law grads become "lobbyists" or at least regularly negotiate with government agencies. Admin. law isn't all that needs to be taught about government representation. Law School still teaches that rights are common law and "natural." Politics is never considered. In fact all lawyers are involved in government-influencing, advising clients on government benefits.

With brief exception of a period with a large Michigan firm (to which I will probably one day return), I have worked only for the Court of Appeals in Michigan. I enjoy working for the Court because it is intellectually interesting, low pressure, not time consuming, and the pay is fair given the nature of the job. This survey is obviously intended for people who are really in practice. Admittedly, it is unusual for somebody to be nearly 5 years out of law school and still to be working a temporary court job. Although I felt I was very good in private practice for one of my experience, I despised the hassles--the long hours, the family disruptions, the bullshit from the partners, the intra-firm intrigues, the monotony of drafting yet another set of Interrogatories, answer, etc. I was not happy doing it, but no doubt I'll return--I have to eat. Someday I can be a partner--make a lot of money, stress out in court dealing with a bunch of petty hack judges, and be an asshole to a new generation of associates.
I have learned virtually 100% of "how to practice" since leaving law school. I'm sure that this comment does not come as a surprise to you and is a fact that "rational" law schools are actually proud of (sorry about the use of that preposition). However, in my opinion U of M could add some practical emphasis without sacrificing the theoretical underpinnings. In many ways, I have felt at a disadvantage, comparatively speaking, to other associates at my firm who have attended local law schools. I don't believe that a student should be permitted to graduate from law school without knowing how to draft a trial brief, several contracts, an appellate brief and without knowing proper cite forms as well as how to do an opening argument, direct and cross examination, closing argument and appellate argument.

1. The Socratic method is an obsolete teaching method. It has a place, but is grossly over-used. It is a tool abused at U of M's Law School to educate the greatest potential number at the least expense (both financial expense and expenditure of faculty effort). With very few exceptions, U of M's faculty, while brilliant, cannot teach: this is primarily due to: class size; Socratic method; over-emphasis, in recruiting, on academic skills (vis a vis teaching skills); rampant and institutionalized elitism. I have given heavily to my undergrad. college, but will probably never contribute to U of M.  

2. At a minimum, U of M needs to reduce class size. There is virtually no faculty-student interaction--particularly for the average student. Students (or "average" students) are fodder to pay for other reputation- and ego-enhancing activities. Face it: you take brilliant, motivated students and for the most part allow them to educate themselves. I shudder to think what you could accomplish if you discarded antiquated methods and improved faculty-student ratios.  

3. I am not a bitter person. Further, I am very satisfied with most aspects of my young life and education. Nevertheless, I feel almost nothing positive about the law school or legal education as I experienced it. It is difficult to repress my cynicism about the law school for a period sufficient to record my own humble analysis and recommendations. I am certain that without particular institutional effort, they can be discarded, ignored or rationalized. How unfortunate that such a brilliant institution is incapable of meaningful self-analysis. Refer to Fulbright and Halberstam.

I had always intended to work half-time after having children, and had even arranged to share a Legal Services position with a friend who also has a baby, but both of us decided to quit once we were confronted with the choice of placing our children with a babysitter or caring for our children ourselves. It is scary to think of being out of the work force for 6 years, and I hope that the trend towards working parents doesn't hurt those of us, male and female, who choose to stay home for a time. I found Michigan to be a conservative, elitist school, and I would like to see it change its tone and its orientation. While I was in law school I complained that we were not being taught how to practice law, and we weren't. However, we were taught how to think about a subject in terms of societal goals. This was invaluable, and makes the practice of law much more interesting than it would be otherwise.
The law school did an excellent job of teaching me to think, research and write legal memoranda or briefs. It made no effort to teach courses that would assist one in advising businesses on business (as well as legal) problems nor was I prepared to counsel clients or draft contracts upon graduation.

Comments about work pertain to 1982 primarily--I have been on medical leave since May 1983. Since my own graduation, I have not recommended law school as a desirable goal for others when asked--particularly not to those who have just graduated from college (which was my situation). This is due partly to my own generally unsatisfactory experience and partly to my concern (based on my own experience and that of others I know) that law school is perhaps best endured by those w/ more years and life experience behind them. At least, those were the kind of people who seemed to emerge more or less in tact. The Admissions Office should start drafting more of these older applicants; leave the bright young things to the med school. The environmental stress generated by law school (and augmented by susceptible students) is greatly underestimated. I believe it to be a precipitating cause of my own ill health (first diagnosed as a 2nd year student) for which I hold myself responsible not the school, of course -- it seems inconceivable to me that the institution could ever change its way of doing business, or would want to. After all, survival of the fittest is still the theory, it seems.

First year of law school taught me how lawyers think but little else was achieved there. So the following 2 years weren't really useful. My particular section of legal writing was terrible, and this appears to me to be a major fault. Law schools could at least turn out competent pleadings drafts persons. Many law school courses were geared towards litigation but my strong impression was that they weren't very effective in producing competent trial lawyers. I don't litigate at all anymore, but when I did, I didn't think I was very competent and there isn't always a senior lawyer around for coaching. In substantive areas, I learned enough to know when there were problems someone else should solve. I shouldn't tackle anti-trust or securities problems nor should the untrained write pension plans (my work). So it's almost impossible for the law school to offer substantive law programs that are very useful.

The University of Michigan is a great law school. It is very highly regarded wherever I go, and by almost all people who know or are involved in the legal profession. It has helped my career immensely. My skills seem to be substantially above average, and I practice with a great deal of confidence. My communication skills are excellent. I attribute a great deal of this to my law school, although at the time I graduated, I was not so cognizant of my relative abilities in the legal profession. It becomes apparent as one practices. Thank you.
Law school totally ignored the practical aspects of everyday law practice--there should be significant increase in courses regarding court rules, discovery, and negotiation. Also, greater selection of clinical courses and emphasis (or even requirement) of clerkship in a law office or court.

The most important skill required in my practice is the ability to write well in a hurry. This skill received very little attention in law school, and I had to learn it on the job. I have been successful in this, but adjusting to practice would have been easier had I been required to write more, for credit, in law school. Government practice offers a very high degree of intellectual stimulation, and a rational work load, so that the law is by no means one's whole life.

When I was in law school, and even more when I taught law courses one year, I observed that the law school process is a potent force turning idealistic first year entrants into materialists. I believe the quality of legal services in the country suffers as a result, for it encourages self-centered short run views toward many problems. Not all lawyers are affected, and flame is not easy to assign -- the pressures of the first year seem to have this result despite active opposition by particular faculty members. This, I believe is the principal problem facing national-caliber law schools--how to turn out good attorneys who are also encouraged to be well-rounded people. In far too many cases many schools are failing (Michigan, incidentally, has a somewhat better record than other schools I have observed, but I still felt a tremendous pressure--from no particular source--to search for a "good, high-paying job" with a big city firm.).

When one has gone from military criminal defense attorney to foreign legal consultant with one of Asia's largest commercial law firms (international business practice) in the past six months, it becomes difficult to know from which perspective this questionnaire should be answered.

While at Michigan, I very much appreciated the caliber of instruction. I continue to believe that this is Michigan's strength: not subtle adjustments to the focus of the curriculum. If Professor White or Professor Lempert are teaching a course, it will be valuable. Period. And the same goes for every other professor I had the privilege of studying under.

May the Law Quad also remain architecturally inspiring.

I enjoyed law school more than the practice of law. For me, practicing law was all consuming, leaving little time or energy for family life. This was partially because of the type of practice in which I was involved--criminal law, divorce work and representation of police officers. The demands of working in small law offices are great since there are responsibilities of every kind. The independence that type of practice afforded me was, however, crucial to me.

During my second year of law school, I attended a school other than U of M and truly came to appreciate U of M law school. The professors, my fellow students and the atmosphere at U of M were terrific. Most of all, I place great value in the respect with which the administration treated the students.

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What was most surprising to me about the practice of law was how easy it was to hustle cases and make excellent money. After three years, I was doing quite well. Few U of M students get involved in the type of practice I had and I think they are quite uninformed as to the benefits and rewards of a small office practice. Lastly, being a full time mother is far more rewarding and stimulating than practicing law. Luckily, my life time will afford me plenty of time for both careers.

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Michigan Law School still needs a basic corporate law course—the "Enterprise Organization" course I had there was partnership, agency and securities law. Thus, not only did I not learn about shareholders and boards of directors, but my Securities Regulation course was mostly material I already had seen in E.O. I transferred to U of M from Univ. of Detroit my first year, and the difference in corporate law courses was striking—U of D had a solid, basic corporate course, but U of M had nothing. Other than that, U of M was the most stimulating educational experience I've ever had.

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Law School education should be a tool which adds to one's life, widens one's horizon. All too frequently persons leave l.s. not broadened, but changed into people who can then only think like lawyers— their pre-l.s. ways obliterated. I believe that l.s. teaching methods are at least partially at fault. Students are made to question and then remake themselves, or their thinking, to conform to the l.s.'s image of a lawyer.

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I found the years from 1978 to 1980 very exciting and rewarding in the practice of law—not necessarily from a financial standpoint but from a personal growth point of view. The last few have been a difficult transition period as the options for exciting opportunities narrow—or appear to. For the first time in my life I am seriously contemplating a change in career and leaving the active practice of law. I would be interested to know how many others are in this position. I found this survey interesting to participate in. Thank you for the opportunity to give some of these questions some attention.

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After having worked as a law clerk at both the state appellate and the federal district court level and as an associate in a private law firm, I have concluded that I do not want to practice law in the traditional sense. I am making a living doing free-lance legal research while I figure out how I can use my legal background and skills to best advantage in another field.

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The contribution of U. of M. Law School to my total overall well-being is large; but rapidly decreasing with the passage of time. In other words, my J.D. (plus Law Review) from U. of M. got me a very good job. But it is increasingly difficult to identify anything learned prior to graduation as materially assisting me in my law practice. Every so often, like a glowing ember, something from a first year course comes to the fore. The rest is white noise. (Come back in ten years and I'll try not to mix my metaphores).
The decrease in funding for legal services by the Federal government has saved tax dollars (perhaps) but the human toll is very significant. There are thousands upon thousands of poor and legally unsophisticated people who have a real need to have legal representation. Disproportionately these people are women who are single heads of households who, because of their inability to cope with the legal system, are in dire straits. Marital relationships are not properly severed so that their children's legal status is muddied. Creditors and landlords can use heavyhanded tactics that are not challenged. Local bar associations generally are unable to fill the void. Ultimately something will be done but in the meantime lots of lives are being messed up. Unfortunately these are in large part the same lives that are most affected by other cuts in Federal spending (welfare programs).

I deal peripherally with the above issues in my work but have seen enough to know that the legal delivery system in this country favors the wealthy and virtually ignores the poor. I've nothing against those who pay receiving services--but there are too many at the lower end who are left out. Locally, your clinical law program helps to fill this void. Whether or not law school graduates participate in programs to assist the disadvantaged, they should be aware that it takes funding to keep these programs going.

At first I was disappointed with law school because I believed there was very little concern with concepts of 'right' and 'wrong.' Of course, I later realized that the function and purpose of a legal education are not oriented toward such concepts. These notions of societal policy are, perhaps, better left to educators in other fields.

All in all, I am quite satisfied with the training provided me.

I feel strongly that ethics should be a mandatory course. I attended one or two of Judge Gilmore's evening ethics lectures and learned next-to-nothing. I was totally unprepared for recognizing and knowing how to respond to ethical problems and I remain somewhat ill equipped in this area.

I feel that many attorneys I deal with are similarly ill equipped and that they lack any concern for ethical problems.

I can still remember my first day as a law clerk, w/ two years of law school under my belt, being handed a file and told to "draft a complaint" by week's end. Despite all the "book learning"--civil pro, evidence, torts, etc.--I didn't have the slightest idea what I was doing.

That experience has long served as a metaphor for how I now see my law school experience. While legal "theory" is undoubtedly important, legal "practice" is equally so. There is something very humbling about realizing that one's secretary may possess just as much legal "savvy" as you do, even though she never spent an hour in the classroom.

The future of legal education must take into account ways of bringing the "school of hard knocks" into the Gothic halls of the law quad--at least for those who, like myself, are primarily involved w/civil litigation. Graduates of U-M Law School will undoubtedly make good lawyers, but one is not a good lawyer upon graduation or passing the bar. That takes some experience--including lots of mistakes. So there is a real need to either bring the "experience" into the classroom or at least make it clear that law school is really just the kindergarden of one's legal education.
When I started law school, it was an extension of the intellectual exercise of college work generally. My part-time work is what gave Law School meaning (in that it gave a sense of what legal work in the real world is all about). In addition, there was so little research and writing in my law school curriculum that part-time work was truly necessary for one to acquire those necessary skills. My conclusion from this is that the writing and advocacy course should be expanded and emphasized more in terms of credit hours and, perhaps, grades.

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I still feel a strong sense of alienation from the law school due to the activities of certain teachers in riding roughshod over students and the overall impersonal quality of the education. The "us versus them" mentality of the students at that time was very counter-productive to a mutual educational effort by both professors and students. I wish you luck with this problem.

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The law school is in a position to help bring about change in the area of social equality. Discrimination and oppression must end. Otherwise, the stability of the United States will be in great jeopardy in the future. There must be, and will be change. The law school can use its political and economic influence to encourage the academic and professional success of Black Americans. This may be combined with an effort for elimination of discrimination against Black people in courts of law. The disproportionate number of Black persons in penal institutions reflects a continuing, systematic elimination of Black people from mainstream American society. Jobs are needed. Business opportunity is needed. Justice is needed. Hope for young Black people is needed. Elimination of discrimination in hiring, promotion, salaries, are needed.
The University of Michigan is a fine institution. It provided me with the best intellectual experience of my life. It must continue this effort, and work to bring about change outside the halls of learning. It must work to bring about real change in the real world. Make no mistake--the very survival of our society depends upon it.

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I found my years at Michigan to be the most intellectually stimulating and rewarding in my life. I think that quality of law school education should be maintained, even at the cost of failure to impart the more mechanical aspects of practice. While it might be useful to learn how to draft a pleading, cross examine a witness, manage an office, or interview a client, these items are readily learned on the job and do not tend to impart a lifelong respect for the law as an institution with a history of intellectual integrity or to teach the nature of the legal process.

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Combining law and parenthood is very difficult at times. During the past year, I have been a part-time lawyer. It is very very difficult to practice law part-time!
Law School should concentrate on substantive courses, and avoid "how-to" or "practical" courses. There is no way you can teach trial tactics or discovery tactics or negotiation or how to interview a client--these are all things that are learned by doing it in the real world on the job. Law students are basically interested in getting an "A" and have virtually no interest, in school, about learning "trial tactics" or "how to interview a client"--those are jokes.

The unstated assumption in these questions, and in the law school curriculum, seems to be that the norm in the legal profession is a lawyer in private practice, either a sole practice or small firm, who represents individuals or small businesses with the major portion of that lawyer's work consisting of counseling, drafting commercial documents or perhaps some commercial litigation. This certainly does not describe my kind of practice and I suspect I am not alone or in a small minority whose practice doesn't fit the assumed norm. Thus, I found many of the questions here, and the courses I took in law school, unsuited or irrelevant to my work. Since law school my practice has consisted of complex administrative litigation before a federal regulatory agency and the representation of that agency in court. As a salaried government lawyer the questions here about how I divide my time in legal areas simply aren't useful for accurately reflecting my work. As for the courses available to me in law school, they provided me with virtually no substantive preparation for the kinds of government regulation and decision-making that I find myself defending. What I have found to be my most useful tools from law school came not from individual courses but from the totality of the training--a way of analyzing problems and a style of arguing a point of view!

One thing not mentioned in things to emphasize in law school is the job searching process. Although I graduated near the middle of the class, I have yet to find a job in the private sector, as opposed to the public sector where I work now, even though I have been out of school for 5 years and have been looking for a job in the private sector since then. Only recently, by talking to people at private search firms, have I been given any assistance as to how to look for a job. Unfortunately, because I have been with the State of Illinois since I graduated, five years, that factor works against my finding a job in private industry. Also, I was disappointed in what little emphasis was placed in law school on working for places other than law firms, even though many people I know are now working at corporations.

Most of my feelings about law school are negative. Not all, but far too many, of the students were snobs who entertained ridiculously inflated impressions of their own talent and worth. I think I like lawyers more than law students, but that's probably normal.

If I work very hard, one day I won't have to practice law. But I must admit that my career has provided a strong basic foundation for entry into virtually any other compensated endeavor.
Law school was an unforgettable experience. Not only did I receive a quality education, but I met individuals who will be lifetime friends.

I hope to be involved in the continuing excellence of the school and expect to contact Prof. Proffitt regarding my interest.

I still believe Law School is dehumanizing and socially retarding but I have the highest respect for the profession as a whole. Those who give us a bad name are fortunately very few.

Law School was generally a repulsive academic and intellectual exercise. Quality of teaching was generally abominable, with, however, notable exceptions. Perhaps it is time to select good teachers for the faculty, rather than the impressively credentialed sycophants who appeared with astounding regularity. Student body was terrific, social life very good. Law school taught me ZIP about practicing law, although the practice in New York is sharper than elsewhere. Status in community is low.

My legal career at US Justice was most satisfying. I prosecuted law enforcement officers for violations of criminal civil rights violations. The position, however, demanded constant and protracted travel.

When I married in early '83, my husband and I decided to abandon our lives in Washington D.C. for a community where we could bring up children in a more stable and safe environment. Having two legal careers in the family made the move more difficult. I believe my husband is more satisfied with his new position than I am with mine as an Assistant County D.A. In light of the fact that we are just now bringing children into the world, and I may choose to stay home for half-days, we determined that his career was more important than mine. In so doing we chose the traditional family model where he is the primary breadwinner.

Though the verdict on this decision still is not in (our child is due in eight weeks) I find that the transition from a challenging Federal prosecutor's position with national jurisdiction to Asst. County D.A. has been more difficult than imagined. I find this job provides little intellectual activity, though many litigation opportunities. For the first time I question my commitment to public service in the government. Money never has been too important to me, but I find the pay cut and loss of prestige troubling. Only time will tell whether we each find our niche in this smaller community.

A. If not train, then warn and prepare graduates about the place and importance of counselling, negotiation, court procedures, etc. Emphasize those skills to help people to solve legal disputes generally.

B. The law school should not contribute to, or at least be neutral, as to the continued myth of superiority of the adversarial form of justice, which has led to overlitigating, elevation of procedure above substance, and the acceleration of law into the field of marketing and away from a professional, and only necessary, service when other means of problem-resolution fail.

C. Encourage students to think positively and realistically about using legal training in other than private practice, and allow admissions for those without the goal of law practice per se. (contd)
D. Put the study of appellate case law into proper perspective. Overemphasis on briefs, appellate practice, etc. only reemphasizes the trial practice which precedes. The underlying philosophy that every trial can (or must) have an appeal merely adds to the problems of the court system by those being trained for it.

My years at U of M remain a bad, painful memory for me, but I am convinced that the school's reputation has significantly advanced my career. I think much of the pain could have been avoided if I had been more certain when I entered that law was the right profession for me. Fortunately, I am now happy with my career and am a devoted alumnus.

This is one of the few communications I ever had with U-M Law School.

Since leaving UM, I've attended tax school, I've clerked at Federal appellate level and I currently teach part-time at NYU. For these things I'm thankful to UM whose reputation helped and helps at every stage.

U of M law school put on me what I consider to be an "artificial standard of success," i.e. big firm. The big firm fed that same standard until "success" became narrower and narrower. After five years I left (having a baby helped) and now I am extremely happy working in house in a major teaching hospital. The things about law school which now seem to be most important to me were the "process" rather than substantive courses. I'd be very much interested to know how many women graduates have had babies and how they answered question 20. (How satisfied with balance between family life and professional life)

Being a lawyer is great--as or more satisfying than I imagined. Too bad I had to go through law school to become one!--although as law schools go Michigan is one of the best. I'd have further comments but I don't have time to think about them--as anyone in active private practice will tell you. Adios!

Almost the only practical, as opposed to intellectual, education U/M Law School offered my class ('78) was embodied in Dean St. Antoine's graduation-speech remarks regarding form books and court clerks. If I had it to do over, I would either delay going to law school for 2 or more years after college graduation (I went straight through school) or I would not go at all. (My perspective is that of a solo practitioner with entrepreneurial ambitions).

I am very proud to be a graduate of the University of Michigan Law School. In my practice I find that other attorneys consider U of M as one of the best if not the best law school in the country. I have discovered that many attorneys with whom I deal have a far more favorable image of the U of M Law School than most of the so-called "Ivy League" schools and (while I confess to a bit of prejudice), I think their observation is quite accurate.
Having been in the Army for several years immediately before law school made the pressure seem much less than other students perceived. I feel the law school made me examine my political philosophy and as a result of the law school experience I am significantly more liberal than when I entered the school. Although the course is much maligned by the students, I found Dr. Watson's Law and Psychiatry to be the most valuable course I took in law school. It gave me a much greater understanding of myself and my wife, enhanced my relationship with family, and aided me greatly when my parents separated and I lost my only partner in a plane crash.

Bev Pooley commented to me recently that alumni support provides a $1000/year subsidy per student. I believe a pattern of giving which is established early in a graduate's career would yield the most to the school. Every effort should be made to get recent graduates to donate even token amounts. Graduating seniors should be surveyed to identify potential alumni leaders who would contact their classmates in their city. In five years I have never been personally contacted even though I donate every year.

1. I'm sorry to see law schools becoming technical schools at which "professional" (i.e. trial practice, etc.) are stressed. The sad truth seems to me to be that students are in much greater need of work on their thinking and analytic skills than they think, and that law firms don't even teach them as much in this regard as they do about lawyering skills, and that's extremely little.

2. I think that when I was a student, the school had an absolutely terrific faculty. Unfortunately, anti-intellectualism was all too rife among the student body. This was far more marked among the in-staters.

3. I wish our class had been more go-go.

4. Question 6a didn't give me an adequate opportunity to relate my strong sense about practice among the trial court bar: an amazing amount of truly shoddy work is being done. Amazing.

5. I enjoy reading the Law School Magazine.

Law School provided very little preparation for the practice of law. Training in research and writing was particularly inadequate.

The law school would do well to present to students the array of options which are really available to them in practice and the pain and pleasure associated with various sorts of practice. I think far too many, otherwise bright and well informed students, chose blindly since they lack this understanding until it's too late to change.

I attended the UM to see the world. I received that and much more. The courses, students, professors and activities were instrumental in developing a competent lawyer, extremely proud of the school and determined that my legal existence has a positive impact on the profession.

My three years at law school taught me a lot about the law, a little about ethics, and nothing about how to apply either of them.

I really enjoyed my years at law school. I think I was well prepared for the practice of law.
Although I would hate to see law schools become mere trade schools, I believe that more emphasis on clinical education would better prepare students for the "shock" of real life practice of law. The clinical education should not just focus on litigation, but also on drafting, client counseling, interviewing, negotiating, factual research.

I did not like law school. Part of this is because it was so different from my small college liberal arts experience at Princeton where teaching was important. As a whole, I found the quality of teaching and the faculty/student contact dismal. After more experience (practice & teaching), I find my reaction unchanged; however, my feelings now have an intellectual as well as an emotional basis. Many of the deficiencies I encountered at Michigan are common to all law schools and derive from the history and structure of law schools. For example, I am very sympathetic to the critiques presented in Seligman's High Citadel and Auerbach's Unequal Justice. Overall, the quality of the teaching was poor. By this, I don't restrict my evaluation to in-class lectures or recitations. Little or no feedback was given; there were no comments on my exams, grades were based on a one-shot final. There was no way in which a student could monitor or improve his or her performance. Kafka's works took on new meaning. In teaching, I believe, one tries to help a student learn how to learn. Needless to say, when I teach, my class is different than what I experienced at Michigan. My students typically have 2 quizzes before the final, and I write a comprehensive syllabus for each class. Comments are made on all work submitted. I realize that what I propose is labor intensive, but I feel students learn more this way. In the end, I suppose I favor a two or three year law school experience with another year added for supervised apprenticeships.

As an aside, I felt that having a writing course that was taught by students was close to criminal. Luckily, I had good instructors but not all of my classmates fared so well.

Finally, I have become friends with some of the faculty since graduation. This has given me an interesting insight into the faculty, and how they evaluate and react to some of their students. It is clear that they all care about their classes. What I have found occasionally disturbing, however, is their definition of "brightness" and a tendency to disdain "average" students. Most tend to favor a glib, best and the brightest type of mind which enjoys manipulation without giving weight to the moral consequences of their ideas. Much of this brightness is superficial, it has no depth or substance. Perhaps this is a natural consequence of the present structure of all law schools. Whatever the reason, it is very harmful. Several of my friends, all of whom were "B" students, have commented on how this attitude undermined their self-confidence in practice. It took a while to become convinced we were good attorneys, and in many cases, better than the general run of attorneys one encounters in practice.

I hope these comments are useful. They are intended to be constructive. I am aware of the benefits that I derived from the law school, and for that, I thank you.
I disagree with the testing procedure at law school. Tests should be used as a teaching tool—a test can show a student what needs more work or where s/he has missed the point. Then the student can correct the matter and will, in the process, learn more. As tests are used now, they only tell a student that s/he has missed the boat when it is far too late. Thus, the tests do not measure a student's ability to learn the law, only his/her luck at hitting the right formula, first try.

Law practice in a large, big-city private law firm for an associate (and young partners as well) is high pressured, tense and hard work. Positive reinforcement almost does not exist—the rule is—no news is good news. It is, therefore, difficult to be happy at work. The pay is very good, and status is high, so it is difficult to change jobs. The perceived alternative is practice in-house for a corporation. My solution is to put priority on my home life for happiness, and hope to feel occasionally good about work. It would be more fun to be a businessman, and more productive for society as well.

If it assumed that the law is not completely against my position, then my prior experience with the judge and my knowledge of the facts advances my position much more than my alleged analytical skill.

In answering questions.....I named the professors because my feeling was that it was in every case the person teaching the course who made it valuable or challenging. Courses which should have been more valuable to me in my career (especially Contracts and Property) are not included because of uninspired and confused teaching.

Much to my surprise, I have found that law school exams, requiring the student to demonstrate in 2-4 hours what he has learned over an entire semester, are good training for the kind of demands placed on a lawyer in private practice.

Communication, as a basic skill, must be emphasized and taught more in law school. Some students, regardless of academic position or ability, simply do not know how to communicate—and thus persuade, effectively.

Law school grads are totally and completely naive about what is important in finding a good environment in which to practice law. Private law firms will continue to exploit this naivete as long as it exists via attractive starting salaries with "prestige" law firms. I believe it critical for law schools to do a better job in balancing this mercenary "mindless parade." I have nothing against money, however, it is easy to manipulate starting salaries and law students have no good idea about what else it takes to be happy as an associate and what else they ought to expect from their law firms. Law Office Politics is the issue.

"The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers" Specifically, all attorneys are arrogant snobs.
The ability to write clearly and effectively is the most important skill utilized in my job. The law school might consider hiring writing coaches to work with the case clubs and give assistance to the students who need it.

The single greatest failure of law school is that it divides the legal world into 2 camps:
1. the realm of "pure law," which is considered intellectually challenging & worthwhile by the professors & the administration
2. the realm of "practice," which is considered boring, routinized, and learnable in the real world.

This means that the stuff that often matters the most is stuff we learn at the expense of our clients, not to mention our time and morale. Practice is more than learning the court rules, it is hard, painstaking, intellectually challenging stuff and law school helped me NOT ONE bit on this. What amazes me is the basic lack of appreciation that law schools have for the intellectual side of practice—it is as if law schools assume it out of existence. I applaud the folks who seek to make those connections--I've tried to make a few of my own in the legal writing field.

Put another way, my point is not to subordinate either "law" or "practice" to the other, but rather that law schools--especially places like U-M--must focus harder and more vigorously on the relationships between the two.

The day-to-day practice of law is far different than I ever imagined and significantly less enjoyable than I had hoped it would be. My practice centers around commercial litigation and insurance defense. The pressure to manage and "process" a high number of files is intense. Further, negligence cases quickly fall into a routine which is not particularly stimulating. I do find the commercial work interesting and challenging but it does play second best to the insurance files which form the economic backbone of our firm. Billing by the hour quickly limits potential income and indirectly compounds the stress inherent to litigation. The rapidly changing nature of our contemporary legal practice, the need to keep current, the ever present threat of malpractice and the difficulty in balancing my family and professional goals also generate stress and a sense of dissatisfaction. Lawyers have a valuable role in our society but have lost prestige due both to their own activities and swelling numbers. UM Law School is not particularly well suited to address these problems and does a fine job teaching individuals to critically analyze issues. I would suggest more emphasis on negotiation and trial practice in law school and leave instruction in the art of drafting to senior partners. The course offerings have always been diverse and timely. I only hope I'm having more fun when I answer my "15 year" survey!

I do not feel that present law school curriculum should be modified in favor of clinical programs, as it wasn't until 3rd year that I sensed I was finally understanding the law. However, I see a large number of incompetent lawyers--I would rather see additional year(s) of internship and clinical work added on. The use of the bar exam as a rating of professional competence has eliminated the years of working with an experienced lawyer that used to be mandatory. Now, if you pass the exam, you hang up a shingle. We may be able to learn from the medical schools which require additional practical training before releasing a graduate.
Three years is too long; two is enough.
Part-time professional employment should be encouraged and perhaps given credit.
The economics of legal practice should be taught. "Office Administration" should include discussions of billing, efficient client handling and the implications of legal economics on legal practice. There should be more seminars with practicing attorneys about what practice is really like.

Notwithstanding some of my responses herein, attending U of M Law School was a privilege, which I did and do appreciate.

Most of the practice questions are litigation oriented and are difficult to answer for non-litigation attorneys. I am disappointed that the practice of law is a business in large law firms. Primary emphasis is upon productivity, efficiency and financial viability with correspondingly little emphasis upon scholarly and intellectual aspects of law.

Increase the rigor in academics.
Admit more ambitious and self-motivated students.
Put more value on undergraduate school and course selection.
Pressure the Review to accept non-professor articles.
Revive the Socratic method in first year and Con Law.
Create interdisciplinary courses for 3rd year, such as:

- business planning (tax, corporate, partnership)
- financing (tax, securities, corporate, partnership)
- estate planning (individual tax, probate, trusts & estates, estate tax)
- real estate financing (same as "financing" w/o corporate but with property)
- distribution (antitrust, contracts, UCC)
- computer law (UCC, copyright, patent, trade secret, tax)
- persuasive drafting (admin. law, civil proc., legal writing)
- mergers & acquisitions etc.

[the point is to apply sophisticated concepts--both to learn practical skills but to do it in a rigorous, theoretical way]

The worst part of practicing law is dealing with other attorneys. I'm still seeking optimal use of my joint Law and Economics degree with mixed success.
Law for large corporation clients tends to be extremely inefficient with a lot of duplicative work, and non cost-effective work. The shocking part of all this is that quite often it is the in-house attorneys of the client who cause the inefficiency and wasted effort.

I have always viewed the law school as opposed to the public service/public interest goals that I brought to the law school and that I bring to my legal work.

In law school I believed that a majority of my classmates were motivated by bourgeois materialism and/or ego problems. I have the feeling other classes were different, but the selection process locates very ambitious people, by and large, and the materialistic
and egomaniacal are favored thereby. In practice I find those categories well-represented, but not as heavily as at U-M. On the other hand, my class was on the average much smarter than my current fellow attorneys. I have found status of the law school attended tends to impress only attorneys. Personal skills are extremely important in small-firm private practice such as mine, the abilities to listen and to instill confidence thru counseling being perhaps foremost. I think the U-M's policy of teaching principles and methods of legal thought, as opposed to specific legal practice, is completely correct. The sense of superiority seemingly encouraged was not. In practice as in law school, I have many needs and interests outside the profession, which I neglect in favor of work.

Life: law lacks a creative spark because of its very narrow rational approach--intellectual stimulation within a box.

Law School: begins the long process of taking relatively normal people and turning them into workaholics. It had its good moments though.

Mr. Coffee, give me your brew
Last night I worked till a quarter til 2
My head is aching, I'm feeling so blue.
Oh, Mr. Coffee, please be my glue.
(to the tune of Mr. Sandman)
(all rights reserved)

I loved Law School, enjoyed all my classes except Civil Procedure, and have no regrets about having attended U of M. My best class was Westen's Criminal Procedure, because he, better than anyone else, taught me how to "think like a lawyer," i.e. truly analyze. The other profs I found most stimulating, wonderful, etc. were Waggoner, Smith and John Martin (visitor from North Carolina).

I wish I had had a lot more career guidance. The real world of law is quite different than that of the Lawyers' Club and I might well have gone in a very different direction professionally had I known then what I do now. Certainly the placement office puts too much emphasis on large firms, though I recognize the inevitability of this to some extent. Yet, I don't feel I even learned what practicing with a large firm would really be like, in the long run, or how to distinguish between different firms (they are not all the same), much less other types of legal practice.

Too little emphasis was placed on ethics "etc." I feel that too much of what goes on in law is considered "acceptable behavior." Also, too much emphasis was placed on intellectual capability and "achievement." I mean--being a brilliant student, scholar or lawyer can be a good thing, but it is far from the most important things in life, in my opinion (e.g. are we motivated by love of self or love of others, are we kind and sensitive to others, are we good spouses, parents, friends?) No doubt U of M is a very high-quality law school w/brilliant scholars as its faculty members. But, that should be no cause for self-delivered pats on the back or vain conceit--rather, the school should be thankful for the blessings God has bestowed on it and tremble in awe at the responsibility for using its resources for the betterment of mankind (Matthew 25:14-30).
Law school does not adequately prepare its alumni for life outside a college campus. Students leave law school believing society will reward them with two cars, a split-level home and a "good" job. Young lawyers suffer adjustment problems when this belief is proven untrue. The law school has an obligation to inform students that the American tradition of "achievement by hard work" no longer holds true. One's "achievement" is directly related to "who one knows." After practicing law for three years I returned to a local law school to secure an advanced tax degree. Other attorneys and law school faculty led me to believe the degree would open doors for me. Because of racism and sexism job opportunities are nonexistent for me. I think the law school should aid its alumni to secure employment. I have received no job placement support from either law school; I feel betrayed and deceived by the law school community.

As to curriculum improvements and changes, I would recommend very few but for the upgrading of the faculty. For me, the best courses turned on the quality of teacher. Personality and love of teaching is all important. The substance of the course is almost unimportant, since being taught to "think like a lawyer" is the raison d'etre of law school. I would thus like to see Michigan seek good teachers rather than scholars who happen to have to teach for a living. Such teachers, I hasten to add, should ideally meet the law school's academic standards. However, the primary concern ought to be teaching talent. Not everyone can be Allan Smith, Hart Wright, Phil Soper, Mary Fellows or Yale Kamisar, but Michigan ought to make a giant effort to attract as many as possible like them. There were too few when I was there.

As a consequence of rapid and unplanned expansion in the 1960's and '70's, most of the individuals whose names now fill the letter heads of major New York law firms are between approximately 40 to 55 years old. This, in turn, means that there will be very few partnership opportunities at those firms over the next 15 to 20 years. The "carrot" of partnership which convinced otherwise intelligent graduates of the nation's finest law schools to work like slaves (at relatively low wages when the cost of living and hourly work demanded are considered) is simply becoming too small to serve as an inducement.

I look forward to the development of "professional" class labor organizations/associations and a re-evaluation and negotiation of the law firm/associate relationship.

Law schools should stop teaching law as if this were 1880. No lawyer learns the law solely from cases--he uses secondary works and headnotes, so law students should too. Junk the casebook method of teaching.

The Socratic method sounds good in theory, but only one of my law pros (L. Hart Wright) knew how to use it.

Get rid of the pros who may be great scholars (although the value of a long article in a law review that no one reads or uses escapes me) but can't teach worth beans.

Law students can use academic counsellors, familiar with outside practice, to help plan their curriculum. That way they won't miss courses that will be very valuable after graduation (Family law, insurance law) by taking courses that will be worthless (international law, patent law).

(contd)
Law school was the worst three years of my life. The profs were more insulting than any judge or lawyer I've ever encountered, and the whole process seems to maximize busy work and minimize learning. Do we really need a "hell week" lasting three years for those wishing to join the legal fraternity?

I am sincerely grateful to the people at the Law School for a number of reasons, among them being admitted to the school in the first place. I believe it is very important to elite educational institutions to admit qualified individuals of diverse backgrounds and of lower than average economic origins. From what I know of my law school, it appears to me that an effort is being made to do exactly that.

In my practice, I attempt to "repay" the people of Michigan for the opportunities I was given by supplying the highest quality of legal service I can give to all my clients, at a reasonable fee. On many occasions, I have reduced my fee substantially in "deserving" cases. Of course, I do expect to be paid a fair fee by those who can well afford it. To a certain extent, I have difficulty in reconciling the business aspects of my profession (paying the bills, making a good income, etc.) with the service aspects (helping people, serving "justice," etc.).

With regard to Question D5(e)(mandatory requirement that attorneys devote a specified amount of time each year to pro bono legal services), I favor requiring attorneys to give money in lieu of service.

Also, what about the working and middle classes who cannot afford legal services?

Except for some nuts and bolts courses in UCC, federal tax, evidence, etc., law school was only a tedious necessity enroute to becoming a practitioner. It is still an incohesive, messy educational process. Although I graduated with high grades at Michigan, I occasionally feel I learned more in the BAR/BRI bar course in six weeks to bring that mess together than any other process at the school could have achieved.

I believe Michigan is too big, and on reflection, I should have attended a smaller school. For the student with reasonably high grades but not sufficient to make Law Review, there are few writing opportunities after 1st year, which are sorely needed, and little creative give and take in classes.

Although I worked diligently every night (and inflicted three years of intolerable stress on my wife), my only significant warm feeling about law school was attending Michigan sporting events and attending J. J. White's class on UCC.

In the six years since I graduated from law school, I served as a prosecutor staff judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps, and as a Law Clerk to a U.S. District Judge. I believe my education at the University of Michigan Law School provided superb preparation for the careers I have pursued to date.

The law is overly complex, litigation is too expensive, and the whole thing is generally bullshit—but it is a good living.
I currently work for Student Legal Services at U of M. I find this kind of pre-paid "legal insurance plan" an excellent way to dispense legal services.

Concerning the quality of education at U of M Law School: The Clinical Law Program was an excellent educational experience. Working with the Environmental Law Society was also very good.

The professors, for the most part, were not especially good teachers, even if they were excellent scholars. They should spend more time discussing the basics of the law rather than advancing immediately to the gray areas. The profs should have assistance in improving their teaching techniques. The Socratic method, as practiced, is mostly a waste of time. Straight lectures with open question format is more effective. Joe Sax used that format with great success. Much more genuine give-and-take results. Asking half-informed students questions about the obscure areas of the law is a waste of everybody's time. There were occasional exceptions. Some profs were more artful in using the Socratic method, but they were rare.

More emphasis on practical aspects of law would be helpful: How to write a Complaint, for example.

The summer before I entered Michigan Graduate School in political science, I worked for a tenants' rights lawyer in Massachusetts. After 3 weeks, it was clear to me that that was what I wanted to be. After 1½ years in Graduate School, I got a Master's and entered Law School. The sole purpose of law school was to get through and graduate so I could take the bar exam. Along the way, I happened to be able to take a number of clinical law courses, including the Michigan Clinical Law Program, Appellate Practice, and a semester at the Center for Law and Social Policy in Washington, DC. It is symptomatic of the problem with U. of M. Law School that I could not get credit for all of these clinical courses, but rather, could only get 12 units of credit for clinical programs, no matter how many I took. These three courses taught me more law than all of my other law school courses combined.

In addition, I worked for two summers and for part of my third year of law school at the Landlord-Tenant Clinic of the Legal Aid and Defender Society of Detroit under the student practice rule. There I made countless appearances and motion arguments, including four bench trials and two jury trials. I also worked on an appeal to the Michigan Supreme Court, which construed what would be an acceptable appeal bond in an appeal from the Landlord-Tenant Court to the Circuit Court. Throughout law school it appeared that being a tenants' rights lawyer would be a difficult job to obtain or create, due to the generally unfavorable political climate prevailing. However, in 1977 and 1978, legal services programs were expanding at a tremendous rate, due to the goal of "minimum access" of legal services to all poor people.

Along the way, in 1977 I fell in love with another entering 3rd year law student and we decided to link our fortunes....and landed jobs together at a Neighborhood Legal Assistance Program in South Carolina....After 2½ years in general practice we obtained jobs with Client Centered Legal Services of Southwest Virginia....We now have a 10½ month old son.....Each of us got 3 months parental leave to care for him....a benefit we would not have had outside
of legal services. While legal services can be frustrating at times, we have outlasted the first (and hopefully last) Reagan term, and I cannot think of any legal work I would rather do.

Questionnaire tends to assume modern "liberal" social philosophy.

I worked hard to get through law school and I am very proud of the fact I attended Michigan. I find I have a strong general background that prepared me for anything I have faced thus far.

During the time I was in law school the tuition I was charged was so high as to make day-to-day living uncomfortable. I had intended and did in fact remain in Michigan after graduation, yet I never qualified for in-state tuition. Further, the percentage tuition increases each year, when compared to the other schools in the University, was so high that it caused a great deal of resentment and bitterness. That, combined with the cavalier attitude of the staff (not faculty) toward students in general throughout the University has caused me to refrain from making any contributions to fund raising drives.

I had a genuinely positive experience at U of M and I remember my law school days fondly. It is however a very stressful experience and contributed to the demise of my first marriage.

Occasionally I was made to feel like I didn't belong at U of M, or that my race made others doubt my competence. Those incidents were few and were far outnumbered by meaningful interaction with individuals of all races....

Good luck with your statistical compilations.

1. I resented the second-class treatment of transfer students.
2. Most students were more proud of how long they had lasted on Harvard's wait-list than of going to Michigan.
3. I loved going to law school at Michigan.
4. Michigan is the reason I was offered my job.
5. I earnestly hope Michigan keeps its high standards of excellence.
6. Jerry Israel is a terrific guy.

I thank the school for having given me the chance to contribute, as a lawyer, to society. While some change to the curriculum may be advisable, it is generally adequate.