Class of 1979 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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RESPONSES FROM THE MEMBERS OF
THE CLASS OF 1979
TO THE LAST QUESTION ON SURVEY ASKING FOR
"COMMENTS OF ANY SORT ABOUT YOUR LIFE
OR LAW SCHOOL OR WHATEVER"

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U-M Law School was without a doubt the best 3 years of my life.

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It is possible to provide a "national law school" curriculum at a superior academic level which better prepares students for post-schooling careers. Increased reliance on faculty with considerable (25 years) practical experience, "real life" sabbaticals and a better attitude by faculty would improve the quality of legal education of UMLS. This is not to argue for increased "clinical" education; academics are what law schools are for. Additional emphasis on new curricular areas (e.g. telecommunications, finance, etc.) would also help.

UMLS was a fine place for legal education; perhaps a new course or two on "Lawyers as People" or "Lawyers as Managers" would make it more useful, too!

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The bias of the form appears to be towards trial attorneys. For example, the skills section lists all aspects of being a trial attorney -- interviewing witnesses, factfinding, drafting pleadings, writing briefs, arguing motions -- yet lumps all other legal drafting into one category. Consequently, I found it difficult to answer the form. From my answers, it appears I only do one type of work. Yet, I do all kinds of different things in connection with my estate planning and probate -- tax planning, tax counseling, drafting of partnership agreements, research, protests to the IRS, negotiation, some real estate, etc. Another member of my firm spends a great deal of time with private foundations and other charitable institutions. The layman may perceive the lawyer as a litigator, but for many lawyers today, that perception is unrealistic.

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I did not have answers to questions 9 & 10. I realize that I work in a narrow specialty (corporate taxation), my preparation for which would have been better had I taken more tax courses. The Law School's offering of courses could have been broader 1976-1979 -- I don't know what it is today.

I do not conclude from the above that a significant portion of law school students would benefit from such an expansion. I think that the role of the law school is limited in providing practical training to those of us headed for large firm practice. Consequently, although I was inadequate in certain areas when I left law school, I would not tinker with the curriculum for that reason. Moreover, some of my inadequacies came from not taking advantage of the courses offered.

I expect that those who are bound for smaller practices would have a different view. It seems to me that current law school curricula are well suited to the Wall Street practice I am familiar with, and that it is for the benefit of styles of practice with which I am not familiar that curricula changes are necessary.

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Top-notch legal education cannot continue to down-play the critical importance of training in basic legal skills. Practice and procedure courses should be made mandatory or at least more accessible to law students. Much more emphasis should be placed upon legal writing, and some basic training in oral examination should be provided. Civil Procedure, in particular, should be taught in a practical vein, perhaps tracing case examples through the legal system from preparation of a complaint to payment of court costs. That course and its professor (now departed) were the worst I had as an undergraduate or law student, and his course book can be charitably described as a bad joke.

Despite these criticisms, I have little but praise for the Law School overall. With the moot exception noted above, the Law School has an excellent professional staff which is the principal reason for its well-deserved reputation.

Overall, I am very satisfied with both my professional life and my family life. U of M Law School prepared me well to be a lawyer. My ongoing complaint is that there isn't enough time in any day to do all that I want to do -- either in my work or just for me. I never seem to have time to read for pleasure, or write to absent family members. I'm a sucker for most anyone who needs help with most any liberal cause, and I take on more than I should. I also get big ideas now and then and am foolish enough to carry them out sometimes (e.g. I am founding President of a women's bar association). But I guess I wouldn't be happy any other way.

I went to college on a part-time basis while working full-time, so I particularly enjoyed the luxury of developing deep, and I believe lasting, friendships in law school. The very best and most lasting benefit of law school, however, was that I met my husband, a fellow student. We married the day after graduation and our life continues to be a storybook romance -- a fruitful one, too. We have a son who brings us endless joy and we hope for a daughter in a couple of years.

I have become convinced that a legal education requires an internship program following 3 years of law school. It shouldn't be a requirement of graduation, but it should be a requirement of admission to the Bar. There are too many ill-prepared solo practitioners out there.

I attended U of M Law School, solely because I wanted the challenge, personally, together with the benefits of reputation of being U of M LS grad -- The Alumni community of the L.S. +, before, the fellowship of students at UMLS. -- Afterwards, I started as a litigator in a civil-state Att'y Gen'l's office, I was promoted to Chief Counsel's staff, I did appellate, writing & research which greatly sharpened these skills -- to some extent, U of M LS does not have the ability to offer courses which "focus" legal skills w/ specific substantive law -- perhaps ongoing writing exercises, based on The Civil Rules -- Rules 12, 26, 30, 37, 56, 60 -- would provide a useful base to put Law School theory into context.
When I was in law school, I thought it was too theoretical and not practical enough. In practice, however, I am very pleased that my education was theoretical because

1) there is precious little time in law school and should be directed toward improving thinking and analytical skills.
2) there is a lifetime to learn substantive law.
3) If one never learns to think and analyze "legally" or "logically", knowledge of substantive law is of little help in itself.
4) So many situations arise in the practice of law where an attorney is called upon to make logical judgement calls where he or she has no substantive knowledge in that area to base the decision on.

In the large scheme of things, it's difficult for me to justify the large salary I earn and the large hourly rates my firm charges for my work. Just because it's "always been done that way" or "other professionals do it" doesn't make it right.

I'm extremely satisfied with my choice of profession from an intellectual standpoint, but it's difficult for me to believe that my work, in a large firm for business clients, actually contributes to the betterment of people as a doctor's or an engineer's work does. Sometimes we're the grease in the cogs -- sometimes the sand. When I look at all of the intelligent people who choose this profession, I wonder if all of our talents might not be used more effectively elsewhere.

I have nothing but good things to say about my legal education at Michigan. With every passing year, I appreciate more the stimulating environment and the rare opportunities we had to really dig deeply into a legal issue. Now most of us are truly the "hired guns," and while that is a challenge which makes our work interesting, it rarely provides an opportunity to think long and carefully about the law and what the "better rule" should be. I can appreciate why people leave the practice to become law professors -- I used to believe they couldn't hack it, but I think they really need something more fulfilling than result-oriented practice.

You don't get rich practicing law but it is not a bad way to make a living.

(1) The competence level of most attorneys with whom I deal in litigation is substantial. Perhaps there should be a mini-bar exam for admission to practice in federal court, limited to knowledge of the federal rules of procedure and evidence.
(2) The backlog of federal (& state) cases is due in large part to the unwillingness of the judges to dismiss claims which are frivolous on their face.

I strongly believe that the law school, as part of the University and not part of the "outside world," should devote all its teaching efforts to the intellectual development of its students, e.g., the ability to reason and to "spot issues," as distinct from the practical ability to deal with clients, adversaries and courts. The latter set of skills cannot be taught effectively in school and must be learned in practice, under the tutelage of more experienced lawyers.
Michigan is a great law school. I am extremely glad I attended.

Each year of law school was wonderful, and better than the year before. My 2 years of clerking were even better. Since then, practice has been disappointing.

The number of young attorneys (5 years out or less) who are dissatisfied with their law office jobs is astronomical. The hassles, pressures and long hours take over their lives, affect family life and crowd out other interests and pursuits.

I believe Derek Bok's recent commentary on lawyers as a "brain sink" is accurate. Too much talent is devoted, in this society, to practice of law. Lawyers do not contribute efficiency to society, but may be able to help specific clients overcome largely unnecessary legal impediments. In short, I believe that lawyering (at least private practice corporate lawyering) is a waste of society's resources and my talents. Accordingly, I am about to leave private practice for a career in the federal government which will entail management and policy-making responsibilities, and will not entail law practice. Notwithstanding, my law school and work experiences have been beneficial, and, having learned by and from them, I am the better for them.

It's a living--

Law can provide a great deal of flexibility. With this fast changing world, the need for flexibility has never been greater.

I am not an active alum -- Once, while in law school, I went to ask a professor if he could help me understand how my performance on a test earned a "C" -- he took 15 seconds to flip through the pages and declared that there wasn't much to say except that it was a "standard C paper". That was in my first year. In my second year, I asked a professor to expand on a point raised in class. He responded "that's just the way it is" and turned away. In my third year I asked a professor in whose class I had been very participatory (in fact had been thanked for my participation at the end of the term) and in which I earned an "A" to write a recommendation. That professor responded that he would, but didn't think he could say much of anything. Moral: Law school gave me nothing but a paper credential. I appreciate the paper credential but I have little appreciation or tolerance for the process or the institution that I was forced to endure.

The Law School classes from which I continue to benefit were almost all part of the First Year curriculum.

By and large, Law School was not intellectually stimulating, and the overall level of teaching was rather poor. I think Michigan's reputation has more to do with its ability to attract top students than with its teaching.

Nonetheless, the first year curriculum proved its value in the evolution of my career from antitrust (law firms & FTC) to Federal Criminal Prosecutor (Assistant U.S. Attorney, Middle District, Fla.).
I very much enjoyed the years I spent in Ann Arbor, and law school (aside from exam time) was a large factor; at the risk of triteness; I'd say it was "intellectually stimulating."

Strategy, judgment calls, & the "art of anticipation" are the most difficult part of my practice -- I think law school's focus on issue-spotting was somewhat overdone; often the more difficult problems are what issues to not raise. If I were czar of a law school, I would require 1st year students to take a "Business for Poets" course which covered: reading financial statements, basic taxation principles (& how they affect the structuring of transactions), present-valuing of money (for purposes of presenting settlement proposals to clients vis-a-vis the cost of litigation), etc.

Law school prepared me for a "typical" lawyer's career -- i.e. an attorney in a law firm. However, in Washington, D.C., lawyers easily work over 2000 hours per year. My son was born after I had been practising law for 3 1/2 years, and it was hard for me to balance home and work demands. Because my husband is also a lawyer and makes a good income, I quit my job to find a way of pursuing my career while still having more time for my son. I am now starting a business where law firms with discrete needs (e.g., one large case) will hire attorneys to work exclusively on that project as an independent contractor. So far, it looks promising -- law firms are interested, and many attorneys have contacted me asking to be considered for work. If you can stress one thing to your law students, especially women, tell them that there are alternatives to the traditional, time-consuming law firm. Also tell them that they'll make at least as much money marketing their own skills independently (after you caution them that they must first develop those skills upon graduation!).

In response to your question about lawyer caused delay, I believe the question is based on a commonly held, but very wrong perception. In my four years with this firm and the 6 months of volunteer work I did while doing graduate work, my experience has been that the major source of delay is coming from the other side of the judicial desk. My cases that have progressed reasonably were before judges who had the time and the inclination to make rulings, set hearings, and hear trials on a reasonable schedule. Those that dragged were those in which it took months to get rulings on even the most mundane matters. Very seldom have I encountered a judge who pushed a case faster than the attorneys (both sides) would like it to have proceeded. Even in those cases, it did not take the lawyers long to adjust to that schedule.

With the crowded dockets most judges face, delay is inevitable. This makes it even more difficult to bring pressure to bear on those judges who lack the inclination to move a case along. Given the increasingly litigious nature of our society (which is certainly a better safety valve for disputes than the generally more violent alternatives), society will need to either devote more resources to its courts or alternative dispute resolving forums, or risk losing all effectiveness of its current legal system for resolving disputes.
The above responses reflect these facts. For the first 3 years after graduation I was associated with a mid-sized (40-45 attorneys) Washington, D.C. law firm. Since June 1982 I have been employed in the General Counsel's office of a federal regulatory agency. It is likely that within the next 2-4 months I will return to private practice, perhaps in another city. As may be apparent, my strongest interest in the law is intellectual. If an opportunity developed and my family finances permitted, I probably would have preferred, and may some day choose, to be a teacher or judge.

In retrospect, the academic program at UM seems to me fairly strong, although it could certainly be further enriched. What I feel is most lacking in the curriculum is a course on the structure of the legal profession and its social and economic role in contemporary America. Perhaps courses introduced since I began cover part of this, but I am doubtful. I think it essential that students be better informed of how the national and local legal communities are organized, the costliness and clumsiness of many of the techniques employed supposedly to protect clients' interests, the widespread ineptitude and greed in the profession, and the distorting effects of placing lawyers at the junctures of all significant economic transactions. In my job, although it is in some ways unique, I routinely deal with litigation or transactions involving sums from hundreds of thousands to hundreds of millions of dollars. Although as a salaried government employee I am not in a position to profit from these matters, it is painfully evident that attorneys in private practice frequently exploit such dealings for their personal gain. I believe this is largely responsible for the growing disrepute in which the profession is held.

(1) I interview each spring and fall at the law school. It disappoints me that the students, despite their intelligence and personal strength, are so often headed, sheep-like, to large corporate firms. I don't think they are aware of other options, and do not realize the pains and problems of working in a huge corporate firm.
(2) Perhaps more in retrospect than in reality, law school was a fantastic personal and intellectual experience. Next to my family life, it's the best thing that ever happened to me.
(3) Someone, somehow, should try and convince students that mid-level or even low grades are nothing to be ashamed of. I did well and played the game -- but, of the hundreds of lawyers I've run into, I don't think anyone's GPA ever made any real-world difference.
(4) Placement Director Nancy Krieger is a priceless asset -- pay her well, please.
(5) People, somehow, need more real world knowledge -- office politics, how to get in and out of airports, etc.
(6) I am amazed at the high quality of the student body -- keep up the good work.

This survey appears to be designed primarily with the litigation attorney in mind.
Many of your questions were personally difficult for me to answer as I have just begun a new job that calls for routine use of legal skills. Previously, as a House of Representatives Associate staffer, and personal staffer to a U.S. Senator, legal skills were helpful but not crucial to effective job performance.

My academic problems were, to say the least, monumental. Much of that can be attributed to my voluntary isolation -- my view (wrong view) that I could do it alone. However, as a black, I must note that my encounters with racism, usually subtle but very real, came from fellow students. A third year student who acted as a paid legal academic adviser, convinced me (through repeated efforts) that as a black I simply was incapable of effective performance and here to fill up an "affirmative action" space. I succumbed to his belief, lost all confidence in crucial moments (i.e. tests) and spent the remainder of my law school years and beginning professional years overcoming that view. Part of the reason for the "length of recovery" was that many fellow students and some faculty acted to confirm my initial unfortunate experience.

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(1) Something must be done to stop imbuing law students with the perceptions (which have stilted my thinking) that (a) private firm practice is the only available alternative; and (b) private firm lawyers are "better" or more deserving of respect than any other legal practitioner. There is a very pitiable disregard for commonsense and experience and a very haughty premium on rarified intellectualism which makes recruiting a boring and largely fruitless task. I'm urging my firm to abandon law school recruiting and rely exclusively on lateral hires -- this way someone else can pay the ridiculous starting salaries and train young lawyers, and we can find people capable of (and with demonstrated proclivities towards) handling people in business.

(2) Law school tests should not assume away issues in classes other than that which is the subject of exam (Business schools don't). This is a skill which must be taught to every new lawyer.

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I believe my bar review course taught me more specific, useful law in six weeks than I learned in any year of law school. This would be partly due to a difference in my motivation and partly due to a difference in purpose between Law School and the review course.

I would obtain more from law school now than I did 5-8 years ago.

Practical experience greatly enhances what is obtained from law school. I learned a good deal from civil procedure and did well in it because of experience representing myself in a suit at the time.

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(1) Having a law degree from Michigan is a valuable asset -- clients and other attorneys hold you in high regard from that fact alone.
(2) Would have liked to have seen more seminar type classes with a smaller group of people.

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Michigan was great but gave almost no preparation for the real world -- I'm not sure that's bad, since there's lots of time to learn about the real world.

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I believe that today's law schools should begin to emphasize real world lawyering skills through mandatory clinical programs. In addition, negotiation and mediation techniques must be the emphasis of the future. Lawyers-to-be must begin to learn how to deal with problems through non-adversarial means and methods. Finally, a sensitivity towards people must also be emphasized by our law schools.

The decision to get off the fast track (large, high pressure, very prestigious corporate law firm) and seek an alternative which allows me more time with my young family has been both difficult to make and painful to implement. The professional alternatives are few. A woman seeking part time work or less time-demanding options is viewed in the legal community as something less than a "real" attorney. My experiences reflect the finding of a recent study of Harvard Law School grads ten years out -- that the women grads suffered professionally from their decision to pursue both career and family whereas men grads did not.

I am currently an assistant professor at New England School of Law (where?) teaching health-related courses. I gain a great deal of satisfaction from being able to keep current with the issues in my field and from feeling as though I have something to offer the students. I worry about the feasibility of returning to active practice in four or five years if I do not now take on clients. But alas with a new infant who has the time or energy for that! 

I am pleased to read that the Law School is experimenting with small sections for freshmen. I believe this will allow those less familiar with the law a better opportunity to clear up misconceptions and ask questions. Perhaps in 8 years you won't have any positive answers to No. 5 "just getting through it!" I hope so.

I loved and still love both the school and the community. The legal education was excellent as to law, policy, theory and principle. But as far as the real live work-a-day world of a trial attorney is concerned, I may as well have stayed home. You MUST get your pretentious heads out of the clean hands clouds and teach your students what it is really like to be a lawyer. You will no doubt save many people a lot of grief, and perhaps one of your thus turned off students will discover a cure for cancer instead of justice.

For me, the "meat" of my law school education was contained in the first year. Except for clinic, which I took in my second year, the courses after first year have not contributed significantly to either my understanding of or my practice of law.

I have professional happiness working as in-house counsel for a large financial institution. The "Michigan" credential undoubtedly played a major role in enabling me to "land" the job. But I have a recurring suspicion that any success I am having in my current job is attributable to personal and writing skills which I acquired without, and perhaps despite, my legal education at Michigan. I confess that I believe I and my fellow workers who are Michigan alumni can "hold our own" against any other workers who graduated from other peer institutions and often stand upon those who graduated from lesser schools. However, I think the reason for this is due to the selection of students in the admission process rather than the teaching of Michigan professors.
Observation (perhaps biased): People who make it through a decent law school and pass the bar usually have the ability to "make it" and become a good attorney. Those who I have seen fail (or who are in the process of failing) either never overcame the post-Bar results feeling that they have made it, the work is over, and now it's just sit back and "collect the bucks" time (this may be a typical response, but it should pass fairly quickly) and those who never really internalize the desire to be a good attorney (they strive to 'get by' and avoid pressures to perform imposed by others by becoming more 'furtive' rather than by becoming 'good enough' to sort the demands on them objectively), and generally taking charge of their own careers and practice.

Final observation: Attorneys, like 'real' people, form their own "in" groups, carry personal biases and generally can complicate your professional life with nonprofessional problems.

'Final' final observation: Everything in life is affected to some extent by chance. All we can do is play the odds.

P.S. Do all grads go on like this, or do I just need a vacation?

Law school should provide more education regarding the practical aspects of legal practice through mandatory classes, including clinical programs, not necessarily litigation oriented. Courses on interviewing and negotiating should also be mandatory.

I feel Michigan provided me with excellent training for my profession. It was a positive experience, fondly remembered.

On the whole, I am very grateful to Law School for the challenge it presented and the opportunities it made available.

(1) Like law school itself, this questionnaire reflects a bias towards the litigation side of legal education and practice.

.......... There is too little emphasis in law school on the realities of the business/economic world. An understanding of that world is crucial to any commercial, real estate, tax, estate planning, labor, etc. practice, and the lack of preparation and insight afforded law students is a major impediment to performing well in the early years of practice. Although I didn't know it at the time, I now consider the litigation orientation of law school as the single major flaw in my legal education. Also, I find the same orientation in virtually every bar association, which discouraged my active participation in those organizations.

(2) The most challenging personal aspect of a sophisticated, large-firm practice is balancing the demands of the job and the demands of family life. It requires constant energy and attention to maintain what for most of us are the two most crucial areas of our lives. The lack of control over one's work and schedule (which is inherent in my type of practice) often breeds conflicts which cannot be avoided. Candid discussions in law school about these important "life issues" (perhaps with practicing attorneys) could be very helpful.
I am concerned that the law school hires too many Supreme Court clerks and not enough lawyers. Although practical experience isn't everything, it is good to occasionally run into a professor who is in touch with reality.

I was repeatedly admonished by Law School alumni and other lawyers to enjoy law school because it is the last time in your career no one expects anything from you. I have found this to be true.

The major dissatisfaction with the practice is that the value of the case, or the business aspect of the practice, frequently prohibit devoting sufficient time to a matter to do a good job. On leaving law school, one loses the luxury of devoting as much time as it takes to a given question.

Depending on the nature of the practice and perhaps the orientation of the law firm, it appears extremely difficult, if not impossible, to learn the law on the job. A new lawyer should probably be prepared to spend a substantial amount of his or her own time on self-education.

I have found it sadly too often to be the case that lawyers are the people you hire to read what other lawyers have written.

I believe that two priorities of the local and national bar associations should be (1) to project an image of the lawyer as an honorable person with specialized and helping skills, and (2) to educate the public about the law (especially criminal procedure and the historical reasons for, for example, so-called Miranda rights).

Serious problems facing this profession:
(1) More lawyers than necessary, creating frivolous litigation.
(2) Jury verdicts out of line with reality.
(3) Mediocrity in the profession and in the judiciary.

The most important thing I learned in law school was that I did not want to practice law. Although at first glance this may seem to suggest law school was a waste for me, I do not at all feel that way. My being a lawyer got me my initial job as a tax specialist at Coopers & Lybrand, which in turn got me my second job with a national publishing firm. What I saw about how business operate, plan, etc. at these two jobs has allowed me to now be running a business I own, operate and enjoy. So although I am not practicing law nor do I suspect I ever will, there is a clear and direct path my life has taken, most of which I am happy with, and without having gone to law school I do not know where things would have taken me.

Law students should be required to think far more about the place of law and lawyers in society. The fact that the University of Michigan churns out a high percentage of lawyers with no higher goal than to make large amounts of money and wear a tie working for a large corporate firm should be a source of great shame to the University.

Lawyers work too many hours, are compulsive people, and do not have a sufficient level of social conscientiousness --

The most frustrating aspect of my career is attempting to balance family and professional demands.
If the profession does not do something to alleviate the hatred and mistrust that the general public has for attorneys, I think that legislatures or the Congress may. When I moved from Washington, D.C. to New Mexico I received a rude shock when I confronted the attitudes of business people, representing all sizes of businesses, toward the legal system. Many of them consider it a hindrance at best, and an absurd, rigged game in its ordinary course. The endless motion practice and game playing that passes for corporate litigation absolutely disgusts them -- and they are looking for alternatives to the status quo which do not involve attorneys. We have to stop beating our breasts and wringing our hands and do something -- or we will be left behind.

Law school was an excellent experience for me. It was stimulating intellectually and most enjoyable. Although law schools are often criticized for not teaching enough "practical" law I think this criticism is misplaced. Law schools do teach the student how to think and to analyze and that is certainly the most valuable lesson to be learned. Practical matters such as how to draft a complaint or handle discovery are easily learned on the job, but how to think through a legal problem is the most important skill and can't be picked up on the job.

Keep up the good work.

I considered my law school to have been a very good experience. I do feel that law schools need to have a more practical approach to law and need to have more of an intern type setting for lawyers to get more experience before they leave law school instead of hoping to acquire it as on the job type training. That is why I feel the clinics are important adjunct of the law schools and should be pursued diligently.

It is an unfortunate situation that, in the majority of sophisticated, profitable private practices, a young attorney may not limit his/her hours without suffering injury to career development. Many of us like our jobs and would gladly trade salary increases for lessened time demands.

After law school, I decided that I would prefer to work only part-time, whether in one permanent position or on a number of more short-term projects. Unfortunately, the opportunities for part-time legal employment in Chicago seem to be quite limited. On the other hand, I do know a few women in other cities who are working part-time under very satisfactory arrangements. Is it me, or Chicago, or both? Or is the practice of law generally not very accommodating for those of us who prefer not to work 60-hour weeks, and those other women just got lucky? I would be interested to know whether you are picking up any trends toward part-time employment and, if so, in what areas.

I was satisfied with my law school education. I am somewhat concerned about the future of the law school, particularly with respect to the hiring of professors. Many of the young faculty seem to have no experience in private practice -- they seem to be ex-law clerks. More importantly, they seem to be interested in the esoteric areas of legal history and philosophy. That is fine in small doses, but to have a faculty dominated by such types would be a grave error.
Legal education at Michigan suffers two fundamental weaknesses. First, the absence of practical education is appalling. It is absolutely ridiculous to release new attorneys upon an unsuspecting public when those attorneys haven't the faintest idea how to draft a complaint. Leaving such mundane training up to senior attorneys -- who may not be in existence, available, or competent to teach -- is a strange educational approach. Law schools should assume responsibility for releasing, upon graduation, individuals who possess the basic skills required for lawyering, although obviously only time and experience will hone the skills generally and as specifically needed for the attorney's chosen field.

Second, Michigan's excuse for not producing lawyers with competent legal skills is that intellectual development is emphasized. It may be emphasized but it certainly isn't encouraged in any sensitive fashion. Legal education at Michigan is directed not at encouraging creativity, synthesis, intuition, or any similar mode of intellectual functioning, but rather at being able to respond to inane questions from someone who has spent their life coming up with questions that can't be answered -- or so it seems. The only intellectual growth I experienced at Michigan was in David Chambers' child abuse seminar -- a course reminiscent of college courses in which I did grow a great deal. The others were an appallingly inefficient use of my time and that of my teachers. Michigan and all other law schools must learn that the "Socratic" method (a gross misnomer) is not conducive to the development of the types of creative, careful and caring thought that our society so desperately needs.

In short, teach us to be lawyers or teach us to think -- but don't just bore us for three years.

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I wish I had taken all the trial practice/clinical law courses I could have taken. Schools like Michigan should seize the opportunity to educate lawyers about the practice of law, rather than assuming that the first year or two post-school will be spent in some in-house training program (as in most large, corporate-oriented firms). I felt unprepared to start "practicing," although I wanted to.

More emphasis must be given, in the process of education, that alternative career choices are available, and more opportunities for learning about those choices must be provided. It always seemed clear to me that the "substantive" courses (after first year and basis like Evidence), should be chosen on the basis of interest and who was teaching the course. The only regret I have is not taking more "corporate" courses, especially the UCC course.

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My practice has yet to take a cohesive direction. I am working in litigation, primarily with a commercial thrust but also involving many P.I. and workers' compensation-type cases. I would like to move more toward a more concentrated practice so that I can gain some real expertise which I currently lack. The biggest single difficulty in doing this is the absolute lack of time to do many things that are quite important. Part of the problem stems from the fact that my organizational skills are weak. (In fact, a law school course in time and practice management could be very useful.) The rest of the problem seems to result from the fact that -- organization aside -- there is simply too much work to do. It is very frustrating to not be able to do as much on a case as I feel should be done. Like many, I have days when I'd rather do something else entirely different with my life (But what?). Still, I have enough other days where legal practice is enjoyable to make it seem worthwhile.

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My family/social life in law school was somewhat unconventional in that I was married and maintained a home 150 miles away. I stayed in Ann Arbor 4-5 days per week, and returned home on most weekends.

I was disappointed to find very few fellow students interested in the arts & humanities, still reading non-law books, etc. I admired the intelligence of my fellow students, but not their sensitivity or breadth of interest.

I started with a summer section (June 1977) and found more interesting and unconventional people in that group. I especially appreciated the people who were older and had already participated in other careers, raised families, etc.

Lastly -- I now work for a legal services program, which I have found quite accommodating to my desire to work only 30 hrs. per week in order to raise a child. My observation is that the private bar is not accommodating female (or male) attorneys in this respect at all.

Consider the discipline involved in law school and juggling family and job factors in my current business success. There should be more room at U of M for people not fully committed to residential student status, i.e., part-timers, who could effectively add a new dimension to the student population, which from time to time has appeared exceedingly one-dimensional.

1. This questionnaire is too long -- I almost threw it out.
2. Teach more practical skills, please. One learns the analytical/intellectual skills that are needed in the first year, but many law students never learn how to deal with real people.

I am very pleased with having switched from private practice to corporate (in-house) practice. Other corporate lawyers I have met have been, on the whole, intelligent, well-informed, honest, and satisfied with their jobs. As a law student I somehow got the impression that in-house corporate lawyers are "B-Grade" lawyers. Perhaps the placement office could encourage students to look at corporate jobs and could provide information about them.

Another service the placement office could offer is salary information for graduates, to give them an idea what kind of salary to ask for if changing jobs at various times in their careers. The placement office newsletter (reporting to alums on available jobs) is a very useful service, and should be encouraged.

The law school was good, although 99% of pre-trial training came in the firms I've worked for. Social life at U of M sucked. I now lead an entirely schizophrenic existence in which I'm a moderate, conservatively dressed and overworked real estate lawyer by day and a member of a somewhat exotic, creative, avantgarde, partially European and non-linear-thinking group at other times, and never the twain shall meet. It's tiring.

I would have liked to have been exposed more to career opportunities other than private law firms.

I think clinic was my most valuable experience in law school.
Since graduation from law school, I have been exposed to a substantial amount of unethical conduct by attorneys. For example, I have seen numerous criminal defense attorneys lie to judges in order to obtain continuances for their clients. Numerous defense attorneys have told me that I would not survive as a defense lawyer because of my unwillingness to: (a) pay a referral fee to another lawyer; (b) lie on my income tax return regarding the receipt of cash fees; (c) assist a client in concocting a perjured defense. As a prosecutor, I have also been scolded by judges for moving to dismiss a criminal charge before the judge had a chance to appoint the "Bar Reference" lawyer, who could have collected a fee out of the defendant's bond, even though there would be no work to do on the case. The list goes on.

The bottom line is that the legal profession is very overcrowded. In an effort of self-preservation, lawyers have created dilatory and wasteful procedures and low ethical standards to increase their income. I have seen so little law practiced in the public interest that I see no justification for publicly subsidized legal education. Educational opportunities for the underprivileged can be guaranteed by means other than having "state" schools such as Michigan. Why should a lawyer be absolved from eventually paying the full cost of his education?

My years at the University of Michigan Law School were some of the best years of my life. The students and faculty are first rate, not only in intellectual ability but also in personal character. Never allow the competition to overwhelm the goodwill and camaraderie so evident in my years at Michigan.

When I look back at my law school experience, the one item most lacking was contact with the faculty. I was conscious of this in law school and since graduation, I increasingly am aware of what more contact would have meant. More contact means smaller classes but also more than that. Perhaps putting faculty members in charge of individual case clubs, getting them more involved in meeting with students, or arranging for groups of students to meet with individual faculty members.

I am appalled at the bar's response to the ethical issues that arise in the real world. Although case club helped, I think the law school must do a far better job in alerting students to the ethical dilemmas they will face.

The law school did little in preparing me for practice other than as a member of a large firm or as corp. counsel, or of preparing me for the intense competition for legal work and difficulties of finding a decent job.

I view my law experiences and U-M Law Degree with a great deal of pride and feel that my years in Ann Arbor, studying, interacting with professors and fellow law students as probably the single most influential shaper of my thinking.

I strongly believe that my law school education has contributed greatly to my success in business. My development of thinking processes, my technical legal education, and the prestige of the University of Michigan Law School have had profound effects on this success.
Weekly problem sets should be distributed and graded in most courses. They help students learn the course material much better than the socratic method.

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I hope that part-time practice of law will be eventually accepted by more law firms. Only a few law firms currently permit or approve of such part-time practice and a lot of well-trained attorneys (mostly women planning to or already having children) are leaving law firms and seeking alternatives to traditional full-time law practice.

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Law school was a singularly unpleasant experience. I found my classmates generally unfriendly and uninteresting. However, I thoroughly enjoy the practice of law, much more than I ever expected I would when I was in school.

My one disappointment is that I feel lawyers (at least the good ones) are vastly underpaid. As a group we are brighter than our clients and are used as tools to achieve an end. I am overworked and underpaid. I practiced 3 1/2 years with a nationally known NYC firm and worked for a nationally known expert in my field. As a result, I obtained an offer to move to California and practice in a boutique law firm with another nationally known expert. As such, I am well known in both N.Y. and Calif. in my field and have developed a good client base. However, the only way to make real money as a lawyer is to be a businessman, the trick is not to "uncover" money or "save" money for your client, but to make money for it. That is why Marty Lipton and The Hon. do what they want and the rest of us are out screwing around.

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I truly enjoyed my experience at the law school and I believe it has left an indelible mark on my personal and professional life. This survey is excellent, and shows you care. It is very commendable.

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I oppose mandatory pro bono work, but I resent like hell the refusal of corporate and large firms to do any significant pro bono work. People are being sentenced to death and are in danger of being executed because they have no appellate attorneys. A handful of lawyers across the country are representing or directing the representation of the great majority of the 1,300 people on death row, on pay scales that top out at less than the average starting salary for Michigan law grads. "Court appointed" counsel get paid $1,250, maximum, for representing an inmate on federal habeas. Those Michigan graduates who practice commercial and corporate law leave to someone else the sacrifices that the entire legal profession extols. We all ate Adams' defense of the British soldiers after the Boston Massacre as an example of the legal profession at its finest, but it should always be someone else who represents the poor and the unpopular. Chastity is a virtue fondly recommended to others.

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The most significant content of legal education remains jurisprudence, and mundanely writing about the law in submissions to court. Michigan fails by omission in the former, and in the latter by commission in the most obnoxious form. This writer now teaches legal research and writing and supervises students in moot court, and must express his shame at the low quality of instruction at Michigan, as he remembers it, in these most important regards.

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I wish I could present a happier picture.
I am very proud of Michigan Law School and very glad I attended. However, I believe there are extremely serious problems with the law, given its inefficiency, delayed positive reinforcement, lawyer glut and burnout. I feel the professors were totally uninformed about types of law and career opportunities. It was assumed all would go into corporate law. Also, I believe the professors should spend some time practicing law and be less conservative as to the status of law. (e.g., antitrust is changing, so is banking law, etc., but we learned nothing in school to provide a basis for analyzing changes in law -- only rote memory of what the law was.) I have had a difficult time because I was fired from a federal government job because of policy differences. I have been known as a "whistle blower." Nothing from school provided me any guidance or suggestions as to how to proceed. My professors, whose advice I sought, were uninformed and ill-equipped to help. I believe that law school was pretty much "anti-intellectual" since it promotes the status quo. I believe society still mandates that lawyers be leaders and law school does not promote vision and leadership, but self-preservation and obsequiousness. We needed to learn how to "hustle." But students there were all very smart.

(Georgetown L.S. environment is so inferior to UM!!)

I would like to be more active in providing interface between university and private practice.

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I'll offer two comments about law school, more for the sake of getting things off my chest than with the expectation of changing things. First, there is a definite and unfortunate bias towards the litigation areas of legal practice that pervades law school. Fitting evidence of this can be found in question (how you rate your own skill level at lawyering activities) which subsumes the entire maze of transactional practice in two or three categories but devotes six or seven categories to litigation. The 'unfortunate' impact of this bias is that it unquestionably steers many law students to litigation practice at large firms who might have better enjoyed transactional work had only they been offered the slightest hint of the nature of this practice area. Second, the first year of law school is as strong, dynamic, challenging, and useful as the second two years are boring, and uninstructive. While part of the contrast is caused by the intense concentration of first year law students seeking to maximize those all-important first year grades, an equally important factor is the lack of structure of the second and third years. While freedom of choice is normally a virtue, the reality is that most students do not have the information as to their future career plans to make good choices, choices are often made on the word-of-mouth wisdom regarding professors, and the flexibility is gained only at the terrific cost of rendering impossible a coherent, disciplined approach to the second and third years. My suggestion for the second year would be a broad-based introduction to legal skills, including drafting, negotiation, brief writing and exposure to wills, residential closing documents, etc. The third year could be a large series of short seminars which would compress many of the second and third year courses into one or two week lectures highlighting what's special about the various specific fields of law such as family law, banking, international, securities, etc.

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(1) The ethics of the lawyers with whom I have dealt are very like the spectrum. Fortunately, where I practice, you know which lawyers you can trust and have ethics and those who do not.

(2) What complicates this area in addition to self-enforcement is our highest court -- "popularly" elected and at odds with our state bar association. What effectiveness the bar ass'd had in this area was undercut by the state's chief justice after the bar questioned the ethics of the chief justice "running" (unofficially) for governor for a 2-month period, before deciding not to officially announce his candidacy as the political waters were not to his liking. I am very cynical towards our highest state court, its lack of judicial expertise and the members' politicization of the court. If ever an argument exists for merit selection of judges, this state court system (appellate is also elected) is it. This is an issue that should be included in this questionnaire.

(3) Twice in my practice. No problem. The firm informs the second person in that the firm cannot represent him because of a conflict; or returned the case to the insurance carrier citing a conflict in not being able to take the case. The firm I am with is very concerned about even the appearance of impropriety -- a stand with which I am very satisfied.

(4) I thought I was adequately skilled in the various topics listed at graduation. However, I quickly found out that I was not in the field I entered -- litigation. There are many aspects of litigation which the law school does not treat.

Prejudice experienced outside legal profession for having legal education
1) from lawyers: "a lot," for having the ability to practice their profession and choosing not to.
2) from non-lawyers: "a moderate amount," usually taking the form of negative stereotyping when the "non-lawyer" was at a business disadvantage. However, the fact that my legal education was taken at the University of Michigan carries a positive prejudicial value in both circumstances.

Responses are not a reflection of how my present job affects my personal/family life, but the fact that I am married to a practicing "Wall Street" attorney.

The attorneys I deal with (hire) are highly ethical, this is a requirement for me and my employer to hire their services. Also on the level of practice my wife practices law, the majority of her associates and contacts are highly ethical. However, the majority of attorneys that the legal representatives of my company deal with appear to me highly morally suspect.

The one experience in personally hiring an attorney for a business purpose not related to my current job resulted in dismissing the attorney for a breach of confidence on a patent matter. This attorney was referred by the company's in-house patent specialist.

1. I found law school to be a high pressure environment to which I reacted very negatively. The memories are still painful. Insofar as the Socratic method and professional bullying and intellectual pomposity are used to shatter the students' former ways of thinking, so that they can be taught afresh how to think. I regard law schools as an unforgivable horror.

Insofar as bullying and pomposity are employed by individual professors for other reasons, I regard the law schools as at fault for tolerating it.

(cont'd)
The students' own self-built pressure cookers are bad enough; the school should bend all efforts toward relaxing them, not further terrifying them. It's difficult to respond to intellectual delights when paralyzed by fear.

2. Some thought might be given to breaking the mechanical march off to 100+ lawyer firms. I know of only 2 people from our class who enjoyed them and some 15 in the painful process of clambering into the life boats.

On the whole I am very satisfied with the education I received at U of M and my present practice as an attorney. (However, my former job as attorney for a large corp. was much less satisfactory.) I find my work interesting and challenging. My education was stimulating for the practice of law. The only exception to that is the practical skills required of a litigator. Although I participated in a clinic and a trial training course, I found them to be somewhat less effective preparation than I would like to have had. For example, I had no experience drafting pleadings, learning about discovery, etc. Also I took the clinic before the trial training and that sequence should have been reversed. I think the best training for lawyers would involve a one-year apprenticeship (comparable to an internship) so that practical experience could be gained under close supervision of an experienced lawyer. Perhaps the last year (or semester) of law school could be used for that purpose.

I have achieved many of my life's goals, though very few through the avenues I initially envisioned for that achievement. I had to work to support my undergraduate education as opposed to four (or five) years of undergraduate adventure. In retrospect, the tougher moments or events have better prepared me for the non-technical aspects of my career as well as my family and social life.

There should be "Medicine for Lawyers" courses in Law School. I have found that I have needed to know a lot of medicine in my legal practice and it would have been very helpful to have had some foundation anatomy, pathology, etc. courses in law school.

It is difficult to balance a law career and a family life such that the family can depend on getting a fair share of one's time, patience, and understanding.