Class of 1981 Five Year Report Alumni Comments

University of Michigan Law School

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Overall, I'm proud to be a Michigan graduate. My law school years were intellectually and socially challenging—the exposure to such a group of bright, talented, ambitious peers was wonderful. I also am amazed at how non-competitive Michigan was compared to horror stories from fellow associates' schools or within the law firm. I found my law school peers to be very supportive, probably because no one had any doubts that everyone could succeed.

I wish that professors would have had more interaction with students. As a "middle of the class" type, I felt that professors really didn't care about the majority of the students. An effort should be made to get professors to give some attention to those who are not academic superstars, keeping in mind that we all had the minimum Michigan criteria and potential for success.

One last thing -- Dean Sue Eklund and Nancy Krieger are both absolute gems. Their efforts--almost exclusively--made the administration and the law school as an institution a much warmer and humane place.

An afterthought--I was dismayed to read in the legal press about the failure to tenure Michael Rosenzweig. He attempted to bridge the gap referred to in paragraph 2 above. There should be room for a few like him, not everyone has to be Yale Kamisar.

The social contacts I made in law school were invaluable and provide fine memories. Certain friendships developed there are very worthwhile and will last a lifetime.

The quality of the profs and substance studied in class was superb. I am proud of my degree from Michigan and look forward to hearing survey results.

I enjoy running into/across classmates in my dealings with other federal government counsel.

Could use more emphasis on non-litigation practice. I was thoroughly unprepared for drafting documents used in transactions (when I left law school).

I am happy to say that I have succeeded in practicing law in a satisfying position in spite of the hellish ordeal that I endured at the University of Michigan Law School.

I have decided to leave private practice. I have found that
although I enjoy labor and discrimination law as a field, I do not like litigation at all. I have decided to leave my law firm and am now looking for a position as in-house labor counsel, or as a law professor/labor arbitrator.

I wish I had had more litigation experience in law school, so that I might have found out earlier that I did not like it. I think the law school offered enough litigation courses, but I did not take advantage of them. Perhaps that fact alone should have told me something.

I truly enjoyed law school. I liked my fellow students, the professors, the classes, the facility—all of it. I felt I hit my stride in law school. I have not felt that I hit my stride in private practice, nor have I liked it. I am determined to find a position that I like, and in which I succeed.

I still strongly feel that most of my law school education was an irrelevant and useless intellectual exercise. My fellow workers/attorneys who attended less prestigious more "practical" oriented law schools had more exposure to clinical programs and practical courses and are much more effective attorneys and advocates than those who spent 3 years arguing with pompous law professors about some esoteric point in a 19th century case. I became an excellent attorney because of my intellectual ability and in spite of the Michigan curriculum and legal emphasis.

Michigan has an excellent reputation, and a degree from U-M opens a lot of doors.

The biggest deficit I found was lack of knowledge re: practical, procedural matters (motion practice, discovery, disputes and strategy, etc.).

The discrimination I have encountered has been for having a Southern accent, particularly from black judges.

I went to law school with the feeling that such training would prepare me for a number of potential careers. Once on campus the only option discussed -- by students, faculty and staff -- was the practice of law, usually with a private firm, the bigger the better. Now I find myself wondering if I might not be happier with a different occupation, but I’m addicted to the salary and find my options severely restricted.

I enjoyed Michigan and the law school more than I appreciated at the time. I remain very grateful for the excellent teaching I received there. I hope that the School, while maintaing its excellence, can also remain a humane institution.

Law profs great scholars, absolutely incompetent teachers.
In request. #1. I do not share the view that more "training" or skill should be taught at an institution of the caliber of U-M Law School. The system I found there is fine as is. The Problem with lawyers today is that we are too well "trained" and not well enough educated.

As an older student, my comments are perhaps not representative, but the Law School was perhaps the best educational experience I ever had outside of the Lycee in Africa. I hope that the Law School will preserve its low key approach to excellence, its knowledge that it is a superior institution without feeling the need to be arrogant or insecure. And please, keep the professors accessible, it is one of the best features of the Law School.

I find much of my work intellectually satisfying. Nevertheless, I perceive that some of the most intellectually satisfying tasks (litigation, for example) are not particularly useful to society or to the individual client. The high expenses to clients are particularly troublesome. It is particularly frustrating to have clients who adamantly refuse to settle, but who incur large fees to litigate, often exceeding a reasonable settlement amount. Lawyers are caught in a system that requires many expensive procedural hoops, clients who insist on litigation even when the costs exceed the economic value of their case, and opposing counsel who unreasonably refuse to settle.

I had many wonderful friends in law school, but the memory of the ruthless and inconsiderate attitude of a significant number of law schools is vivid. As a group, law students are the most emotionally unhealthy group I have ever encountered. While in law school, I know that 2 students committed suicide, another was clinically depressed, and another beat his girlfriend. There was also a major cheating scandal. From other rumors I have heard, such incidents were not unusual. There are many professors and students who are compassionate and caring. Nevertheless, the law school should work to solve these problems. Somehow values other than "winning" must be developed.

Lawyers in general seem to lose sight of what their role is in the business context. Many never knew. I have found this lack of perception results in many business transactions being aborted because the lawyers wear out the business people. I have met lawyers who would kill a real estate transaction over the question of which party assumes the risk of the Russians launching a massive nuclear attack on the United States. Frankly who cares?

Solving this problem is difficult. Perhaps, a "philosophy of practice" course could help. I'm afraid most law students would not understand, however, given their lack of experience.

A similar problem exists in the litigation area. I hope some
solution can be found. At time, the behavior of these kinds of lawyers makes me ashamed of being a lawyer.

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1. Law School. I was not nearly so alienated as many of my classmates. By and large, I found my courses and professors interesting and worthwhile. Too, I think many people come to law school expecting that it will somehow imbue them with a sense of purpose or that it will help them discover what values or activities are important in life. I did not expect that law school would do this for me and that the study of law should not, in most circumstances, be expected to affect the values and goals one has (at least if carefully considered) which one has before beginning law school. I expected law school to train my analytical skills and to give me an opportunity to think about substantive areas of law. This it did very well. One of the things which I miss in practice is the time to sit and think and work through a complicated area of law (as opposed to finding some precedent that supports a particular position).

2. Practice. I am also less alienated than many of my classmates (I hope that this does not display an unusual ability to rationalize life situations). I practice union-side labor law, which I believe offers some modest societal value and which I find personally fulfilling. The practice is in a firm of 10, which I believe to be an optimal size. The only major problem is the balancing of professional and personal goals. This is an accommodation not easily made if there is substantial overlap (as with me) between one’s personal convictions and the effect of one’s legal practice on the advancement of those convictions. Thus, the major challenge for the next five years will be raising children in a 2 career family without a deep loss of career goals. I look forward to the 15 year questionnaire!

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From time to time I have heard proposals to reduce the number of years of law school from 3 to 2. I believe this would be a big mistake. Althought 3 years of law school are very expensive, I believe exposure to as many substantive areas of law as possible in law school is critical.

I would have found instruction in contract drafting and negotiating very helpful.

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I believe that U of M Law School (and just about all law schools) should change the way courses are taught. The Socratic method is useful and challenging for a semester or two, but offers little after the first year of law school. Students become bored with it, as do many of the professors. A problem-solving approach to most, if not all, courses would not be difficult to structure, and I believe would reduce absenteeism from class, lack of preparation for class, and boredom in class. Too much creative brain power, both on the part of professors and students, is wasted due to the Socratic method. I found it outrageous that on
my last day of law school, I was asked "What are the facts of this case?"

More practical experience should be added to course work. Most of us graduated without ever having drafted a contract or will, prepared a tax return, read a lease or security agreement, or drafted any papers other than an appellate brief. On the whole I feel that law school education does not prepare one to practice law.

I grew up in a small town and attended a liberal arts college in an even smaller town. When I entered law school, I thought a firm of 10 to 15 lawyers was a large law firm. Very early on in my law school career, however, I learned that a large law firm always had more than 50 lawyers. At the same time, I accepted the conventional wisdom that any Michigan law student worth his or her salt pursues a career at a large law firm or, in a few special cases, with the federal government. Consequently, I focused my attention on those substantive courses said to have the most appeal to large corporate law firms while shunning the trial practice courses which I now wish I’d taken. (I do not deny for one minute that the substantive courses were valuable. I only wish that at some point I had substituted 3 hours of trial practice for 3 hours of substantive law. Michigan gave me skills which enable me to teach myself substantive law. It is now much harder, at this point in my career, to gain trial practice skills.) I also spent 2 miserable summers and 3 miserable post-graduate years working in a large corporate law firm. Although I consistently received excellent reviews while working in these firms, I found the work so unsatisfying that I seriously considered leaving the practice of law altogether. I think I stayed at my firm as long as I did because I could not reconcile my dissatisfaction with the fact that I was performing well in the setting in which I had been taught all successful Michigan graduates should want to perform. At any rate, 2 years ago I decided to give the law one final try before leaving it for a new career. Fortunately for me, I found a position as assistant general counsel for a university. As you can see from my answers to this questionnaire, I enjoy my current position very much.

I write all of this only to encourage you to encourage your current students to explore seriously the varied forms of practice that a Michigan law degree affords. Despite what the Wall Street recruiters say, one can be a good lawyer and one can have a rewarding career in law even if one doesn’t work in a large corporate law firm. I, for one, believe that I am a much better lawyer today than I would have been had I stayed at my large firm. I know that I am a much happier lawyer.

Law school was a positive experience, but I didn’t go because I had a lifelong desire to practice law. Rather, I was curious about the process, so I applied, got accepted, and it seemed like
too good an opportunity to pass up. I don’t regret it for a minute, but I doubt that I’ll spend the rest of my career in private practice, and maybe not even in the legal practice. More than anything else, the experience has opened my eyes to other opportunities.

I think my law school experience was excellent and that U of M well prepared me for my occupation.

U-M provided a prestige degree and an incredible door opener across the nation for me. However; the Law School does little to provide students with an education regarding the possibilities of the use of the degree. When I graduated I actually believed that everyone went to work for either an insurance defense firm, a securities firm, a bank or on Wall Street. Few other options presented themselves. Every fall like a lemming I interviewed with anyone who would talk to me and I traveled all over the country at other people’s expense. I never really even knew what I was really interviewing for, although the summer clerkships taught me a great deal. Unfortunately you get "tracked" through the clerkship system also.

The lack of emphasis on dispute resolution, including litigation was scary. I really got very little training for court room practice. Trial practice was always full; and under-staffed. Clinic was terrific. Tort litigation as a career was never addressed—like U-M grads were too good for that. Many of us, however, do plaintiff’s tort litigation and enjoy it immensely.

One of my most valuable experiences at law school was Law Review—the discipline and process of researching a problem in detail, analyzing the problem and responding to critiques. Any action you would take to expand writing and research opportunities should be pursued.

One significant gap in the law school curriculum is the art of non-substantive "lawyering"—particularly negotiating. I did not take "The Lawyer as Negotiator" but from my understanding of its format (mock negotiations with grades based on whether you "won" the negotiation), it is misleading and not helpful. In my experience in negotiation, it is largely a "win-win" process of mutual accommodation and problem-solving. There should be a course on the strategy, goal and art of client counseling—preferably taught by a practitioner—based on a "text" such as "Getting to Yes" or Herb Cohen’s "You Can Negotiate Anything."

The student body at the University of Michigan was comprised of a wonderful, diverse group of people. With respect to my legal education, I believe that its overall quality was high; however, the method of teaching was too traditional and did not match the diversity of the student body. By the third year, law school became almost rote. In general, I greatly enjoyed my law school
Law School at Michigan was one of the most pleasant experiences of my life. I found the majority of my classes extremely interesting and challenging. I did not feel a lot of the tension that many of my classmates seemed to feel, but I attribute that to the fact that I had a well-balanced personal life (husband and baby) outside of school—helped me keep my priorities straight.

I have found that the practice of law is much different than the "law school experience." I don't fault law schools in general or Michigan Law School in particular for this fact. I would not want nor do I think it would be helpful that law schools mimic law practice. Law school represents the best in our ambitions, the striving to learn, to understand, to divine reason and purpose in the law. Law practice tends, from my experience, to be consumed by lower ambitions such as making a buck, getting ahead, impressing a partner with a song and dance, phony enthusiasm and working unnaturally long hours that leaves little time to enjoy the fruits of one’s labors. What's worse is that little seems to change as one moves on to partnership. This may not be at all unique to the practice of law (I fear it is not) but is is disheartening. Not all of the practice of law stokes such a negative chord in me but it seems that the negative crowds out the positive moments. There are many pressures placed on the young lawyer today and the pressure we put on ourselves to be successful would be enough. It also seems that too much of litigation is games playing rather than substance. This is the fault partly of lawyers and partly of our system which allows discovery to be used as a weapon rather than a tool and fails to penalize lawyers who abuse the pleadings and discovery rules. These are my random comments at this rather uncertain time in my career.

I think Michigan is too dedicated to big city big firm practice. Maybe there are too few of us who went to small firms, so we aren't worth accommodating, but the entire atmosphere there is that I must go to a 100+ firm. As a result my securities course (e.g.) was all about Wall Street, nothing about Blue Sky, nothing about syndicated limited partnerships, nothing about the securities aspects of incorporating a small business.

Also, the classes are way too big. Maybe you should launch a fund raising drive specifically to pay for more professors and thus smaller classes. E.g., I took Tax I and Corp. Tax in classes of 100+. Now I teach both (Univ. of Nebraska) to classes of 30-60. We have 2 sections of Tax I this fall, even though we could combine them and it would still be smaller than the U-M equivalent.

The nice thing about law school is that the bad memories fade and the good memories become dearer. I was very sorry to hear about
the passing of Professor Martin. Law school was far from perfect and I dislike the "elitist" atmosphere and attitude of some of my classmates but it was the best educational experience of my 19 years of public education. Thanks.

I'd like to see more trial practice in law school. I'd also like to see more students encouraged to do legal services work.

As a woman lawyer I have been more fortunate than many in not encountering direct discrimination against me personally because of my gender. However, the standards for women in this firm and in the profession generally are stricter than for men and it is therefore more difficult for women generally to obtain desirable positions. In other words, women who are accepted in the first place will probably experience less discrimination, but many women will not be accepted because they don't fit the rather narrow acceptable category.

A second problem is that the systems and assumptions under which the legal profession operates, particularly within a private firm, are such that women are at a serious disadvantage. The societal realities of women's lives, with greater family considerations and responsibilities, are not consistent with professional demands and expectations, which are nearly inflexible. I have been subjected to, and expect to continue to be subjected to, this type of discrimination.

I have been fairly happy and comfortable in my role as a lawyer since graduation. However, on occasion I have been ashamed to be a member of the profession because the profession has not acted in the best interests of society but rather has been motivated by self-interest to the detriment of society, or has simply lacked the courage to act in an appropriate manner, or has been represented by a person who did not embody the highest of ideals. In particular, I was and continue to be ashamed and angered by:

1. Congress' repeal of the domestic 10% withholding tax on interest and dividends, which made good sense as a tax policy matter and which had been enacted a mere 11 months before its repeal and never went into effect. The spinelessness of the repeal was breathtaking.
2. The ABA's decision regarding the responsibility of lawyers to inform authorities as to the criminal intentions of their clients.
3. The obstructive actions of personal injury lawyers in hindering responsible debate and action to solve the country's insurance crisis, and the irresponsible and preposterous suits that have led to the crisis.
4. The obscenity of Ed Meese as the highest law enforcement officer in this country, and Brad Reynolds' malicious twisting of every well-intentioned civil rights law in sight.
5. The ABA's gutless "qualified" recommendation of Dan Manion and the other judicial nominees like him, who are and were
unqualified in the extreme and who have no business sitting on a federal bench. (In this regard, I am quite proud of the law school deans who, eschewing political inclination, strongly urged the Senate to reject Manion.)

I feel that these are society-wide problems that lawyers should be in the forefront of solving (not that I’ve lifted a finger, admittedly); but we have not acted forcefully, and are therefore part of the problem.

I did not wish to be involved in a clinical course in law school. I did, however, wish to receive some training for courtroom practice. I was unable to get any such training because the few trial advocacy classes provided were always oversubscribed, so much so that I could not get in even in my 3rd year of law school. I think this certainly made me less prepared as a future litigator when I entered practice. The oversubscription of the trial advocacy classes existed in all 3 years of law school and, unfortunately, never was remedied.

I practice mainly civil rights law and constitutional law from both plaintiff’s and defendant’s perspective. I love this aspect of my practice.

I think law schools have to undertake the job of training in more practical areas -- namely negotiation and litigation. No trial attorney should graduate without courses in these areas.

I do not believe the basic course areas should be changed significantly. Background in contracts, torts, constitutional law and commercial transactions are necessary to be effective in any area of practice.

Law school does not prepare graduates to practice law. Change your emphasis. Get away from "concepts" and "teaching students how to think about problems." Move toward black letter law, nuts and bolts, and law school-as-a-trade school.

Eliminate things that stratify law students, such as Law Review.

Discourage professor-student fraternization. It was unfair in 1978-81 and I bet it still is.

U of M does little or nothing for those of us who decide to practice outside of the corporate/big firm sphere. When I was looking for a job, the placement office didn’t even have the addresses of major labor union legal departments or labor law firms.

My fondest memory of higher education is financial aid. I couldn’t have made it through without it.
My overall law school experience was very good. The diversity of the faculty and the student body introduced me to a broad range of intellectual approaches, philosophical attitudes and social backgrounds which I feel have made me a better attorney and a better person. The University of Michigan Law School provided me with a total learning experience that can only be achieved in an environment that provides a unique blend of legal theory, analytical training, practical training and an honest perspective of the legal profession. I sincerely believe that the education I received at the Law School has resulted in a very positive improvement in my life, and for that I will be forever grateful.

As in law school, life as a lawyer changes from day to day, from assignment to assignment. Answering questions about the intellectual challenge of my job is difficult, given the broad range of assignments. Some cases are fascinating, some are pedestrian, there is really no way to give an overall impression. In the same way, working endlessly on challenging assignments is gratifying; working endlessly on routine matter is torturous. Again, it is not the hours that breed dissatisfaction, it is the purpose to which I dedicate those hours. I suppose, like most people's, my satisfaction with my job, my personal life and the balance I have struck is constantly in flux.

This was not the case in law school. With a few notable exceptions I disliked law school almost every day. One reason for that, perhaps, was that the law is taught in many classes as a series of discrete rules. The best classes I had tended to take the approach that the law was an evolving piece of intellectual history that somehow reflects an attempt to fashion an organic and fair system. When challenged to "get up on top of the world, look down, and ignore all the flyspecks," I felt (and still feel) that the study of law was something worthwhile. To solve specific problems within that context seems to me to be the better way to instruct. I was also disturbed by what I felt was the law school's lack of interest in education. While certain teachers labored to instruct, I always believed that, as an institution, Michigan was completely unconcerned about my intellectual progress. On graduation I felt not that I had been welcomed to the fellowship of educated men and women, but merely that I now had privileges to the Lawyers' Club.

I hated every minute of every day of law school after the novelty wore off (3 weeks); ditto for practicing law. Despite same, I graduated cum laude and did well in practice, winning a nice important case in the 3rd Circuit before bagging the whole sleazy business.

I found lawyers to be even more smarmy, smug and self-satisfied than I expected, and more willing to prostitute themselves--and even willing to believe the fantasies they were inventing on behalf of their clients.
My experience in big-firm, big-time law taught me an utter and absolute disrespect for the law. It took me nearly two years after leaving law to begin to be an honest and ethical person again.

The best part of law school is the first year. I would hope that the Law School can resist the temptation to tamper with it.

Clinical courses are a complete waste of time.

Michigan Law prepared me wonderfully for the intellectual aspects of both bar examination and law practice. More practical/advocacy/trial skills preparation, although painful, would have been useful. Since the practice of law teaches these skills "OTJ", the line is hard to draw - i.e., if you don't learn about constitutional and other esoteric legal principles at law school you are unlikely to take the time to master them while practicing, but you will learn advocacy while practicing or you will lose your job. My recommendation is to require a "NITA" style hands-on program, possible in the evenings early in a semester or two, to give law students a perspective on how to apply intellectual principles to specific facts and present them to a court. (Cheap alternative--make all students master McElhaney's Trial Notebook)

Law school doesn't prepare students for dealing with difficult personalities which abound in law. The Socratic method encourages asking questions, but most partners dislike answering questions. To ask a question is a sign of ignorance. Law firms expect instant expertise without providing the training necessary for the same. The pressure upon associates to produce is very high and I believe may become self-destructive in that law firms will lose those who can best train incoming ranks.

I wish the Placement Office had done a more effective job of providing information about legal positions besides those available with large, prestigious corporate law firms. I am not alone among my classmates in recalling a "mind set" that seemed to brand anyone a failure for not going with one of those firms. I followed the crowd to one and then another such firm and was both unhappy with my career and life and ineffective, both in my own estimation and according to the evaluations of my superiors. Now I am practicing with a government agency and making no more money that I did upon graduating the Law School in 1981 but thrilled with my work and collecting accolades from my supervisors.
I only wish I'd known more about alternatives to large firms five years ago. The Law School could do a tremendous service to its current students by educating them as to the alternatives and assuring them that large firms are probably best suited to a minority of graduates.

Working on the Michigan Law Review was the best preparation for practice of all the activities and courses I participated in during law school.

Great school; great people; great community.

In addition to the opinions disclosed in the foregoing survey, I would like to add that one of my greatest surprises on entering private practice was that the subtle discrimination and disfavor accorded to female attorneys is greater and more pervasive than I expected or was led to expect as a law student. The laboring oar of this profession is carried by, and the major decisions are made by, attorneys in 45-60 age bracket. These are overwhelmingly men, and the threat they universally feel by every young attorney who enters the practice is doubled when that attorney is a woman. This is a profession where the ability and success of the professional is as much determined by his confidence and conviction of power as by actual ability. The threat of being bested by a woman in a combative situation strikes to the very core of a male attorney's concept of success as well as the manhood of which success is seen to be vital part.

In addition, I am disappointed to see that the practice of law, particularly in the high quality firms and organizations that the University of Michigan encouraged us to aspire to, has developed a lifestyle that makes it impossible to have a normal family life. The good high-powered attorney is simply expected to spend incredible hours away from home, and to travel at the drop of a hat. If that attorney would be a woman, time taken out to have or raise children lengthens the time to partnership, and may in fact take her out of the track altogether. I would like to see the legal profession, which if anything is characterized as having one of the most flexible work schedules possible, take leadership in developing a workstyle/lifestyle that accommodates both personal and professional responsibilities and does not always put family and personal concerns second.

With respect to question 12 (discrimination or adverse treatment), you will note that it is a particularly difficult one to answer. My practice is internationally oriented and client adverse treatment—the little that exists—appears to be somewhat culture bound. Discrimination by lawyers outside my office is minimal. However, within my own office, I feel that there is some backsliding in the way male lawyers view female lawyers. This is particularly evident in a law firm where the ratio is approximately 9 (men)/1 (women).
For both personal and professional reasons, my years at U. of M. were ones of tremendous growth and were incredibly satisfying socially and intellectually.

I have very favorable recollections of law school, both from an intellectual standpoint and from a social perspective.

My feelings about practicing law are, however, less glowing. To be honest, I just do not enjoy practicing law very much and wish I did.

I am, however, not sorry I went to law school—and I am especially glad I chose Michigan. Most attorneys I know disliked their law school experiences—but nearly every Michigan Law School graduate I know speaks of his or her experience in a very favorable light.

The Law School has an ethical obligation to require that its attendees experience after their first year what the practice of law is like, to ensure they make an informed commitment to further study.

The Law School should establish a specific program of assistance and counseling for students who are less than certain that they desire to become attorneys; potentially a separate program and degree for legal administrators, assistants, or administrators should be established.

I personally feel, and witnessed, the appalling absence of realistic comparison to life as an attorney (70 hour weeks, intense pressure, educational inadequacy in the details of practice at other than an appellate level) permitted by U. of M.’s law school administration. I consider it a failing—can you see the challenge?

I really had a positive experience at Law School. I had a social life that has resulted in friendships of a lasting nature. We get together as a group at least once a year. The bond was a result of two things in my mind: living at the Quad for two years (1st and 2nd) and sharing the "trauma" of first year together.

I understand that the School is just as competitive as when I was there if not more so. Some serious thought should be given to encourage students to not let law school, especially first year, twist your mind. Life is more than practicing law!

I was extremely disappointed that I was not able to take trial practice despite registering for the class every semester my 2nd and 3rd years. I was planning to litigate and was extremely limited in the amount of exposure I could receive at the Law School. I was also unable to get into the Lawyer as Negotiator.
class and feel as if I started with a disadvantage when I began working. Add more practical classes as 2nd and 3rd year electives!!!!

The most important changes in my life since graduating law school have been those caused by my becoming a parent. Becoming a parent spurred me to learn about emotional development. The lessons I've learned about guilt, anger, and other emotions have made me a better advocate, negotiator, adviser, husband and father.

I have had very positive feelings about my law school experience and consider myself very loyal to the Law School. However, I was very disgusted to hear about the decision with respect to Prof. Rosenzweig.

*One's health is the most important thing in your life--not job--not family. Absent health, all else is irrelevant.

Law school is a bit like boot camp in the first year. There is an intense socialization process. On the whole, I think it distorts people's perspectives, although it is an economical method of professionalizing large numbers of diverse individuals.

U. of M. Law School provided an excellent legal education. It did not teach good legal writing, at least not draftsmanship or writing for purposes of advocacy -- probably because the 1st year research and writing class was taught by law students who had never practiced.

I found a very disappointing homogeneity and lack of political consciousness among my classmates. Also, they offered no resistance -- and seemed unaware -- of the Law School indoctrination process.

The Law School was a bit isolated from the University.

If judges were more competent and more plentiful, and they exerted discipline on attorneys, the legal profession could make litigation less expensive, less necessary and more equitable. There are too many "paper mill" firms, particularly in tort work, who mindlessly spew out paper. Rule 11 helps in federal court (some judges), but in many states there is no equivalent.

Lawyers need to feel more of a need to do some kind of community service; they are too financially oriented (i.e., selfish).

It has recently struck me that the number of classmates who no longer practice law should not be surprising, and should even be higher, because so many of us entered law school as a late alternative or without any feel for what our lives would be like. I would think that somehow the law school curriculum could more
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strongly advance the idea that the legal education is beneficial even if not used in a typical law setting, and may even be more inventive and useful.

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Although I am currently home full-time with three small children (ages 4, 2 and 3 mo.), I do look forward to resuming my practice. I found that my experience in Michigan prepared me quite well for private practice and that although I only worked 3 years, it did not take me long to become established in a small town practice. At least in a small town, rural setting a Michigan law degree opens many doors and commands respect.

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My only comment is that I enjoyed law school. I thought the professors and courses were interesting and, for the most part, stimulating. I do not believe that law school should dramatically shift their focus to clinical type courses. Learning how to practice law takes a long time and a lot of experience -- you cannot take a course that will teach you everything you need to know.

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I have a very fond place in my heart for Michigan.

I went to law school simply because I had done well in school and was "expected" to go to a professional school. I really had very little idea what lawyers did, and wasn't really very enthusiastic about the things I knew they did.

In law school and in summer clerkships I found one area of law which was somewhat interesting -- employment law. However, even in that practice there were several activities which did not appeal to me, such as negotiations and trial work. Actually, I was never comfortable with the idea of me practicing law. But I did very well academically (magna cum laude), and continued to go along for the ride toward a big firm. I had several excellent job offers during the fall of my 3rd year, and took an offer with a big firm in my home-town, Grand Rapids.

All of these doubts and uncertainties finally forced a personal crisis while in practice. Once the firm caught on, it was only a matter of time 'til I left. I was never comfortable practicing law, and I was actually very depressed for much of the time.

I decided to try to get into law teaching. While I had some interviews, the best I found was a research and administrative position at an employment relations center at Florida State Univ. College of Law. We moved to Florida, and this job turned out to be a disaster. The Director of the Center turned out to be a raving kook, who was disliked immensely and had no respect at the law school or the whole campus. I quit that job after 7 months, and found a job back in Michigan teaching in and coordinating a paralegal education program at a community college.
In retrospect, I think law school may have been the high point of my legal career. In fact, I often wish I could do it over again and go to graduate school in something else, probably English.

I do value my U-M law education, and I remain very proud of the degree and the University. Since my current income is in the mid-twenties and my wife is not working, we haven't been able to give any financial support, but I would like to in the future. It would be nice to help someone who will make better use of the valuable U-M education than I have.

I found the first year to be so overwhelming that I decided to leave law school after that year. However, just before I was to begin graduate school in another field (urban planning) in the late summer of 1982, I reconsidered and returned to law school. I didn't enjoy law school more in my second and third years, but I did meet with progressively greater success. My first year GPA was around a 2.3. My third year GPA (not cumulative) was closer to a 3.5.

My marriage between my second and third years was also a contributing factor in my later success in law school. I was much happier married than single. My wife provided me with the "balance" my life needed. When I left Ann Arbor in May of 1981, I vowed never to return. I was unable to keep that vow.

Life: I have 11-month-old-twins (B-G) and balancing spending enough time with them and my husband, and maintaining a trial practice, is extremely difficult and occasionally frustrating. Still, it's fun, too. My current small firm is fairly flexible, and we get along well. I have been invited to join the partnership the last quarter of this year (1986). For whatever it's worth, I met my husband at U-M Law School. He won't get a survey till next year, tho, because I graduated in Dec. '81 (I was a 1979 summer starter) and he graduated a semester later, in May '82.

Law School: Law school doesn't do enough to prepare students for life in the "real world." A big part of the problem is that U-M can rest on its laurels--most students get jobs easily in the larger, higher-profile firms. They all came in droves to interview students, and pay students' ways to expensive hotels and big cities all over the country. It's very easy to just go along with all of this (I know--it happened to me!). However, I discovered I was very unhappy practicing with a large business law firm and switching to a small firm and to plaintiff's personal-injury was the best thing that ever happened to me professionally. I know that what I'm doing now makes a big difference in the lives of my clients. U-M students need to understand that there is more to life than 2,000 billable hours and mega-bucks. Being in a small town like Ann Arbor, this is difficult, but I would urge the Law School to keep trying to
bring in lawyers from a wide range of backgrounds, to actively encourage students to consider careers other than those with big commercial firms, and to offer more courses that will be of practical benefit in law practice. When I graduated (cum laude, for whatever that’s worth), I didn’t have the first idea how to draft a complaint, how to answer interrogatories, or how to write a contract. The Law School gives superb training in legal analysis, and most students graduate well qualified to research, write and (perhaps) argue an appellate brief. Still, there’s a lot more to life (after 4 1/2 years of a litigation practice, I’ve only been involved in one or two appeals).

The major lack in my law school education was practical. I am preparing to begin practice and law school did not give me any help in how to do that.

Also I feel my research and writing skills are lacking because of the nature of the writing course offered. Being able to write does not qualify one for teaching writing.

I have a great deal of resentment toward the Law School for these lacks in my education. I didn’t know at that time how badly I would miss them.

Law school was a great experience for me. Having time to reflect on interesting legal questions is a luxury not available in practice.

I was a student who loved law school. Unfortunately, I found I was terribly inadequate as a lawyer. The same perception of their skills was shared by my friends. We all found the first year out to be terrifying—and very damaging to the ego.

I’m not sure what the remedy is. A few suggestions:
1) The pervasive attitude of faculty and case club judges was "make it through your first year of law school and the rest of life is a breeze." This is wrong. The first year of law school is tough, but nothing like the first year of practice. All first year students have been students long enough to generally know what to expect. But the first year of work, whether as a lawyer, teacher, or business person, is a whole new experience. It is a jolt to most of us with student sensibilities.

2) Not only offer more courses in the practical aspects of lawyering (fact-finding, interrogatories, memoranda, briefs, negotiating, etc.), but emphasize their importance. My perception when a student was that the faculty disdained clinical-law programs and that any one with intelligence could "pick-up" these skills in a matter of weeks. Thus, I took no clinical law course.

The skills courses should extend beyond the first year. I would make "real work" courses mandatory throughout all six terms of
law school. One brief-writing experience as a first-year student was not enough to make me proficient in this skill when I was asked to write a brief my first year practicing.

I was disappointed with my law school experience. I believe the substantive areas of the law could be taught much more effectively, more classes should be offered which are geared toward the real life practice of law and students should be better advised how to search for jobs which are suitable to them.

To me, law school seemed to be an exercise in which professors discussed issues of particular interest to them while students were left to learn large areas of the law on their own. Little effort was made to give students a cohesive framework of the "big picture" in order to comprehend where the particular issues and areas which professors discussed fit. Professor Kamisar was very entertaining, but I do not recall him ever listing all of the elements of murder or any other crime.

One of the most valuable and rewarding classes I took in law school was the Tax Clinic. Certainly, one needs a background in a substantive area of the law before being able to practice in the area, but more could be done to integrate real-life practice with traditional substantive classwork. I believe that a clinic could be developed to correspond with almost every "traditional" class.

The placement office does an excellent job of attracting interviewers to the Law School in search of job applicants. I believe more could be done to instruct students how to conduct themselves during an interview and how to evaluate job prospects. Many students, having had no working experience, have no idea what questions to ask during an interview. Perhaps it would be helpful to have former students come back and talk with students about their jobs and the practice of law.

1. I enjoy receiving the Law Quadrangle Notes. Aside from personal contacts with other Michigan alumni, either within my law firm or contacts I have maintained, this publication is my primary link to the Law School.

2. I was somewhat dismayed to learn that Prof. Rosenzweig was denied tenure in spite of the overwhelming support of his fellow faculty members. I realize that all professors are evaluated in part on the basis of their research and writing ability and their contributions to their field of law as much as their teaching abilities. I also realize that as students and former students we are not in the best position to evaluate their non-classroom activities. However, I do not believe that the denial of tenure will be good for the Law School in the long run. I understand that it is having some difficulty in attracting qualified faculty, and the treatment of Prof. Rosenzweig can do nothing to
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enhance the image of the School in the eyes of talented young legal educators. Furthermore, if the vote of the faculty was so overwhelmingly in support of tenure, why was it not heeded?

1. I would make law school last 4 years, and make the last year a sort of "residency" as in medical school. It's shocking to see people fresh out of law school handling cases that affect people's lives w/o adequate supervision. This is not a problem for people who work in big firms, etc. But not everyone does. Clinical education is very important, but should not come at the expense of traditional, substantive teaching.

2. I now teach law at the University of Colorado, and it's remarkable how good Michigan is by comparison. My students are much more lackadaisical about law school than I remember the experience. That's too bad. Law school should be an incredibly demanding experience. I hope this is just a difference in schools and not a trend.

3. The debt burden problem is very serious. I graduated w/$20,000 in debt. My girlfriend graduated from law school $50,000 in the hole. This forces people toward the big money jobs and away from public interest work. A program to help make loan payments for persons working at low paying public interest, teaching, etc. jobs would be a big help.

4. The salaries paid to lawyers by the big firms are obscene.

5. There are too many lawyers. It's a terrible waste to have America's best minds going to work for places that produce no really valuable social product.

I do not know what percentage of entering law students plan on careers in government, academia or other non-traditional fields, so I am not sure how relevant my experiences are. I entered law school planning on a career with EPA or OSHA; I wound up in academia. While my legal education has not been without value, neither did it come close to preparing me for a job outside the traditional realm of legal practice. Fortunately, I realized this before leaving law school and entered a graduate school program, where I learned most of the skills that I now apply in my position.

I saw a fair number of other students enter law school with aspirations for careers outside of corporate law who gradually changed their goals to conform with the curriculum and what the interviewers for summer internships were looking for. First-year class discussions about the type of work one would do upon graduating were replaced by second-year discussions of what cities were best to live in. A fairly diverse, interesting group of people were homogenized to an amazing extent.
In short, law school does a poor job of preparing students for many career areas that nevertheless seem to have a large number of lawyers in them. Government administrators with legal backgrounds tend to be more effective advocates for the goals and views of their organizations, but they seem less likely to arrive at proper or optimum goals in the first place. Given the developing glut of attorneys, your strong tendency to steer students towards the mainstream of the legal profession is unfortunate. I have no specific suggestions as to how the problem should be tackled; I am just disappointed that so many intelligent, hardworking students wind up in legal careers that do not necessarily make the best use of their talents and abilities.

I had the rare opportunity to attend two top-ten law schools: one of which was a large, urban law school with a large number of adjunct professors and a clinical "hands-on" focus (NYU) and the other of which was U of M. I firmly believe that the rush for clinical, "hands-on" experience should never be permitted to get in the way of a solid, intellectual legal education. I've always thought that first and foremost, law schools should be in the business of teaching students how to think. The nuts and bolts of practicing law will take care of themselves, if the student has a solid intellectual backdrop in the law. Michigan strikes a good balance between the clinical and the intellectual approach to the study of the law.

As is indicated above, I am happy with my education at the University of Michigan. I believe that the curriculum would be of greater value later on if greater emphasis were placed on business law issues (though I concede that the contents of a curriculum should reflect a variety of values, of which later professional use is but one).

My biggest complaint about law school concerns the lack of feedback. Since the average student rarely gets any response to their work product other than a grade, and since that work product is usually only a final exam, there is very little opportunity for growth. Also, since the curriculum seems fairly rigid, the student rarely feels that they are tapping into what excites their teachers about law. Smaller classes, smaller and more frequent assignments which give an opportunity for feedback, and more creative teaching methods would be a breath of fresh air to a pretty stale law school experience.

U-M's Writing and Advocacy program provides excellent career preparation. I have noticed a significant difference between the skills of U-M students in research and writing and the skills of students at other Michigan schools.

A section 4 (summer starters) reunion should be organized.
I think there is too much emphasis on going to work for big law firms.

I would encourage students to participate in clerkships.

Law school was truly enjoyable -- intellectually and socially.

Thanks for everything.

I am extremely glad that I spent the 3 years at law school vis-a-vis my current employment. However, I did not particularly enjoy the experience because of the time constraints associated with commuting from Jackson (my wife worked there), raising 2 children (our 2nd was born just before 2nd year started) and my teaching at the business school in Ann Arbor as a graduate assistant (up to 40 hours or so per week, including grading, office hours, preparation and actual class time).

"If we had some ham, we could have ham and eggs, if we had some eggs."

Hon. Glen E. Clark, U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for District of Utah