

Profiles of Diversity: Four Members of the Class of 1989

by Assistant Dean Joan Rundle

Three years ago, the Law School conducted an experimental and voluntary survey, which will be repeated this fall, of the entering first-year class. As a result, the Admissions Office compiled a booklet which listed the background and experiences of 257 of the 283 first-year students, in areas such as foreign languages, musical talents, public service and volunteer activities, and work experiences. The survey confirmed what the Admissions Committee members, faculty and deans had observed: Wisconsin attracts an incredibly diverse and talented group of people.

Some indication of that diversity is available in the general statistics regularly compiled on each entering class. For example, the figures on the Class of 1989 reveal that of 286 first-year students, 223 are residents and 63 are non-residents. They represent 106 undergraduate institutions and 24 home states plus the District of Columbia. The women students comprise 46% of the class, continuing a 10-year trend of over 40% in each class. (By contrast, the University of Michigan law School reached an all-time high of 39% in their incoming class of 1986.) The average age of the class of 1989 upon entry was about 26 years, and 65 students had completed college work beyond the bachelor's degree. These figures suggest that the Class of 1989 continues the tradition of diversity which makes this Law School a special place to be. To demonstrate the "spice of law school life," I asked four students of the Class of 1989, who have completed their first year, to write brief personal profiles. Their stories follow:

Linda Bennett, New Jersey



I studied Communications at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. To fulfill requirements in my program, I took several photography courses. Strangely, it was those classes which I think best prepared me for law school. Photographic process is similar to legal analysis. I had to master technical skills in developing film and printing negatives so that I could control the variables to create the images and visions I wanted to express. Similarly, I have worked to develop expertise in researching law and in understanding legal doctrines so that I can marshal persuasive arguments. When taking a picture, I concentrated on what to exclude as well as what to include in the view finder. My sense of how to characterize the facts of a case was prefaced by this attention on focusing and framing the basic question of what to photograph.

During college, in 1981, I helped start an Equal Rights Amendment Action Group on campus. Over winter recess, in Florida and Georgia, I worked to ratify

the proposed ERA. I remember one hot afternoon, my feet were blistered and an elderly man had just spit on me and I thought "How is this going to do a damn thing to make society more just?" Yet, it was the time I spent in Florida and Georgia, discussing with senior citizens, laborers, homemakers and other students the meaning of equality that sparked my desire to study law. Through my grass roots work on the ERA I became interested in questions about the nature of law, its limits, history and theory.

I did not enter the University of Wisconsin Law School immediately after college. After graduation in 1983, I worked a year's stint as a typesetter and graphic artist in a newspaper production company. I worked on the production of the Spanish newspaper, "El Diario/La Prensa." In 1984, I took a staff job at *Ms. Magazine* in New York City and worked there until I entered the University of Wisconsin Law School in fall 1986.

While my job in the Research Department did have its share of drudgery, I felt an urgency about the work that was exciting. Part of that urgency stemmed

from the journalistic demands of the job. I was a fact-checker. I was responsible for verifying information in *Ms.* articles under deadline pressure. That meant reading each article carefully and critically. Then I double-checked each supporting detail for accuracy and tried to ascertain if the facts were relevant and not misleading or potentially libelous.

Aside from the rush created by the push to get the magazine ready for the printers, I felt an immediacy about the issues and ideas contained in the articles. As a fact-checker I enjoyed digging into the trivial and essential facts surrounding social and political issues. One day I would be on the phone with scientists to verify the reproductive effects from the Bhopal tragedy and the next day I would be checking statistics about female headed families living below the poverty line.

Besides the research and editorial skills I developed at *Ms.*, I also gained insight into feminism and law. I had a daily view of the conflicts between theory and practice, the tensions between the push for feminist change and the inertia of the status quo. My research on articles about product liability, affirmative action and child abuse, made me more appreciative of the difficult and complex task our courts face when trying to resolve disputes in these areas.

Currently, I am working as a Research Assistant for Law Professor Martha Fineman and at the law offices of Boardman, Suhr, Curry & Field, in Madison.

I am helping Professor Fineman research the politics of fathers' rights. I am also helping to coordinate this summer's Feminism and Legal Theory Conference. The theme of the conference is intimacy. Scholars will be exploring how law regulates, structures and maintains a variety of relationships.

Aaron Bransky, Wisconsin

After four years of working as an ice cream and frozen foods route salesman, I decided to change my career to an indoor job with no heavy lifting. As such, I returned to the University of Wisconsin as a first-year law student.

Some people told me how horrible legal education was supposed to be. True, I have had to work harder in law school than I ever had before. However, I have not found my home life to suffer from this workload, and I have been pleasantly surprised by the high quality of instruction and by the friendliness and intelligence of my classmates. This friendliness and relative informality is a big reason I decided to enroll here and is one of the Law School's strongest points.

This summer I will be enrolled in the Legal Assistance to Institutionalized Persons program (LAIP). LAIP is a clinical program in which students gain experience while attempting to resolve legal problems of indigent clients. I will be working under the supervision of attorney Dave Cook with inmates at various Wisconsin minimum security prisons, and I look forward to this hands-on experience.

I was born in Chicago and lived there on and off until I was eight years old. In 1966, my family moved to Peoria, Illinois, and there I attended elementary and high school. I don't want to say anything unkind about Peoria.

Despite my parents' goading, I did only mediocre scholastic work in high school. I barely graduated in the top third of my class, but I did enjoy being on the high school debate team and won a number of tournaments and speaking awards. I attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota, for two years, and took a junior year abroad in Scotland at the University of St. Andrews. Like many people, I found college brought out better work from me. Activities at Carleton included the Eating and Arguing Society (informal parliamentary style debate), celibacy, and hopping freight trains to various points in Iowa and Minnesota. I think I enjoyed the freight hopping the best, consumed then (as now) with a passion for the railroad. This passion later led me to two fine seasonal jobs, one as a brakeman for the Toledo, Peoria and Western Railroad; and the other as a coach and sleeping car porter for Amtrak. Since then I have been active in groups (such as the National Association of Railroad Passengers) that seek to promote and improve passenger train service in the United States. I have served as president of our local group, ProRail, and am on the board of the state organization. I also have the dubious talent of being able to recite from memory much of the Amtrak timetable.

In 1980, I transferred to the University of Wisconsin at Madison to complete my undergraduate degree. I graduated Phi Beta Kappa with a double degree in Geography and History of Science and then went out to find some kind of job. I managed a food co-op for a short time until it folded, and then climbed aboard the ice cream bandwagon with Larry Tuthill, Madison's Haagen-Dazs distributor. This job was generally quite pleasant, and it gave me enough spare time to do things I liked. Through volunteer work, I met my wife, a nurse at Methodist Hospital. We married in July 1986, a move that I am glad we made, and we enjoy bicycling, travelling, fishing, and stargazing together.



The Law School admits a fair number of older students, so at 28, I am about the same age as many of my classmates. Those of us who have worked and have been out of school probably appreciate student life more than before, and I hope all of my classmates have enjoyed their first year as much as I have.

Keith Borders, Oklahoma



I have just finished my first year as a law student at the University of Wisconsin, which has been an enlightening experience conducive to my belief of achieving knowledge through broadening my exposure to environmental, cultural and academic differences.

My interest in the law, public policy and leadership, spans from being senior class president at Del City High School in Del City, Oklahoma, to participation in an Anti-Apartheid Rally on the steps of Capitol Hill. In the summer of 1987, as a Jackson Fellow, I interned with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in New York City, a clinical program of the Law School under Professor James E. Jones, Jr.

I have attempted to place myself in many leadership roles to fulfill my contribution to establishing a more equitable environment for minorities. I would hope that my intentions and experience through public policy construct a more aware society.

My current organizational affiliations include being a student liaison to the State Bar of Wisconsin Governmental/Administrative Law Committee, a member of the Faculty Appointments Committee and Black Law Student Association. I have been chapter president at the University of Oklahoma and state vice president of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. I served as the president of the Black People's Union at Oklahoma University and later became the Chairman of the Big Eight Conference on Black Student Government.

Such involvement has lead to my selection for several honors and awards. I have also been fortunate to participate in numerous internships. As a research assistant for the Southwest Center for Human Relations Studies, I prepared a report on the "Feminization of Poverty," and a demographic analysis of Oklahoma ethnic groups.

I contributed to an analysis on Oklahoma Economic Development Strategies for the State Senate through an Economic Policy Internship. I received the Cortez M. Ewing Public Service Internship which allowed me to prepare a summary of the Department of Education financial assistance programs. The information was later compiled in a policy report for U.S. Senator David Boren.

I was recipient of the Oklahoma University President's Leadership Award, Buford V. Lawson Orator Award, David A. Burr Leadership Award and the George Henderson Leadership Service Award. I have been honored as the Alpha Phi Alpha Distinguished Collegian and Brother of the Year, and named Big Man on Campus at the University of Oklahoma from which I graduated in May 1986 with a public administration degree.

Hopefully, my professional and academic experience will contribute to my credibility as a future attorney.

When I am not preparing for classes or examinations, I enjoy "lighter" reading. The subjects I enjoy most relate to public affairs and policy, such as *Minority Vote Dilution*, *Capitol Hill in Black and White*, and *Simple Justice*. I also enjoy easy-listening jazz, public speaking and playing basketball.

Kimberly Patterson, Wisconsin

After working for nine years, walking back into school, never mind law school, is pretty intimidating. It wasn't long before I knew I had done the right thing. Everyone here did their best to lower the anxiety level, and soon I felt as though I'd never left school.

School began and ended in Milwaukee, where I was born and raised. The oldest of five children, I was always strongly encouraged to continue my education. My parents often told me that I could be whatever I wanted to be if I worked hard. I'm sure they never thought I would be a lawyer, though. My dad wanted me to be an architect. In looking back, it seems that I've been almost everything but an architect.

In high school and my early college career, I wanted to be a professional musician. Playing several concert violin solos gave me valuable experience in appearing in front of people. The thought of going blank in the middle of a concert performance is more terrifying than the prospect of losing your place during oral argument—the orchestra will just go on without you! Giving music lessons in violin, guitar and bass generated my interest in education, and later I switched to an education major.

After graduation from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 1977, I substitute taught part-time in elementary education and music. At the same time, I started the job which made me decide that I wanted to be a lawyer. As a private investigator, I got my first close look at the criminal justice system. Working primarily in the criminal defense field, I realized the important part attorneys play in protecting our rights, and indeed our system of law. I also realized that law can

provide a continuing intellectual challenge. I was lucky enough to work with several of the finest attorneys in Wisconsin.

Even a criminal defense investigator's life is not like Mike Hammer's. The scariest thing I ever had to do was to drive across the ice highway of Lake Superior from Bayfield to the Apostle Islands to see a client. Pretty tame stuff!

In 1980, I took a detour from law that lasted for six years. I began working for the division of Hanes Corporation which distributes L'eggs hosiery. In 6½ years, I held five positions. These ranged from the coordinator of a test market program, to managing a region which generated \$8 million per year in sales, to generating \$6 million in sales as a key account sales representative.

Working in business helped me to develop many skills and habits which

I hope will serve me well as an attorney, including discipline, persistence and feeling comfortable making presentations to influential people. It was very hard to leave my company because the people I worked with became my second family. I still check the L'eggs display when I'm in the grocery store. However, my desire to become a lawyer was strong. I recall that once, when I was particularly upset because things hadn't gone well with an account, my boss had some advice for me. He told me not to worry, that in the long run, "it's only pantyhose." You can't say that about law.

I am spending the summer working for LAIP, Legal Assistance to Institutionalized Persons, program. One of the major reasons I chose Wisconsin is their fine clinical programs, which combine public service with a strong educational experience.

