

Into the 21st Century ('Just Around the Corner')

Dean Cliff F. Thompson

As the Law School accelerates into the 21st Century, I am confident the coming decade will bring continued and significant progress. We are engaged in a self-study process to ensure that the University of Wisconsin Law School remains in the vanguard of legal education and scholarship. We are dedicated to providing a professional education which places our graduates on the right track for a lifetime of learning and achievement as lawyers and public servants. This means we are committed to advancing the "law in action" tradition of this law school. Long ago we pioneered the notion, still only dimly recognized in some institutions, that the analysis and exposition of written rules are insufficient tasks for a law school. We seek to illuminate law as it actually operates—law in action—by empirical and interdisciplinary methods, guided by theoretical insights on the edge of modern critical thought.

There will be a summary of the Law School's progress during the past seven years in a special issue of the *Gargoyle* at the beginning of the fall semester. It will include a survey of the individual accomplishments of the faculty in teaching, research, and public service, which are essential in making the UW a top ranking law school.

I want now to emphasize just one element by which the success of our academic enterprise may be measured. Posed as a question, that element is: does the Law School assist its graduates to function effectively over a lifetime of professional service? A professional career requires decades of accumulated experiences and new learning, and the Law School can only aspire to put graduates on the right track at the beginning. The Law School must provide the intellectual tools and insights which will be valuable in the long-run.

In the context of judging a lifetime of professional service, the importance of black letter rules learned in law school quickly fades. Lawyers change jobs, and specialize in subjects they never took at school. They often become experts in new fields which did not exist at the time of their graduation. Other graduates move into public service or entrepreneurial activities where they do not have a lawyer-client relationship, but in which analytical skills learned in law school and a realistic understanding of how law actually operates in society can be immensely valuable.

I am confident that one of the tremendous strengths of our law school has been in preparing our graduates to deal with the complex and changing challenges they face. As many of you know, one of my favorite topics of con-



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versations is to ask you to reflect upon the value of your legal education from the perspective of your career. One such conversation I had recently was with Mary Eschweiler in San Francisco. She was the Notes Editor of the *Law Review*, and graduated in the class of 1932. By that year, the Great Depression was well underway, and there were few jobs for men, and even fewer for women. But she had a fascinating career, and in a later issue of the *Gargoyle* we will be doing profiles of her and some of our early women graduates. I think that it is to the credit of the University of Wisconsin that she graduated 20 years before Harvard Law School admitted women.

Ms. Eschweiler's photograph, taken a few years ago, accompanies this article. The reason that I have it is that while we were chatting, she mentioned that she left Madison so rapidly after graduation that she had not included her photograph in the framed collection which hangs

from the walls in the Law School. So I told her if she could find me a photograph, I would remedy the omission. The photographs of our graduating students are maintained up-to-date, but the building in which they were originally housed has long since disappeared, a fact she did not know. Although she is an avid consumer of domestic and foreign news, she had not in her long absence from Wisconsin learned that we have a new building, or even more recently, that we are well on the way to transforming it.

Just as we have retained our collection of photographs for graduating classes while destroying the building in which they were housed, our academic program has retained some traditional strengths while changing rapidly in other areas. Our continuing efforts to combine the best of what is old and new in legal education makes the Law School an exciting place to be.

Our ambitions for our teaching and research programs would be impossible without a solid base of resources. The competitive struggle within the University for limited state dollars will continue, and I am gratified that the strong support of the Chancellor has made possible enormous strides in recent years in new state funds for faculty salaries, faculty recruitment, and for the law library (in addition to the magnificent support given by students, which I described in a letter earlier this year to you).

The impact of increased state funding makes private contributions all the more valuable, because they can truly be used to achieve a margin of excellence. I want to preview briefly for you a new major endowment campaign that we are entering, and which I foresee may extend over a period of six or more years. In this effort, we will be greatly assisted by Chris Richards, the new Development Director for the Law School.

First, the Law School will be part of the University's capital endowment campaign which will be officially announced later this year. Our goal in this campaign is \$3.5 million. Two million dollars would be used to endow competitive grants for faculty, who would be released temporarily from teaching in order to work full-time on special projects which add to the quality and distinction of the school. These projects would include the development of new teaching materials; service outreach in the tradition of the Wisconsin Idea; and research and writing on the newly evolving areas of the law. One million dollars would be used for engaging students part-time in collaborative efforts with their teachers on those projects. The remaining half million dollars would be for the use of the law library.

Judging by the success of peer schools, such as Minnesota, in raising much larger endowments, we think that our goal is modest. The reason for limiting our ambition is the likelihood of a second phase of essential fund-raising.

The second phase arises from the likelihood that in the next few years we will be called upon to provide some portion of the cost of the new building addition. We have reported on this project in the past, and you will



Mary Eschweiler '32

hear a great deal about it in the future. The recent legislative approval for a new building for the School of Business required private support, which strongly suggests that we will have a similar obligation. In any event, the new building addition for the Law School, which should be completed in the next six to eight years, will provide an absolutely critical opportunity to improve dramatically our law school building both functionally and aesthetically.

The architectural conception for the new building addition is so attractive, and the support of alums has been so strong, that in many ways I would love staying on in order to see our ambitions achieved. But as you may recall from seeing the newspaper reports, or the last issue of the *Gargoyle*, I decided now was the time to seek new blood. I have served seven years in Wisconsin, and nearly 18 out of the last 20 years I have been deaning one place or another. Although I believe I could keep up good speed for the next two or three years, it seemed to me that it was unlikely that I would put in another six to eight year sequence, and therefore it would be best to change the deanship!

I have been deeply gratified by the support of everyone, and I look forward to assisting the Law School in all of its goals, but as a regular member of the faculty, and after my first sabbatical in 30 years!