

THE GUARD CHANGES—

NELLIE DAVIDSON LEAVES THE LAW SCHOOL

After many years of observing the University scene from a number of vantage points, the *Gargoyle* is convinced that a small group of crucial employees (perhaps less than 20) have the power of life and death over the Institution. All of them are women. If, for any reasons of dissatisfaction with their hours, wages, conditions of employment—or for any other reasons—they were to decide collectively to withhold their services, the University would cease to function almost immediately. No pickets. No threats. No leaflets. Just quiet refusal would do the trick.

Their indispensability is due, of course, to the fact that they would never and have never withheld their services. As a result they are experts in all non-academic areas of university administration. They know the short cuts and the long cuts, the people and the sources of power. While they don't make decisions about the budget, they allocate funds and know who writes the checks. They hold various titles—Administrative Assistant, Secretary to the Dean, Office Manager, what have you. Deans, Chancellors, Presidents come and go; these people stay on through turmoil, staff change, expansion, contraction, development.

Nellie Davidson is one of this select group. This year the Law School will be put to the ultimate test. Mrs. D is retiring. Will the School survive? Will it maintain its connections with the rest of the University: Stores, the Bursar, the Registrar?

Who knows?

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Civil Service calls her an Educational Services Assistant, yet she is no one's assistant. Recently, she has been designated by the Law School administration as Registrar of the Law School, although student registration and records are only a small part of the total responsibility of her office. She is self-described perhaps most accurately as Jack of All Trades.

As with the others in her elite company, her job has grown around her. Hence, her power and influence.

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Her career at the Law School began in 1941, half days. She served as secretary and typist for Professors Rice, Bunn, Gausewitz and Campbell, then located in the "new" wing. Miss Aline Merz was the Dean's secretary. The office staff consisted of Miss Merz, Helene Wheeler, Mrs. D, a 1/2 time employee on the 3rd floor, and another 1/2 time typist in the Dean's office.

Early in the war, another task with another boss was added to her duties. By 1943 she was working full time all the time. Her additional duty was to prepare daily for Professor Page's course in *War Contracts*. There was no text on the subject. Mrs. D's job was to keep three cases ahead of the class, typing and mimeographing mountains of material.

This recollection leads her to recall her observation of the duplicating revolution which has occurred during her tenure in the Law School. From typing stencils (which were delivered to the old administration building for mimeographing) to Verifax and Xerox. The Verifax was particularly in-

teresting; the material to be duplicated was produced on a plastic master. Each sheet to be reproduced was placed under a heat lamp and baked 15 minutes. A bell announced the passage of 15 minutes. The heat was so intense that on occasions the heat lamps burst and shattered all over the room.

A modern duplicating room, providing a variety of services, was installed as part of the new Law School in 1965. It received special praise from the evaluating teams of the Association of American Law Schools and the American Bar Association during their visit to the Law School in November, 1971. Ruth Saaf, the manager of the duplicating room, is Mrs. D's daughter, the mother of three of her six grandchildren.

She has served continuously full time under Deans Rundell, Ritchie, Young, Kimball and Bunn—a "nice crowd to work for", she says. With Deans Rundell and Ritchie she was secretary as well as administrator, registrar and admissions officer. It was during Dean Ritchie's tenure that she gave up her secretarial duties and assumed her other tasks full time.

She has, she thinks, done everything in the Law School except teach. She has prepared class schedules—now the responsibility of the Associate Deans.

She has admitted students in the days when the only criterion for admission was a 2.5 average after three years, or a 2.0 and a Bachelor's degree. In those days, she recalls no one knew until the first day of classes how many were coming and who they were.

Many middle-aged alumni will recall the days after the second World War when the Law School enrollment exceeded 800, with a teaching staff only slightly bigger than its pre-war size. Part-time teachers helped fill the gaps, classes were huge, and three full semesters a year were provided to take care of the crowd.

Continued page 13

THE GARGOYLE

Guard Changes, *Continued*

The old building, which had been considered inadequate for at least 30 years, groaned and rocked with the weight.

The sudden upsurge required a major adjustment. During the War, she recalls—somewhat nostalgically—the Law School had 49 students and 4 full-time Faculty members. Afternoon coffee in the Library brought everyone together. (Coffee for the expanding faculty is another of her continuing duties). Many of the students were early returnees from the war, and their reminiscences added a dimension to the life of those left behind.

As the years have gone by, Mrs. D has continued to supervise the secretarial services to the Faculty. She puzzles a little at the changes. Few Faculty members dictate to secretaries any more. Some of them, who have special grants, provide their own secretarial service. Some seldom use typing assistance. All these changes have freed the staff under her supervision for the burgeoning administrative duties required to keep a large Law School in operation.

Her associations with students have been constant—and constantly pleasant, she reports. The Student Bar Association has entrusted her with the administration of an emergency small loan fund—interest-free, short-term, \$50 maximum, few questions asked. She provides records and transcripts, documents required for admission to the Bar, and answers to hundreds of questions. Students appreciate her courtesy and care; this year's crop honored her for themselves and the hundreds who came before, at their spring dinner on April 7.

She has enjoyed the changing scene. Although she recalls fondly her more than 20 years of service in the old building, she has not missed for a moment the drafty chill, the falling plaster, the rickety stairs, the crowded offices in the midst of wasted corridor space.

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Mrs. D

For all her long service to the Law School, her career in the University, which began in 1931, includes five years' service in the Medical School and several years in the University Registrar's office, followed by retirement. She had intended to be a full-time housewife, and then briefly (in 1941) a part-time housewife.

Nevertheless, she is a young retiree. She and her husband, Vearl, are retiring together. Their plans are well-laid. Their cottage at Buffalo Lake has been fully equipped and winterized so that they can spend a substantial part of each year there. They are experienced motor home travellers,

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so that the dead of the Wisconsin winter will find them elsewhere. They will keep their home in Madison, because their family is here. Their lives are full of auto races, card games, church and many activities. It will be a busy, happy time for them.

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Will the Law School survive? Of course. It has an institutional dynamism for which Mrs. D herself is largely responsible. A whole academic year has been devoted to providing transition time and training to the staff.

It will survive, but it will be different.

Where, continued from p. 15

Joseph W. Denissen—1953—
Dayton, Ohio
Peter R. Dennis—1964—
Wauwatosa, Wis.
Philip R. Dougherty—1961—
San Francisco, Cal.
Richard E. Downing—1958—
San Francisco, Cal.
Nancy C. Simonsen—1967—(now
Dreher) San Francisco, Cal.
Lawrence B. Dunn—1923—
McLean, Virginia

Charles T. Duvall—Arlington,
Virginia
John F. Ebbott—1970—
Milwaukee, Wis.
Mr. & Mrs. Frederick J. Erhardt—
1970—Selfridge, Michigan
Dale F. Fuller—1963—Santa
Clara, Cal.
Arthur F. Gausewitz—1965—
Chicago, Ill.