

Fall 2002

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SJCL Inter Alia

San Joaquin College of Law Quarterly Newsletter

Reunion celebrates valedictorians

Smiles lit up with recognition, surprise, and delight throughout the halls of SJCL during the All-Class Reunion, September 20, 2002.

Graduates from every class, 1974 through 2002, reminisced with classmates, faculty, board and staff while enjoying wine and cheese. A memory board for each class featured pictures of the students' years at SJCL and a list showing the current employment of each graduate.

A medallion was presented to the valedictorian of each of SJCL's twenty-nine graduating classes as a permanent memento of their achievements.

Certain comic awards, suggested by the attendees, were also presented, including recognition for having convicted a ferret owner and the prestigious "Worst Joke Teller" award.

The real beauty of SJCL's building continues to impress graduates as did the growing library collection. Some of SJCL's holdings date from before the American Revolution.

Alumni Association President Melissa White invited all graduates to become

active members of the Alumni Association. In particular, she urged graduates to support the upcoming Christmas party for mothers and children from the Marjorie Mason Center.

The event was spearheaded by Joan Lassley, Law Coordinator for SJCL, assisted by members of the SJCL Alumni Association and SJCL staff. A great time was had by all!

See Law Reunion page 6



SJCL Valedictorians: FRONT ROW (L-R): Michelle Pepper, Hon. Nancy Cisneros; MIDDLE ROW (L-R): Carol Corey, Bethany Baker, Tamanee Krazan, Mark Pasculli; BACK ROW (L-R): Trisha Beckstead, Kathy Hart, Regina Derryberry, Mark Blum, Cynthia Scully, Dan Green, Deborah Coe, Suzanne McGuire, Randy Penner, Kimberly Nystrom-Geist

Hopper Moot Court Competition

This competition provides students the unique experience of participating in oral argument of a fictional Supreme Court case.

Sherrie Flynn was named Best Oral Advocate and Ed Day and Deborah Sandoval shared Best Brief honors at the 23d Annual George A. Hopper Moot Court Competition.

The competition this year involved issues regarding the right to seek consideration of a previously dismissed writ of habeas corpus and the imposition of a life sentence under the Three Strikes law. For the competition, teams of two students prepared briefs for either the appellant or respondent. Each student then argued first for one side, then for the other side, in front of a panel of experienced attorneys and judges. From these preliminary rounds eight semi-finalists advanced for another day of argument. The four finalists then competed on the third day arguing before Associate Justice Steven Vardabedian, Associate Justice Rebecca Wiseman, both of the California Court of Appeal for the Fifth District and Judge Lawrence O'Neill, Magistrate Judge of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California.

Our congratulations to all the participants in the competition and our gratitude to each and every attorney and judge who gave of their time and experience to assist the process of creating skilled attorneys.



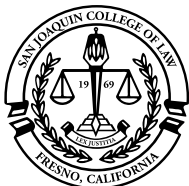
(L-R) **Honorable Steven M. Vartabedian**, Associate Justice, 5th District Court of Appeal; **Sherrie Flynn**, Best Oral Advocate; **Honorable Rebecca A. Wiseman**, Associate Justice, 5th District Court of Appeal; **Jason Taylor**, Best Oral Advocate Finalist; **Jeremy Lusk**, Best Oral Advocate Finalist; **Deborah Sandoval**, Best Oral Advocate Finalist; and **Honorable Lawrence O'Neill**, U.S. Magistrate Judge.



Back Row (L-R): **Crissy Jelladian**, Best Oral Advocate Semi-Finalist; **Jeremy Lusk**, Best Oral Advocate Finalist; **Ed Day**, Best Brief; **Deborah Sandoval**, Best Oral Advocate Finalist & Best Brief; and **Brenda Linder**, Best Brief Finalist & Best Oral Advocate Semi-Finalist.

Front Row (L-R): **Humphrey Valero**, Best Brief Finalist; **Lazaro Salazar**, Best Oral Advocate Semi-Finalist; **Sherrie Flynn**, Best Oral Advocate; **Jason Taylor**, Best Oral Advocate Finalist & Best Brief Finalist; and **Paul Jaurique**, Best Oral Advocate Semi-Finalist.

Not pictured: **Joaquin Borunda**, Best Brief Finalist



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Casino Night at SJCL

On Friday, August 23, SJCL's Student Bar Association celebrated the beginning of school with its annual back to school night.



(L-R) **Cynthia Brock**, SBA Second Year Representative (Law '04), **Offord Rollins** (Law '05), **Dianne Condley**, **Eric Kapigian** (Law '06), **Joaquin Borunda**, SBA Third Year Representative (Law '03), **Gianluca Alessia** (Law '06), and **Rolland Soltesz**, SBA President (Law '03).



SBA President, **Rolland Soltesz**, at the craps table trying to earn more "fun money". At the end of the evening the "fun money" was exchanged for raffle tickets for a variety of prizes.



Erin & Brent Woodward (Law '04) and **Amy & Alex Merriam** (Law '04) try their luck at blackjack.

Full-Time Faculty

Lawrence M. Artenian, Richard M. Cartier, Denise M. Kerner, Kathryn McTigue-Floyd, Janice L. Pearson, Sally A. Perring, Jeffrey G. Purvis

Adjunct Faculty

Marc C. Ament, Hon. James A. Ardaiz, Jesse J. Avila, Barry J. Bennett, Salvador M. Blanco, Stanley A. Boone, David M. Camenson, Lloyd Carter, Catherine J. Cerna, Hilary Chittick, Jonathan Conklin, John P. Eleazarian, Christine Goodrich, Hon. Michael Haubner, Sara Hedgpeth-Harris, Kathi Kesselman, Michael P. Mallery, William T. McLaughlin II, Mark D. Miller, Hon. Lawrence J. O'Neill, Douglas E. Noll, Deborah Davis Owdom, Rosendo Pena, Jr., Neal Pereira, Russell K. Ryan, Rose Safarian, Rene Turner Sample, Sarah A. Schmidt, Michael Seng, Hon. Mark Snauffer, David J. Weiland, E. Robert Wright

California Supreme Court comes to Fresno

For the first time in history, the California Supreme Court held a special session of its oral argument calendar in Fresno on Tuesday, October 8, and Wednesday, October 9, 2002. The session, which included 10 cases, was held in the Courtroom for the Fifth District Court of Appeal.

The special session was opened with welcoming remarks by Chief Justice George and Presiding Justice James Ardaiz, of the Fifth District Court of Appeal and SJCL Board Member.

San Joaquin College of Law was a proud sponsor of the live broadcast of this event on KVPT (PBS Channel 18) throughout the Central Valley and the State.

Congratulations Paralegal Grads

The Fall 2001-2002 class of the San Joaquin College of Law Paralegal Program graduated on August 16, 2002.



(L-R) **Jennifer Wright; Joshua Thornton; Valerie Sorensen; John Allen Jr.; Jennifer Ezell; Theresa Bryant; Pam Ramirez, Program Director; and Mark Cresci.**

A celebratory reception and program was held at San Joaquin College of Law with Harry Pascuzzi as the keynote speaker and Valerie Sorensen as the valedictory speaker. Mark Cresci received the Outstanding Student award.

All of the graduates were working in the legal field by the end of the program except Valerie Sorensen. Valerie had not looked for local employment as her husband had been transferred earlier to the Huntington Beach, CA area. We are pleased that Valerie stayed in Fresno to complete the program. She landed a job within two days after moving and says she

loves her new employment as a paralegal with a Worker's Comp firm. We are proud of these graduates and know they will join the ranks of San Joaquin College of Law Paralegals contributing to the legal profession.

SJCL's Paralegal Program was started in 1991 and has produced over 400 graduates many of whom have gone on to complete their Juris Doctorate.

Staff

Janice L. Pearson, Dean; **Sally A. Perring**, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs; **Tom Chacon**, Accounting Assistant; **Ken Coyle**, M.I.S. Director; **Mark Enns**, Director of Recruitment & Public Relations; **Maureen Hayes**, Assistant to Chief Financial Officer; **Lonzetta Hightower**, Secretary/Receptionist; **Joan Lassley**, Law Program Coordinator / Facilities Administrator; **Pamela Matthews**, Assistant Director of Development; **Kathryn McTigue-Floyd**, Library Director; **Joyce Morodomi**, Admissions Director / Registrar; **Tara Crabtree**, Assistant Librarian; **Pam Ramirez**, Director, Paralegal Program / Director, Placement Services; **Rick Rodriguez**, Maintenance Supervisor; **Patricia Smith**, MCLE Coordinator; **Jill Waller-Randles**, Chief Financial Officer; **Gwen Watt**, Financial Aid Director

Alumni Profiles

The year 2002 is the Twentieth Anniversary of the graduation of the Class of 1982 and the Tenth Anniversary of the Class of 1992. Throughout the year, we will be letting you know “where they are now.”

1982

Deborah Byron

Deborah clerked at McCormick, Barstow, Sheppard, Wayte & Carruth during law school, then joined the firm as an associate upon graduation. She took a two-year hiatus to work as a Senior Research Attorney for Justice Hollis Best at the Fifth District Court of Appeal from 1988-1990. Thereafter, she returned to litigation at the firm, becoming a partner. Her practice for the last 12 years has been representing employers in employment law litigation, principally discrimination, wrongful termination, and harassment cases.

Deborah is married to Superior Court Judge, Don Black; they have two sons. As a family, they enjoy movies, water sports, their mountain cabin, and following the kids' sports games.

Deborah remembers enjoying law school. She would always rather be a student. The class was a very close-knit group and supportive of each other. She remembers Judge Wanger's final in Civil Procedure that asked about the “EIRE” Doctrine. She could not figure out what the “EIRE” Doctrine was. She knew about the ERIE Doctrine, but not the “EIRE” Doctrine. Deborah also remembers Judge Caeton asking Steve Polacek to diagram “the fruit of the poisonous tree” on the blackboard. The class had never before been asked to diagram a case. The color went out of Steve's face and the entire balance of the class tried to hide to avoid being the back-up candidate for board work.

Ronda Duncan

Ronda went immediately to the Fresno County District Attorney's Office from law school. As a D.A.,

Ronda has served in every possible assignment, including the Sexual Assault and Homicide teams. She currently supervises the Welfare Fraud, Child Abduction, and Special Remedies Unit. Ronda says hers is a great job with great people. Ronda serves on the Board of the Fresno Rape Counseling Service.

Ronda is married to James Little, a California Highway Patrol officer of 30 years. She has two stepchildren and now two grandchildren. They enjoy their cabin at Shaver Lake and hanging out with the grandkids. The hanging out includes playing Uno with the triplets—children of her brother-in-law and sister-in-law.

As to law school, Ronda remembers the great camaraderie of her class. They were always doing something together.

Peter Wasemiller

Peter has worked in higher education administration and teaching at Fresno Pacific University since shortly after graduating from law school. He is currently the Director of University Grants and Research. His office coordinates all grant activity for Fresno Pacific from research to grant submittal to grant management. He is also responsible for prospect research for the development office. Peter has taught a variety of courses in the undergraduate program, including History, Political Science, Environmental Law, and the Legal Environment of Business. For the latter course he often returns fondly to his law school Contracts class. He has also collaborated with another SJCL graduate, Adina Janzen (1985) in teaching law for educators.

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Alumni Association

SJCL's Alumni Association Board encourages you to participate in the following events:

Nominations for Board Members

Get involved by being on the Alumni Association Board. As a Board Member, you attend monthly meetings and help plan alumni functions. Call 323-2100 by November 7 to nominate alumni that would like to participate on the Board, including yourself.

Membership Drive

When you receive your Membership Drive letter, please fill it in and return with your annual dues of \$30. The annual dues provide scholarships for SJCL students and other activities.

Ninth Annual Christmas Party

Watch for our flyer announcing we are hosting the Marjaree Mason Center. Please donate to help support this wonderful holiday tradition.

SJCL's Valedictorians

- 1974 Leland D. Sterling
- 1975 Robert G. Williams
- 1976 Deborah Davis Owdom
- 1977 Kathy Hart Seiler
- 1978 Mary Ann Bluhm
Judy Evans
- 1979 Fran Wessel Christiansen
- 1980 Hon. Nancy Cisneros
- 1981 Randall M. Penner
- 1982 Deborah A. Byron
- 1983 Linda M. Rouse
- 1984 Carolyn Albers
- 1985 Reggie Derryberry
- 1986 Tamanee A. Charnin Krazan
- 1987 Carol S. Corey
- 1988 Bethany R. Baker
- 1989 Cynthia R. Scully
- 1990 Michael J. Jurkovich
- 1991 Deborah Ann Coe
- 1992 Mark A. Blum
Kimberly J. Nystrom-Geist
- 1993 Carla Rae Dietle Bourne
- 1994 Mark Andre Pasculli
- 1995 Jeremias F. DeMelo, Jr.
- 1996 Lori J. Anderson
- 1997 Danny William Green
- 1998 Tracy Elizabeth Sagle
- 1999 Suzanne D. McGuire
- 2000 Stefanie Jill Krause-Cota
- 2001 Michelle Pepper
- 2002 Trisha Lynn Beckstead

Law Reunion

San Joaquin College of Law decided to start a new tradition of giving the Valedictorian a commemorative medallion. The medallion features the SJCL Seal incorporating a "V" in the background and includes a display stand with the student's name and graduation year engraved on the base. SJCL retroactively honored all of its Valedictorians at this year's All Class Reunion on September 20, 2002.



Angela Ransom (Law '97), **Traci Fritzler** (Law '97), and **Steve Alfieris** (Law '97)



Valedictorian **Kathy Hart** (Law '77) and **Donna Korotie** (Law '85)



Geoffrey Sims (Law '93) and **Steve Hrdlicka** (Law '84)



Annette Ballatore-Williamson (Law '97), **Judith Baron** (Law '97), **Mark Pasculli** (Law '94) and Mark's wife **Lori**



Kathleen McKenna (Law '99) and Alumni Board President **Melissa White** (Law '96)



Flora Istanboulian (Law '87) and **Judy Ward** (Law '74)



SJCL Founder and Board of Trustee member **John Loomis** and **Jim Wasson** (Law '75)



Mark Blum (Law '92) and **Ka'Ren Ketendjian** (Law '92)



David Schneider (Law '00) holding his daughter **Courtney** with wife **Melissa**

SJCL would like to thank the following people for helping make the All Class Reunion possible.

Richard Caglia and **Richard & Michelle Oleksa** donated the wine.

Gene Bruce donated the grapes.

Michelle Oleksa, Kathy (McGurty) McKenna, Pat Harter, Melissa White, Paul Rodriguez, Linda Richardson, Traci Fritzler, and Lisa Sondergard donated their time to make calls to invite other alumni. They also helped **Jan Pearson, Dean**, with the "Where are they now" sheets listing each graduate's current legal employment.

Peter is married to Diana who works for a food packaging and distribution company. She has the accountant's mind to balance Peter's lawyer/philosopher bent. Their daughter is a freshman at Bullard. She is interested in math and science, plays piano, loves photography, and is a Jimmy Stewart fan. Their son is in fifth grade, loves books (the whole family does, really), has a red belt in Tae Kwon Do, and loves the Beatles. In fact, they are currently adding a room to their house to accommodate an enormous organ inherited from Diana's great aunt. They also enjoy family travel, gardening, and cooking.

Peter says his wife had the good fortune not to meet him until he was in his fourth year of law school. He celebrated his 20th anniversary of law school graduation alone in a condo at Pismo Beach working on his masters' thesis.

Peter also remembers the "fruit of the poisonous tree" incident; the class was horrified. Peter was grateful that his name was long and more difficult to pronounce because Judge Caeton seemed to call more frequently on the students with simple names. Outside of class, however, Judge Caeton was a party animal, always having a good time with the class. Contracts Professor Mike Case gave Peter a concept he remembers to this day and uses in his own classes – "Let the Idiot Know." In other words, when you are answering an essay question, assume the reader knows nothing and spell it all out so even an idiot, like the professor who is reading it, can understand it.

Peter remembers his study group preparing for finals in a mountain cabin. Everyone became fabulous cooks because meals were the big event of the day. Peter really enjoyed his classmates a lot and, better still, he knows so many lawyers, he can always get help on any sort of issue.

1992 Karen Duncan

Karen Duncan joined the partnership of Oliver & Duncan in Oakhurst six months after graduating from law school and passing the bar. She took and passed the Oregon bar in 1997. The partnership moved to Redmond, Oregon in January, 1998. Their practice consists of plaintiff's labor and employment cases and family law, especially interstate family law matters because of their membership in both the California and Oregon bars.

Karen picked Redmond because "it is a good place to rodeo out of" which tells you the real love of Karen's life - team roping, calf roping, and breakaway roping. Karen says she is "living the dream." She does much of her legal work on a laptop while traveling from rodeo to rodeo on the National Senior Professional Rodeo circuit. Last year she was ranked third in the United States in the 40-50 age group in Team Roping (headers). This year she is currently ranked first in the Breakaway Roping and won the Women's All Around competition in the Northwest Circuit. The year-end Finals will be in Reno, Nevada the first week of November. Karen is also on her way to Canada this month for the Canadian Senior Professional Rodeo Finals where she is ranked third in Ribbon Roping and eighth in Team Roping for 2002. Needless to say, the practice also does a significant amount of equine law.

All Karen really remembers about law school is the big personal transition she had to go through to get there and the hours and hours of work. She never wanted the big firm job, just a small practice that could be integrated with rodeo and ranching. Karen's office is located 2 miles from her ranch in central Oregon where she raises longhorn and corriente-cross cattle as a sideline. She takes her blue-heeler dog (Dally) to work with her every day – that is every day that she's

actually in the office. "It's wonderful to be living the lifestyle that I used to only dream was possible."

Richard Hemb

Richard hung out a shingle and opened his own practice the day he got word he had passed the bar. His practice emphasizes estate planning and business transactions. He is a member of the Fresno County Bar Association and the Estate Planning Section of the California State Bar. He also teaches an estate planning class at Clovis Adult School. And in his free time —he golfs!!!

Richard remembers the camaraderie of his class. If you got beaten up in class you knew that it would soon be someone else's turn, so everyone stuck together.

Maureen Holford

Maureen had worked in every possible capacity at Parichan, Renberg, Crossland & Harvey before starting law school. During law school, she clerked for the firm, then became an associate upon graduation. In April of 1997, Maureen opened her own practice concentrating on research and writing projects on a contract basis, exclusively in civil litigation. She prepares discovery motions, briefs, and writs, but the bulk of her work is complex summary judgment motions.

Maureen's daughter served in Americorp and is now studying psychology at California State University, Sacramento. Her son is an Emergency Medical Technician with American Ambulance currently stationed at the Command Dispatch Center.

When asked what she did for fun, Maureen responded "What??? Fun?? What's that?" Her practice keeps her very busy. She does, however, read A LOT and is totally hooked on politics.

Maureen remembers being terrified of Jan Pearson in Torts. (?????) She really enjoyed the intellectual challenge and stimulation of law school.

Marlene Hubbell

Marlene commenced practicing law as an associate with Sarah Schmidt for her first 4 years after graduation, then becoming a partner in Schmidt Hubbell LLP until December 2000. The firm focused on investigating, preventing and litigating insurance fraud cases including personal injury fraud, arson, residential, vehicle and commercial frauds. She worked closely with Special Investigation Units, Licensing Boards, Law Enforcement and District Attorneys in combating fraud. During that time, Marlene also taught the Moot Court class at SJCL for five years and coached traveling teams. Beginning January 2001, Marlene served as in-house counsel for Farmers Insurance Group of Companies through the firm of Banner & Wells, with her primary caseload servicing the Bakersfield Branch Claims Office. Her trial results have been published regularly. Commencing January 2002, Marlene opened her own general practice involving civil and certain criminal cases, unlawful detainer law, collections, family law, and bankruptcy as well as providing support in the form of contract and special appearance work. She is currently adding mediation and alternative dispute resolution to her array of services.

The pregnancy that persuaded Marlene to miss most of Mr. Evans' P.R. course is now eleven years old. Austin attends Rio Vista Middle School and wants to grow up to sell Baby Bobcats, and construction and agricultural equipment (all earthmoving machines). Marlene is into anything that is energetic and pushes her limits. For Marlene, these include ballroom and swing dancing, white water rafting and kayaking, hiking, and spelunking (cave exploring including swimming through under-

ground lakes). She says she looks and listens for the possibility that is present in people and situations to promote the greatness in each.

Marlene's (very successful) Moot Court competitions are some of her best memories of law school. She also remembers having to read more than she ever had to read before in her life, resulting in having to get thicker glasses. Above all, she was impressed that law school draws so many different people from different walks of life together to learn the same skills, and then disperses them out again to contribute those skills to create and achieve so many things in the name of practicing law.

Ka'Ren Ketendjian

Ka'Ren immigrated from Armenia shortly before starting law school. Although he had taught English in the Soviet Union, adjusting to immersion in English and American culture was a major challenge. Ka'Ren describes his four years of law school as the most difficult of his life. That he succeeded and passed the California bar was a significant personal victory for him.

After graduation, Ka'Ren first worked for Greg Morris & Associates. In September of 1994, he joined the firm of Villareal & Farley which became Farley & Ketendjian in June of 1995. Ka'Ren's practice now consists of worker's compensation and immigration cases. From fall of 1993 to fall of 1996, he also taught Russian language at California State University, Fresno.

Ka'ren's parents and brother also live in Fresno. His brother, Armen, is a classical musician. Ka'Ren loves to read history and fiction and travels extensively. He went back to Armenia for the first time in 2001 where he found that introduction of a market economy had significantly improved the variety and quality of goods available. Although he still saw some elements of corruption, the economy was growing rapidly with much promise for people for the future.

Kile McCarty

Upon graduating and passing the bar, Kile says the first thing he did was really celebrate. Then he worked for two years with Horswill, Mederos & Dorman in Tulare. In 1994, Kile opened his own practice doing family law, real estate transactions, and construction and general business litigation. In 1999, he joined McCormick, Kobot, Jenner & Watson doing litigation for public entities in Tulare County. In March of 2001, he ventured out on his own again, emphasizing business and construction litigation.

On June 15, 2002, Kile married his wife, Shereen. With Shereen's son, Steven, and Kile's two girls, Kaitlin and Megan, from his previous marriage, Kile's free time is devoted almost exclusively to family stuff - boating at Don Pedro and Pine Flat reservoirs and trips to the coast.

Kile says the first night of class in Civil Procedure with Judge Wanger is etched in his mind for eternity. He had not read every page of the assignment and when called upon to define a Latin term, he had no clue. That experience guaranteed he would never show up for class unprepared again. Kile also remembers many exhausting and rewarding hours of discussion, usually arguing over the finer points of the law, with his study group, which included classmates Tim Mazzela, Bruce Nickel, Wes Hammond, and Karen McCarter.

Rose Mohan

Since graduating from law school, Rose worked with Forrest, Henderson, Sloan & Davis and Jory, Peterson, Watkins & Smith. On September 16, 2002, she opened the Law Offices of Rose E. Mohan, specializing in employment law in state and federal court and business and civil litigation. Rose says the best two years of her career were spent as an understudy to Ted Forrest. Her goal is to endow fully the Theodore Forrest Memorial

Scholarship Fund at SJCL so that an annual scholarship can be given to a future litigator to pay the cost of the bar exam.

Five years ago on a trip to Ireland, Rose discovered her Irish relatives, including a half brother living in New York who is twenty-five years older than her. The extensive research that led to this discovery was sipping a tall one in a local pub in the village where her father was born. The pub owner directed her straight to her father's birthplace. Rose is spending this October in the west of Ireland with her brother and his family to meet their only known surviving Irish cousins who still live on the land owned by Rose's grandparents. She plans to do more pub research.

Rose's other family members include Doe One, who as a kitten studied for the bar sitting on bar outlines, Dinky, Rose's guardian angel, and Tigger, the alpha upstart youngster. Rose enjoys gourmet cooking, giving dinner parties, designing her Japanese garden, the self-named Beautiful and Intelligent Women's Book Club, writing, and genealogy. She has raised funds for the Mary Haven Center for homeless women and served as a Moot Court judge at SJCL.

As to law school, Rose remembers:

- being afraid Justice Ardaiz would call on her and she wouldn't know the answer.
- Judge Ardaiz's final exam question involving the wink test.
- Judge Wanger's war stories and his suits.
- the thrill of her practice trial in Magistrate Judge O'Neill's Trial Practice class.
- Jackie Schaad Yates waiving her hand every time an instructor asked a question.
- Mark Blum's irritating habit of knowing everything, including case cites.
- the feoffment ceremony in Real Property.

- Jan Pearson's negligence chart
- midnight hours in the law review office giving birth to the first volume of the *San Joaquin Agricultural Law Review*. Marlene Hubbell had to top that by giving real birth while she was an editor of that edition.
- Moot Court road trips with Sarah Schmidt, Mark Blum, and Jim Dubbels.
- a diet of coffee, cigarettes, and donuts.
- parking lot dialogues with class members
- nightly phone calls with Leah Cole during bar review.
- friendships that endure.

Kimberly Nystrom-Geist

Kim began clerking for Judith Leslie-Soley after Kim's first year of law school. She joined the Leslie-Soley firm as an associate immediately upon graduation. She became a Certified Family Law Specialist in February of 1997. Kim became a shareholder and the firm became Leslie-Soley and Nystrom-Geist in 1998.

Kim blames this association on Dean Pearson. She says at the end of the first year, Dean Pearson asked her if she wanted to practice family law. Kim answered "No". Two weeks later, the dean repeated the question, so Kim decided she should check it out. She interviewed with Judy Leslie-Soley and never left. Fortunately, Kim also says it all worked out wonderfully.

Kim's practice is exclusively family law. She served on the Resolutions Committee of the Conference of Delegates of the State Bar of California for three years. She then served for three years on the Executive Committee of the Conference of Delegates. In 2000, Kim was the chair of the local Family Law Section and now serves on the Family Law Section Executive Committee of the State Bar. She sits regularly as Judge Pro Tem on a domestic violence calendar.

Kim is still married to Rod whom she describes as the nicest man in the world. Their son is in his third year of college in the Smitcamp program at California State University, Fresno. The family also consists of a fat old bichon and a lhasa apso who is an avid TV watcher, except for basketball which he hates. Kim loves to be home spending time with friends and family. She is a devoted, but only moderately successful, gardener.

Kim says she loved law school: "it was the most fun ever. I loved the people and the material and the school. When you go to school as an adult, you value it much more."

Kathryn Roberts

Fresh out of law school, Kathryn opened her own office in Merced as under Roberts Law Office. She now also has a satellite office in Fresno, where she still lives. After training in mediation procedures, she changed the name of her practice to Roberts Law & Mediation Offices. Her practice consists of family law and personal injury. As the "boss" in her office, Kathryn reports that it is good not to have someone else looking over her shoulder. She will admit, however, that knowing the "buck stops at her desk" for everything, especially payroll, can be a bit stressful.

As to Kathryn's personal life, she and Ken still live in Woodward Park where Kathryn spends as much time gardening as possible, while Ken is deep into "dead ancestors." Their children, who were teens during law school causing typical teen problems, are now professionals themselves. Jennifer is a registered dietician at Corona Regional Hospital. Burke, who has a degree in finance, is now a "headhunter" with a local company (that is, when he is not golfing). Both Kathryn and Ken have an interest in jazz and are resolved to stop remodeling the house and start traveling to as many jazz festivals as possible.

Recalling her days at SJCL, Kathryn goes back to her first interview with Dean Pearson. Having conflicting thoughts about going to law school after so many years of teaching, the Dean is reported to have said “Well, you can do a ‘little work’ and have a JD in four years, or you can muck around for four years, and at the end of the four years, you will still be four years older but have no degree.” Kathryn is certain that was the Dean’s well-rehearsed line to potential students; nevertheless, it worked (and probably still does!). As to other specifics about SJCL, Kathryn remembers many long night classes and many early mornings writing papers on her old Apple 2E computer. She also remembers many good friends and many exciting lectures. And Kathryn remembers that after four long years of study, when she was also law-clerking 40 hours-plus, she was so excited about graduating that she literally had difficulty sitting still, let alone concentrating for classes. But more than anything, Kathryn will always remember the SJCL experience as the most intellectually stimulating time in her life.

Mary Rogers

Mary joined the firm of Crowe, Williams, Jordan, Richey & Broderson in Visalia as an associate upon graduation from law school. When that partnership dissolved, she became part of Richey & Rogers. In January of 1997, Mary opened a sole proprietorship. She contracts with Tulare County to act as public defender in dependency hearings, generally representing the child. She also handles plaintiff personal injury work, along with some medical malpractice cases and some estate planning.

Between her husband and herself, they have five children- all grown - and now 8 grandchildren. Most of their free time is spent visiting the scattered children and grandchildren, as well as in other travel. Mary’s daughter married an Englishman. Now the family is going to England next August to attend her son-in-law’s mother’s wedding ceremony. Mary is also active in committee work for her Methodist church.

Mary says her memories of law school get better with the passage of time. She remembers the “post mortems” in the parking lot after exams; she always thought she had missed every issue after those discussions. Mary remembers the camaraderie of the class. There was a special bonding that does not occur in undergraduate work; the stressors bring people together.

Scott Vanwagenen

Scott has worked for a total of 14 years for Perez, Williams & Medina, first as a paralegal, then as a law clerk, and now as an associate. His practice consists principally of plaintiff’s personal injury cases and workers’ compensation.

Scott and his two children, Shawn, 15, and Courtney, 12, live on 5 ½ acres in Prather. Shawn attends Sierra High School where he is active in the jazz band. Courtney is into volleyball and drama. As a family, they enjoy anything that gets them outdoors—skiing (snow and water), riding motorcycles, taking cross-country jeep excursions.

Scott has very particular memories of law school. He remembers Oliver Wanger’s lectures which he describes as more like demonstrations than lectures. He remembers “fee tail male”, an ancient conveyancing term from

Sally Perring’s Real Property class. He remembers the banana peel cases from Torts, mainly because of the demonstrative evidence — real, brown, icky-sticky old banana peels. Oddly enough, this is the type of evidence he now looks for in his “slip and fall” cases against supermarkets. Last of all, he remembers the first year of law school when Jackie Yates won the title of “Prom Queen” for the class of 1992.

Melanie O’Mara Taylor

Shortly after she learned she had passed the bar, Judge O’Neill called Melanie asking if she could fill in at the Public Defender’s office for two months for an attorney on medical leave. She handled dependency hearings during that period, then did contract work with the conflict office for the P.D. In April, 1996, Melanie became a Deputy District Attorney, representing minors in dependency hearings and somehow managing not to burn out.

In September, 1992, Melanie married Nick Taylor. Their daughter, Annie, was born in February, 1996. Sons John and Nick were born in January, 1999 and August, 2001 respectively. Nick is now the principal at Wilson Elementary School in Sanger. They live on five acres in Clovis where they board two horses. With three children, most free time is spend doing kid stuff as well as a lot of yard work.

Melanie remembers the difficulty of working, going to school, and trying to get to know her eventual husband when she didn’t get out of school until 10 p.m. every night. She also remembers hanging out and studying with Jane Woodcock, Wes Hammond, Gail Sears, and Cheryl Stollar.

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