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Law School Deans

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Expertise and Improvisation Bond Us

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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Maurer School of Law
Bloomington

Expertise and Improvisation Bond Us

The following is adapted from the dean's address to the 1995 graduating class.

When I welcomed the Class of 1995 less than three years ago, I am sure that for them, graduation seemed to hover somewhere beyond a distant and doubtful horizon. Today, their diplomas are tangible reminders of solid achievement, their own personal potential, the value of their calling to serve society as lawyers, the love and support of their family and friends, and the very special mission of this school to educate lawyers for the next century.

That day, you in the Class of 1995 were brand new law students. It was the first day of your legal career. Today, you are ready to take hold of your futures and to use your education to help others keep hold of their dreams. Today we celebrate your last day as students at this university and your transition to full membership in the legal profession. But, if we have done our jobs well — you as students and we as teachers — our professional lives as teachers, and yours as attorneys, will continue to be in dialogue. To be sure, we will always welcome active dialogue with you, but for now, I mean something else: the practice of law and scholarship have much in common as vocations. In practice as in scholarship, the connection between expertise and improvisation is the basis of our discoveries, and the bedrock of our mission.

I want to dwell on expertise and improvisation for a moment, for these will remain our bonds to each other, no matter where you go when you leave here. By expertise, I mean



Dean Alfred Aman

knowing what came before and understanding its value. By improvisation, I mean knowing how to use what came before to build something new. Improvisation is an optimistic art. Contrary to what many people seem to think, lawyers are professional optimists. It is this commitment to look forward, to find flexibility and possibility where others see only givens, that makes the practice of law and scholarship most fundamentally alike.

To be sure, the world makes this a difficult business at times. It sometimes seems that the sheer scale of human problems, including raw cruelty, defies anything that we might train young lawyers to imagine they could overcome. The impossible lives of so many of the world's people, and among them, numbers of our own nation's children and adults — these are discouraging.

But there are also triumphs — new democracies, new accords, a strong bond of humane concern when a

community suffers — I like to think that these are more reliable signs of what the world will demand of law and of lawyers' opportunities to serve humankind.

What is it about the law that draws forth the dedication of those who seek a voice for themselves and others, who crave action for their own selves' sake and on others' behalf, who crave responsibility for traditions and change, and who crave justice for their nation and the world? What is it about the law that makes so available the tools for creativity, reconciliation, and reform? To put it more plainly, what is it about the law that captures the imagination and engages one's capacity to serve?

I like to think that the members of the Class of 1995 might readily offer their own answers to these questions, answers spun from their own hopes and dreams in and for the law. They chose the law as the domain in which to express their unique intelligence, integrity, and imagination. I will guess at their answers and suggest that today, as never before, the appeal of the law for a young person who cares about the world is that the law is available to serve human needs, it is never finished, and it contains the mechanisms of its own renewal.

As we face the 21st century, the future of the law and the legal profession are uncharted. This is as it should be; this is the source of the law's creative energy. "Being a lawyer" means being able to see issues and needs before most other people. "Being a lawyer" means having the courage to act on your

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based law firm. He recently married and lives in Boston with his wife, Amy.

1990–Present

Cynthia Huang, JD'90, a partner in Barnes & Thornburg, Indianapolis, practices in the firm's newly opened Beijing office. Huang has studied at the East China Institute of Law and Politics, Shanghai.

Mark L. Bayler, JD'92, is an attorney in Marion, where he lives with his wife, Anita L. Day, MA'91.

T. Peige Durell, JD'92, is an associate in the firm of Kahn Dees Donovan & Kahn, Evansville.

Charles M. Gering, JD'92, is an associate in the litigation department of McDermott Will & Emery's Chicago office. He and his wife, Susana Estrada Gering, AGS'91, live in Palatine, Ill.

Karen E. Hodge, BA'88, JD'92, is an assistant state attorney in the Narcotics Prosecutions Bureau of the Cook County (Ill.) state attorney's office, Chicago.

Jennifer C. Jordan, BA'86, JD'92, is the venue press manager for the games support division of the Atlanta Committee for the 1996 Olympic Games.

In March 1994, **David R. Prybil**, MBA'92, JD'92, was promoted to manager of the story department for Prelude Pictures, a Los Angeles film company. Prybil began working at the company shortly after his graduation from IU.

In 1994, **Thomas E. Deer**, JD'94, joined the law firm of Locke Reynolds Boyd & Weisell, Indianapolis.

John M. Ix, MS'94, JD'94, recently became an associate in the environmental litigation division of Porzio Bromberg & Newman, Morristown, N.J.

Dean's Message

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convictions and to act in ways that may be years ahead of your times — and miles apart from what ordinarily gets the label “common sense,” at least for the time being.

“Being a lawyer” means being fluent in the language of the law to express your own ideas on behalf of someone unable to speak for him- or herself. “Being a lawyer” means being so well trained that one can turn even the limits of what one knows today into frontiers of discovery and innovation tomorrow.

Where will you find the resources for these engagements? Remember that your legal education was within the gates of a great university, renowned the world over for the strength of its teaching and research. That means that, as students and scholars, you have been immersed in an academic world committed to the production of new knowledge; that, by now, is your habit. As lawyers, you will generate new knowledge every day, as advocates, counselors, public servants, and in private practice.

Other resources for your creative engagements with the future are your dedication and your capacity for hard work. You have the discipline for detail, the imagination to paint the big picture. You understand not only legal problems, but human problems. The humanity of the law makes the law more than a profession, it is also a mode of inquiry, a body of learning in its own right.

Another resource is your ability to understand and work well with people. Though you have sat through any number of exams, and written countless bluebooks, it is important to realize that there are many skills that bluebooks and grades can never adequately measure. These include your ability to listen compassionately and analytically to your clients and their adversaries, to find common ground between them even when conflict seems inevitable. You will spend your careers listening to your clients, and your colleagues of the bar and bench. They will teach you and test you — and you them — in ways that are always new.

Lawyers, educators — and all lawyers are educators — have these things in common. A legal education must answer to whatever the world demands of us. Justice, creativity, courage, versatility — these are the curriculum that the world demands of us now — you as you go on to your careers, and we who remain here at the Law School.

— Alfred Aman