

December 2019

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Charles S. Desmond

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Recommended Citation

Charles S. Desmond, *An Eastern Judge Visits a Western Law School*, 4 Wyo. L.J. 146 (1949)
Available at: <https://scholarship.law.uwyo.edu/wlj/vol4/iss2/15>

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WYOMING STATE BAR SECTION

AN EASTERN JUDGE VISITS A WESTERN LAW SCHOOL

CHARLES S. DESMOND*

A time-worn legend tells us of the law student who, after his first day at the books, sadly announced that he was "sorry he learned it." Equally hasty and superficial might seem any judgments of mine about the Wyoming University Law School, after a two-week stay. But every lawyer and judge, chained to the wheels of law study through his whole career, thinks he knows something about the business. Besides, the judges of the New York Court of Appeals, charged with the making of law student rules in our State, and responsible for the appointment of our Bar Examiners, etc., have a continuing connection with formal legal education. So here are my impressions of the study of the law in the lovely little city of Laramie.

In a day and a country where bigness is a cult, the University of Wyoming Law School looks small. It has the lowest enrollment of any State University legal department, and only a handful of American law schools are smaller. It serves a state large in area and small in population. It never counts more than a hundred students, but it turns a good many away. Like the pioneers who trained their eyes to grasp the far horizons of Wyoming, the school, I think, looks far and sees clearly. The only law school in the whole state, it accepts the responsibility of training lawyers to serve its allotted community, and, wisely, I think, buckles down to its special job of training practically the whole State bar. In furnishing the tools for that job, the State seems to have dealt generously as to faculty, meagrely as to housing. Taking the latter first, we find the law school on the top floor of the University library building, with cramped classrooms and office facilities, and far too little library space, even for the books on hand, to say nothing of increases. However, the University is, it seems, fully aware of this particular need and it is hoped that the impressive building program now under way on the handsome campus will, in a year or two, permit the allocation to the law school of much larger space, with places for a real library, and for quiet study, conferences, etc.

But a college is men, not buildings, and the Wyoming Law College is strong in faculty. A dean who is a trained teacher and has practised law, plus four young, able, professional law teachers recruited from various parts of the country, make up an impressive teaching staff. A staff that size, with so small a student body, produces in fact what so many schools merely strive or hope for: a light teaching load, small classes, constant, close contact between teacher and student, direct personal supervision and check on individual progress, and ample

*Associate Judge, New York Court of Appeals. During the summer session of 1949 Judge Desmond conducted a seminar on the topic "Civil Rights in State Courts" at the University of Wyoming College of Law.

time and opportunity for student guidance on the person-to-person level. Relationships are close, every student is heard from in practically every class, and no one is a mere name or number on the list. Seminars as such are not held, but, under the circumstances, are probably unnecessary.

I am no expert on law school curricula but the list of courses, and their content, seemed well adapted to the school's primary function of producing practitioners for the Wyoming bar. There is noted an absence of the "Social Science" material which has found its way into many of the larger law schools—whether that be good or bad this deponent saith not. The subjects that Wyoming lawyers need to counsel Wyoming clients and appear in Wyoming courts, are all on hand, and I suppose that whatever else the fledgeling needs is available elsewhere on the campus. The students themselves are a brisk, healthy-looking lot, full of the eagerness and curiosity that marks law students everywhere. They are lucky young men and women, learning their trade on a lovely campus in a magnificent state, whose state government is not stingy with its University.

Southeastern Wyoming and its law school, are a little off the track for Eastern visitors, but the splendid scenery and the expansive hospitality of the people, make it a very pleasant place for a sojourn. Eastern lawyers, judges and law teachers will find much of interest in a study of the way law is taught and practised in the West, and the Westerners show a great curiosity about our methods. I found my visit instructive and rewarding, and I am grateful to the University officials who made it possible.

LEGAL AID AND THE COMMUNITY

ORISON S. MARDEN*

In a previous article the effects of Legal Aid on the lawyers of a community were reported, based on results in forty cities throughout the United States which maintain Legal Aid Societies.

What of the experience of these Legal Aid cities as to the effects of organized Legal Aid on the community as a whole? Again we find a great preponderance of favorable reactions.

There is, of course, the fundamental fact that Legal Aid does assure equality before the law, and proves that such equality exists to all who are interested. This fact alone is a genuine source of satisfaction and pride to the citizens of any city, lawyers and non-lawyers alike.

More than this, it protects a community from the kind of situation in which subversive ideas can flourish, for it is well understood that anti-democratic forces take advantage of any cause for resentment and magnify it for their purposes. The very existence of a Legal Aid organization removes a potentially serious argument from this element.

*Chairman, Standing Committee on Legal Aid Work, American Bar Association.