

St. Mary's University School of Law

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ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

JAMES N. CASTLEBERRY, JR.*

ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY School of Law is an outgrowth and development of the San Antonio School of Law, established in 1927 by the San Antonio Bar Association. In September of 1934, St. Mary's University officially assumed control. In keeping with its inherited tradition, the School of Law has developed as a "lawyers' law school," devoted to the highest ideals of the bench and bar.

One of the five graduates of the first class under the new banner was Ernest A. Raba. Today, as Dean of the School of Law, he is deeply involved in plans for the school's silver jubilee, which will be celebrated in the Spring.

Helping him to celebrate it will be the largest enrollment in the school's history. Enrollment this year jumped to an all-time high of 199 students, an increase of thirty students over the previous academic year.

The school has grown steadily since 1948, when it was placed on the list of schools approved by the American Bar Association. The following year, it was admitted to membership in the Association of American Law Schools.

Although the school has a lay faculty, it is administered by the Society of Mary, an international Catholic religious order of priests and brothers. In addition to a staff of full-time instructors, the faculty is composed of leading jurists and prominent practicing attorneys in San Antonio.

Characteristic of the educational competence of the School of Law is the individual attention and close relationship between student and instructor. Realizing that this personal contact is a highly desirable element in the training of a law student, and that it will have a marked influence upon his later professional life, the school strives to maintain a realistic student-teacher ratio that will ensure a quality legal education.

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Discussions between the teacher and student are as many and varied as the number of courses taught. There are nine required first-year courses and ten required second and third-year courses. In addition, there



Dean Ernest A. Raba

are five electives in commercial law, six in property law, six in public law and eight in remedial law.

The most popular room in the School of Law for the student and teacher alike is the 30,000-volume law library which contains all federal and state statutes, published reports of the federal and state courts, Court Reports of Great Britain, the National Reporter System, Annotated Case series, encyclopedias, digests, citators and treatises on all phases of the law. It also includes 40 current periodicals and 26 cumulative and loose-leaf services.

Although the library is primarily a tool of the students and the faculty, it is available for all practicing attorneys in San Antonio and South Texas.

Students are also encouraged to make full use of the Barristers' Lounge, a spacious, air-conditioned room overlooking the

San Antonio River. This is also the meeting place for the St. Thomas More Club.

The University also has a practice court, where cases are tried by the students under conditions identical with those existing in the courtroom. Legal principles and theories learned in the classroom are put to practice here. All students are required to attend the sessions of the practice court for two years and are required to take an active part in its functioning.

The students share the local limelight one day each year. Their annual celebration of Law Day in May attracts hundreds of attorneys and jurists. Members of the Supreme Court of Texas and the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals are the traditionally honored guests on this occasion. Features of Law Day are the presentations of the St. Thomas More Award, the Annual Gavel Award, and various student achievement awards.

Upon recommendation of its Executive Council to the University administration, the School of Law each year presents the St. Thomas More Award to an outstanding citizen of the nation for his or her achievement during the academic year in the field of law, or for his or her contribution to the legal profession. The award is restricted to judges, lawyers, law teachers, and laymen who have made exceptional contributions to legal education, the profession, or government.

Since its founding, the School of Law has graduated 505 students, the great bulk of them within the past ten years. Many of them are on the district court and county court bench. Many of them populate the offices of prominent law firms and various district attorneys throughout the state, offices of the city attorneys, and the State Attorney General's Department.

The School of Law serves the legal profession of the State of Texas through the research facilities of the law library, and particularly through the sponsorship of annual law institutes and courses.

The School of Law operates both a day division and an evening division. To complete the curriculum for the degree of Bachelor of Laws, three academic years consisting of twenty-seven months of full-time study are required. To earn the degree in the evening division, the student must spend forty-eight months in resident study. Eighty-four semester hours of law work are required for graduation.

At the convocation of St. Mary's University at the opening of the academic year of 1959-60, Dean Raba had this, in part, to

say concerning the objectives of this School of Law:

Law Schools throughout the United States are as important to the conservation of the liberty which you enjoy as the scientific laboratories are to technological advances. Protection of human life, liberty and the dignity of man are the trademarks of the true advocate.

Your Law Schools are the laboratories in great measure of the democratic process. Here the advocate of today is trained, and the practicing lawyer and judge is influenced. The responsibility entrusted to the law school is a grave one.

For that reason, the objectives of the law school must be high. We must have students who have the moral and intellectual capacity and stamina to serve adequately the profession, the client and the public. We

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A trial under way in the Practice Court of the School of Law.