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*This is the eighteenth of a series of articles on Catholic Law Schools in America.*

# GONZAGA UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

GUY F. SMITH\*

“THE MODERN LAWYER — with all his fellows — and with the help of all Americans — is weaving the ever-changing fabric of law. He can make it the protective robe of freedom it has always been for us. His American citizenship, his tradition of freedom, his devotion to reason all plead that his alignment be behind the philosophy of the ages — the philosophy of reason — the philosophy of the natural law.”

This charge, delivered to the annual dinner of the Seattle Bar Association, was made by the Dean of the Gonzaga University School of Law, Smithmoore P. Myers. The words echo the guiding philosophy that has directed the teaching principles of this Spokane, Washington School of Law since its founding in 1912.

One of the many responsible Catholic law schools in the United States, Gonzaga University has a solid wealth of tradition underlying its current teaching philosophy. And, the school itself has several unique aspects that delineate a sharp personality all its own.

The Gonzaga School of Law is the only night law school in the country approved by the American Bar Association as a full-time school. In 1962, Gonzaga law students will help celebrate the school's Golden Jubilee.

It was in 1912 that professional legal personnel in Spokane asked Gonzaga's Jesuit fathers to establish a law school. Volunteering themselves as teachers, the lawyers formed the school's first faculty. A university catalogue, dated 1912, says the school was originally founded to satisfy demands of those “who, owing to day employment or other circumstances, are not in a position to attend institutions away from the City of Spokane.”

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\* News Service Director of Gonzaga University.

The school was founded to satisfy the heavy demand for trained legal personnel in the growing Pacific Northwest. Since that date, the school has grown steadily.



*Dean Smithmoore P. Myers*

The tradition of night study is woven around the principle that the legal profession needs graduates thoroughly trained in the philosophical background of democratic government. And, more important, Gonzaga believes that the community and the nation are best served by lawyers who possess not only a comprehensive knowledge of their profession but also a profound sense of their ethical responsibilities.

Last fall, Gonzaga Law School had a total student body enrollment of 116. The number represents a sizeable advance from the first graduating class of thirteen students in 1915.

When the current class graduates, they will join Gonzaga law graduates who have assumed positions of leadership throughout the Northwest out of all proportion to their numbers. Today, nearly every city in the four-state Northwest (Washington, Idaho, Oregon and Montana) is served by attorneys who received their legal training

at Gonzaga. In Spokane County alone three of every five lawyers are Gonzaga graduates while five of the six superior court judges are Gonzaga law alumni.

Because of the "midnight personality" of Gonzaga, the school draws many older students. Typical of the many who add stability and maturity to Gonzaga's friendly spirit last year were a plastic surgeon and a psychiatrist. Both utilized night courses to get their law degree.

The physical plant of the school is centered around Gonzaga's Administration Building, occupying the structure's second floor. The building, hub of the school, is nucleus for a twenty-one acre campus on the Spokane River situated in mid-town Spokane.

Noted for its friendly atmosphere, the undergraduate school of the University has a current enrollment of 1,700 students from across the country. The school of law has a library housing 25,000 volumes. Open around the clock, the library lights are never turned out.

Students also use the facilities of the Crosby Memorial Library, gift of alumnus Bing Crosby, which houses the only collection of Washington State Supreme Court briefs in Eastern Washington. Many members of the State's bench and bar take advantage of both libraries to supplement their private legal bookshelves. Geared to service the Pacific Northwest where the pioneer spirit still lingers, Gonzaga law school has graduated a total of 813 alumni. Many established practice in Spokane, a city of 181,000 population in Eastern Washington.

The last three graduating classes in the annual July Washington State Bar examination have set high standards for subse-

quent classes. In 1958, 88 per cent passed the examination. In 1959, it was 89 per cent, while in 1960, 86 per cent passed the examination. The overall record for Gonzaga at the 1959 bar examination was 73 per cent, the highest mark for any school taking the examination and considerably above the average of all schools.

It is easy to see why the reputation for Gonzaga's Law School as a fine center for training and educating lawyers is widespread.

The full-time aspects of the school make it unique. Law students are required to attend five nights per week, taking thirteen classroom hours. The figure is far more than usual for a night law school.

Students also are required to complete 100 semester hours of law school work for graduation. The school has representation from every section in the country, drawing heavily on the Northwest.

Calling attention to Gonzaga's record, the school's president, the Very Rev.

Edmund W. Morton, S. J., said the record at the bar "has surpassed the university's fondest expectations."

He spoke at the school's annual Junior-Senior class banquet in December 1959. Another speaker, Senator Warren G. Magnuson (D., Wash.) told the students that they should take an active political interest in their individual communities and "become leaders in political thinking." The event was typical of the many designed to bring Gonzaga's law students in contact with leaders of legal and political thought.

Individual attention to the student, too, is given by the twenty-one member faculty, a fifteen to one student-teacher ratio. The three full-time professors are Leslie Carroll, Lewis B. Orland and the Rev. Charles S. Walsh, S. J. The Dean is Smithmoore P. Myers, a former Seattle attorney. Regent of the Law School is the Rev. James V. Linden, S. J., who has been at the University since 1932.

Many of the part-time faculty members



*Gonzaga Law Library*

are, naturally, Spokane county attorneys and judges. Facilities of their legal offices and practical application of legal practices are at the disposal of students. And, the Spokane Public Library located in nearby downtown, also supplements Gonzaga facilities.

Under the direction of Father Linden, the School Regent, the first moot court was established in 1935. The school's semi-annual Heidelberg, or law conference, was established in 1933. These informal gatherings have included such distinguished persons as former Vice President Alben Barkley.

Another "first" for Gonzaga came in 1959. During the annual meeting of the Washington State Bar Association, held in Spokane, Gonzaga celebrated its first Red Mass, a Catholic tradition dating back to about 1310 when it was formed as a traditional ceremony invoking a blessing upon the courts.

One of the more popular legal activities held by the school is an occasional series of Community Law Forums, open to city residents. The forums featured such topics as Wills and Administration of Estates, Rights in Court, and Family Liability. Attendance was so heavy one year that campus facilities proved inadequate and the forums were later moved to a larger off-campus auditorium.

Guiding the school's teaching principles

since 1912 have been six deans. They were Edward J. Cannon, 1912 to 1934; James Emmet Royce, 1935 to 1941; Louis B. Schwellenbach, later Secretary of Labor under President Truman, 1941 to 1945; Frank P. Weaver, presently Chief Justice of the Washington State Supreme Court, 1945 to 1948; Norman DePender, 1948 to 1955; and presently-Dean Myers.

The future of the Gonzaga School of Law will inevitably be linked with the growth of the still young Northwest. And while the buildings and bricks may replace old structures, the Gonzaga tradition of a sound philosophy behind legal education will never change. As Dean Myers points out, "We attempt in all our classes to show the relationship of the natural law to each particular course."

In meeting this responsibility, Dean Myers contends that law students at Gonzaga have an intellectual and professional responsibility to align themselves consciously on one side or the other in the country's fateful struggle.

Maintaining the American tradition of freedom through legal education, Gonzaga University in 1962 will proudly celebrate its Golden Jubilee. Helping the school celebrate will be the Pacific Northwest, a four-state area which has reaped the profits from Gonzaga-trained and Gonzaga-educated members of the bench and bar.

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