

Classmates, Colleagues, Friends?

By Jameson C. Rehm

Put kindly, law school is difficult. The long hours, difficult material and the idea that a bad grade on a final can lead you to retaking an entire 14-week class can lead to all sorts of problems. Add that each student is working against their fellow classmates for the coveted top spots in the class, and the situation appears to lend itself to back stabbing and a lonely existence. I have learned that first impressions can be deceiving.

I, and more than 50 equally crazy night students, have just completed our first year at Capital University Law School. Starting in late July 2014 and ending in mid-July 2015, our group went from total strangers already saddled with full-time lives to a close knit group of hardened soon-to-be attorneys in under 365 days. And most importantly, instead of fighting for rankings and grades, our group worked together with one common goal: survival.

This story of camaraderie couldn't be told without some of the characters being brought to the fore. While I wish I could tell you the back stories of each of my classmates, I have neither the space nor your attention span for that kind of writing. Instead, here are just a few of the many people that not only made this first year possible but *gasp*, enjoyable. For those of you that also survived the night program, I'm sure you'll find parallels to your own experience. For those that did it the traditional way, read on to see what you missed.

Thomas Spyker, a federal police officer by day and our class representative by night, gets top billing as he basically single handedly brought this class together. Our class discovered rather early on that we were not going to enjoy Contracts. Spyker solidified his leadership position by taking precious time to create a space where all classmates could electronically congregate, to initially discuss our boredom, anger and frustrations directed at Contracts. He also produced a towel embellished by a Contracts question, which he then used to question the professor during a class. The rest of that story should be told at a different time. Did I mention he's on the dean's list?

Another dean's list member and smartest

classmate (though he would never agree to it) is Jesse Shamp, who works for the Governor's office assisting with political races throughout the Ohio. Shamp currently enjoys a 3.9997 (or something along those lines – the poor guy got an A- once) while holding down a full time job and easily sitting in the top 10 of the current class of 2018. I've heard stories of some of the smartest people in classes closing themselves in with their books, working tirelessly in search of that elusive 4.0. Shamp is the complete opposite, helping anyone with a question and quick with an explanation. Shamp is an enigma – a humble, incredibly bright, soon-to-be exemplary attorney.

Each person in class has to be a little crazy to do the night program. I mean, why would we go back to school when we each have perfectly good jobs? How about a person that not only has a perfectly good full time job but drives two hours each way to attend law school? See Tyrus Hudson, an M.B.A.-holding Human Resources specialist at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Cincinnati. Hudson makes it impossible to complain about being overwhelmed. He drives up from Cincy for class and drives home to his wife each night while staying prepared for class. I wish I was exaggerating.

No class is complete without a class mom, and Ruth Miller has taken everyone under her wing. At home she has a husband, two kids and dog. At law school, she has 50 or more 23- to 43-year-olds. Known for her "mom voice" when arguing a point in class, Miller's paralegal job at Nationwide and wealth of experience from working around the country provides an outlet for anyone that needs a good laugh or a good vent.

I truly wish I had the time and space to devote to the rest of my classmates. I would tell you about our former soldiers, Rocky Hogue and Andrew Topetzes, who in addition to serving our country, have families and hold down full time jobs. I'd tell you about Emily Hixon-Patrick, who was pregnant, buying a house and crushing our summer Criminal Law final all at the same time. I'd tell you about Larae Schrader and Marybeth Lawson, bosses for major companies that somehow find time to run departments and sit near the top of our class rankings. And the list goes on and on.

I went to law school expecting hard work and little else. I had heard horror stories of back stabbing and fierce competition for those few high rankings. What I've found instead is an uplifting, inspirational group of students that have completely flipped my expectations for law school. For those worried about the future of law, please don't. If these colleagues are a representation of the future, it will be fine. I've never worked harder for the worst grades of my life. But I couldn't be happier going through it with these classmates, these colleagues, these friends.



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