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Who Are You, Class of 2002

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MLR 1999 Orientation Speech

Once again, we express a sincere welcome to the class of 2002 - all 156 of you. I thought it would be appropriate, this morning to tell you, and the faculty, who you are. Can you guess who is who? Well - you've got the next three years to find out!

From rural Arkansas, from rural Oklahoma, big cities and small, you've come to us from twenty-five states. Of those enrolled from out of state, seven are from North Carolina followed closely by 6 from New York; 5 from Florida; 4 from Georgia. Others are from Arizona, Connecticut, DC, Delaware, Indiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Wisconsin and West Virginia. Nearly 40% of you are from out of state and 3 of you hold foreign citizenship.

Forty-Six percent of this entering class is female, 8 % fewer than last year. It's odd as this is an exact reversal of last year when 46% of the class were men and 54% were women. This class's average age is 25. One of you is only 20, having entered college after the 9th grade at age 14 and graduating at age 18, and one of you is 46. Twenty of you are married.

While graduates of 357 colleges and universities applied to this Law School, you are graduates of 78 undergraduate colleges and universities in this country and 1 foreign university in India. The highest number of our entering class - 20 are alumni of William & Mary; 18 of you graduated from UVA. The North Carolina contingent boasts 2 graduates from Duke and 3 from Wake Forest. Ten of you have advanced degrees, 85 or 54 % have been out of school at least one year. One of you graduated from the University of Missouri,

Columbia in 1975 and another in 1999 - a span of 24 years between celebrations. I wonder who's who.

Your median LSAT score places you in the top 26% of the 309,000 test takers during the past 3 years. One of you scored in the 99th %ile. Your median GPA is 3.18 and 2 in your class achieved a perfect 4.0. Forty-three different majors are represented, with the greatest number - 29 graduating in - no surprise - Political Science. Twenty-four of you were English majors and 23 majored in History.

There are many of you who graduated Magna Cum Laude. Two of you have 2 graduate degrees each - one being both an aerospace engineer and a Civil Engineer. Can you say smart? One student is an occupational therapist and one of you served as an Interim Pastor for a Baptist Church. I'm looking forward to meeting your classmate who worked on Molecular Virological Research helping to develop an animal model for HIV infection at the Regional Primate Research Center in Seattle. Another of you is an Honor Graduate of the US Army Combat Medic School. Two of you have long and successful careers in law enforcement - one being in charge of conducting internal criminal investigations among other responsibilities - the other the object of a man's violence who tried to kill him by infecting him with HIV causing him to recognize his own mortality; thank goodness he didn't succeed! We have a journeyman mechanic in our midst as well as a meat inspector. Two of you are nurses and one of you is an EMT. As the owner of a fine antique auto, and I use the term fine loosely as you'll come to find out, I'm looking forward to meeting the fellow who is restoring a 1962 Buick. Do I have a task for you! Your careers have been

varied and challenging with several environmental specialists and analysts in our midst; a biology teacher, a third grade teacher, former military men and women; someone who installed, operated and repaired satellite communications equipment; a brave soul who taught English to Palestinian youth as part of Teaching for Peace in the Middle East - on the West Bank. Do you think we could get the one among you who had the job as rides manager at King's Dominion for several years to treat us to a ride or two? One of you was a professional journalist - another a Park Ranger. One of you saw the 96 Olympics up close as a member of the Logistics Personnel; and one of you was part of an UN Peacekeeping mission who helped rebuild Haiti; I was fascinated to learn about one of you who was a White House Intern who says he surely would have known Monica if only he'd stayed 2 more months as he worked in the same office. Did you know we have a female member of your class whose goal it is to run for the US presidency? Politics seem to entice a great many of you with you demonstrating your interest by working on political campaigns and being members of staffs of Congressmen and Senators. My hat's off to the one among you who had the tenacity to overcome adverse circumstances which caused him to drop out of high school. Persistently he pursued his goals by obtaining his GED and eventually graduated from college against all odds. As though the hurdles placed in his path weren't sufficient, he had the guts to attempt and succeed in our A.P. program. Way to go!

You have a serious commitment to public service. You gave thousands of hours to Women's Shelters, Habitat for Humanity, Special Olympics, Big Brothers-Big Sisters, working with the elderly in soup kitchens, shelters, and crisis hot lines. You've worked

countless hours in hospices, with sexual assault victims, recording for the Blind and Dyslexic, tutoring, in a state mental hospital for children, battered women's shelters, as well as for many other worthy causes you've demonstrated the art of "giving back." One student helped raise more than 2 million dollars for kids with cancer with a huge dance marathon and tutor and volunteer many hours working with children. Those of you who have given so much of yourselves are surely our hope for the future.

Excitement isn't missing from your lives. Many of you not only played a variety of sports but volunteered to coach unprivileged children and inner city children so that they too might learn and love your sport. Some played baseball, volleyball and basketball, others run marathons, row, cycle and several of you have spent years showing and riding horses competitively. I think you should immediately find out who the woman in your class is who has a brown belt in martial arts and was the first woman in her school to be a female semper in Toro Dodo. One of you back packed and camped in the western US and Canada covering 13,000 miles through 15 states. Do you think you could keep up with the middle-aged woman in your class who cycled 3280 miles across 11 states and 1 Canadian province or the fellow who hiked or raced bikes up to the top of 6 different 14,000 foot peaks in Colorado? I guess I should point out that he was also the 1993 National Military Cycling Champion. Personally, I'm anxious to hear the hair-raising story from the member of your class who jumped from a plane and spiraled 3000 feet under a fatally damaged parachute and had the presence of mind to land safely. Who anticipated that the one question I am asked most frequently on the first day of orientation was . . . where's the gym?

Fifty-eight of you have been on the Dean's List. Many of you have been inducted into O.K. and are members of a variety of prestigious honor societies. Three of you were inducted into Phi Beta Kappa and 5 of you have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout. Thirteen of you are John Marshall Scholars - our most prestigious scholars selected by a blue ribbon panel amongst whom are 2 justices of the Virginia Supreme Court. Many of you received scholarships and many have lived, worked and studied abroad. Australia on a Rotary scholarship is but one example of honors accorded members of your class. The mechanical engineer who sits with you today authored and submitted to the Texas State Legislature "The Pension Property Rights Act of 1997" to address the 2 billion dollar forfeiture annually of vested pension benefits by 30,000 public school teachers and high education employees each year who voluntarily and involuntarily terminate employment.

Oh - I nearly forgot. Can you guess which of you has been a runway model?

The arts have not escaped your interest and you play many instruments. We have talented costume and set designers, a member of a professional theater group, several pianists, members of bands, and a soprano. One of you was one of six finalists for an Academy of TV Arts and Sciences script writing competition. One of you established a weekly showcase for songwriters to perform original songs with the proceeds going to charity.

Interesting - in this class are many who have family ties to the Law School. The father and brother of one of you graduated from this law school, as did the fathers of two more of you as well as an aunt.

And so it goes - 156 different stories and 156 different factions as they're sometimes called around here. But, half the fun is getting to know those who are going to become your life long friends so I'll stop now and wish you good luck and good fun on the adventure upon which you are embarking.