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Who Are You, Class of 2012

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Who Are You Entering Class 2009

We have had a long journey together, you and I. Like you, I've spent the last year thinking about who would be in the class of 2012. So, who *is* sitting there along-side you about to take this fateful journey?

I am pleased to share with you, the faculty and our University President, who you, the Class of 2012 are. The challenge is for you to guess who is who. I challenge you to use the next three years to find out as there will be a quiz in 3 short years as you graduate and leave us to take your place in the legal profession.

As you searched web sites, got suggestions from your pre law advisors, lawyers, friends, family, and visited law schools in determining where to go to law school we also searched for you – travelling 49,285 miles by land and air to find, and recruit

you, to join our law school family. From across this great country, from California to Massachusetts, big cities and small rural towns, you've come to us from 26 states. Two of you have dual citizenship – with Denmark and with Belgium. One of you is a citizen of my home country, Canada. Several of you grew up in the mountains of Virginia, some on farms, and some in big cities. Nearly half of you are from out of state with our biggest feeder states outside of Virginia this year being Texas, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Georgia. Two of you are with us as exchange students from Sweden and Italy. Fifteen of you are married, some as recently as last month. One of you will be married in just a few days. While several of you have children, one of you is a single mom raising 5 daughters while juggling law school.

As I went back and read your files again my thought was that you, the class of 2012, are one of the most interesting groups of students we've had in recent years. You come from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Several of you are the first generation in your family to attend college. You come from privileged backgrounds and from poverty. Reflect on the tenacity of your classmate whose grandmother picked cotton and wrote, "My family of six shared a small, two bedroom apartment, with a set of rats and roaches that we could not permanently evict, in a gang-ridden and poverty-stricken housing project on the Southside of Chicago". Many of you are "self-made" and have had fierce battles to make it to this momentous day. While each of you is diverse in your own way, 19% of your classmates are students of color. The youngest members of this class are 21 years old and the eldest is 44. We

are always happy to see that many of you have been inspired to become lawyers by family who are members of the legal profession including one of you whose mother *and* father are both alumni of this law school. You follow a grandfather, fathers, mothers, a brother, cousins, and uncles who graduated from this law school and, within the next two weeks, one of you will marry a very recent graduate. We know all of you will make us as proud as we are of those upon whose shoulders you stand.

Applications were received this year from 2,036 applicants (up 4% over last year) and from 14 foreign countries. We admitted a slightly smaller percentage of these applicants than last year – only 29% of those applying. This class is slightly smaller than that of the previous year. Graduates of 487 colleges and universities - 56 more than last year - applied to the law school

and 74 universities are represented in your class. Ten of you hold advanced degrees.

Ninety-one, or 61% of you, have been out of college for at least one year and one of you graduated in 1992. Your median LSAT score of 161 means that only 16% of the 429,816 people who took the LSAT over the last three years did better than you and the *bottom* quartile – 159 puts you in the top 22% of those same takers. My hat's off to the top quartile of the class which scored 163 or above, which is slightly higher than last year's class – the top 11% of all test takers. Just as important, your median GPA is 3.48 compared to 3.34 last year – the highest GPA in our history, while the top quartile is also higher – 3.63 compared to 3.55 last year.

One of you achieved a GPA of 3.98; 69 of you have a GPA of 3.5 or above. Forty different majors are represented with the greatest number – no surprise – 29 being political science majors. History runs a distant second. Fifty-two of you – more than twice as many as last year – achieved Latin Honors graduating Cum, Magna and Summa Cum Laude. Many of you graduated with distinction and high honors. Four of you were elected to Phi Beta Kappa. You are gifted in many ways! Many of you are members of a variety of prestigious honor societies. Nine of you have attained the rank of Eagle Scout and two of you have a long history with the Girl Scouts. Twelve of you are John Marshall Scholars. Several members of your class come from large families – one has 5 siblings, another 6 and they are both bested by one of you who's from a family of 8 children. Two of you are one half of sets of twins.

You are a well travelled group dedicated to seeing the world and improving it. So many of you have traveled extensively, lived, worked, done mission trips, studied and performed as good will ambassadors all over the world. This class seems to have a particular affinity for Peru with more than the usual number of you spending considerable time there. You speak many different languages – Spanish is most popular but you speak Farsi, French, Italian, Russian, Hindi, Indonesian; Portuguese, Urdu, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Greek, Czech, Ukrainian and one of you is fluent in American Sign Language. Two of you have security clearances - one “Secret” and one, “Top Secret”. Several of you are trained EMTs and give many, many hours of service. We are especially proud and grateful for the service of those of you who have served in our country’s armed forces. Three of you have been in the US Army, one in

the Navy and one in the Air Force. A woman in your class whose two brothers are currently deployed overseas in service to our country wrote that she understands how, “Duty, Honor, Country” applies just as much to the courtroom as it does to the front lines”.

You’ve had some pretty amazing careers pre law school. Some of you have been teachers – several in other countries including China, Sarajevo and Russia; one of you in an urban city school where you were the only Caucasian, and yet another taught English as a second language to Buddhist monks in Tibet. One of you served as a Surface Warfare Officer aboard a ship. Several of you worked on Capitol Hill and one of you in the White House. One of your classmates, a defector from Kaplan, researched, edited and approved scripts for *National Geographic* Most Amazing Moments which received the

highest ratings for any show in the history of the channel at the time. I'm certain you'll want to meet your classmate who is a model and actress appearing in two episodes of CSI Miami as well as in many commercials and a music video. The "Voice of Villanova" is sitting with you and several of you worked for AmeriCorps. I was fascinated to learn that one of you is an Agricultural Economist, who has had many jobs including one as a cowboy moving 600 and cattle as well serving a stint as a breeding technician. I know the faculty will be interested in your perspective on how legal and policy issues at the farm level can make an impact on a national and global level. One of you has been an innkeeper for 8 years and one of you, a volunteer firefighter, wrote "I performed CPR for 30 minutes on a "dead man" I didn't even know." Another has been a paralegal in Kuwait. I know many of you will be anxious to

know your classmate who was employed as a question writer who wrote over 800 AP Statistics questions and managed a database of over 1600 questions – a database still used by teachers around the country to make actual tests for their AP students. A woman in your class drafted language for a statute establishing the North Carolina Actual Innocence Commission, the first process of its kind in the country to be enacted into law. Another of you wrote, “The power of law is a thread that runs through every culture and binds its elements into a cohesive and workable society” – this after working with a team to excavate ancient Mayan ruins. I’m impressed that one of you has been employed researching and analyzing the professional qualifications of Presidential appointees from staff assistants to Cabinet Secretaries; another as a Political Affairs Assistant at the Embassy of Afghanistan in London. I find

myself once again on the “no fly list” with the airlines and so I’m anxious to chat with the woman in this class who’s been an Intelligence Analyst for the Department of Defense. She was directly involved in what turned out to be the first post 9/11 terrorism trial in the state of California as a result of a flight she personally diverted carrying two people who were alleged to be involved with a terrorist sleeper cell in that state. Very cool is the fellow who has invented an athletic mouthpiece with an embedded magnet capable of clinging to a face mask or helmet and is applying for a patent for his invention.

Your interests and talents are varied and you are accomplished in so many areas. You are poets, artists, singers, dancers, accomplished in playing a wide variety of musical instruments – several of you at the professional level touring the world and performing. You are published poets and authors; members of

choirs and orchestras. A woman in your class performed as the principle vibraphone player for a Drum and Bugle Corps and played in the Giants Stadium and the Alamo Dome. The collective artistic talents of this class will be highly sought after for the riotous Law ReVue in the spring and I can't wait to hear the vocal talent of the man in your class who performed and recorded with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

You join the law school in having a serious commitment to public service. Perhaps the most committed class in some time each of you has performed public service giving from the heart thousands of hours of your time to benefit others. One of you has volunteered for 8 years for Guiding Eyes for the Blind raising puppies for a year and a half of their lives training them to be service dogs. When asked how she could give up a puppy that she'd loved for more than a year she answered, "How can I

not”. “But still I cry”. You are *not* strangers to sacrifice. You are tutors, you teach children to ride horses as therapy, you rehab homes for the poor, you raise money for every charity in existence; volunteer for organizations which help victims of violence, you obtain books for the underprivileged, work in shelters and thrift stores. You extend a helping hand wherever you see a need and do not restrict your efforts only to benefit your own country and its citizens. You clearly believe in the American Dream and seek to take that dream to the world at large. You give so much of yourselves – the world and its future is in good hands!

While you have a serious altruistic bent you and your classmates know how to have fun. There is hardly a sport not represented in your class. Serious athletes are amongst you. You’ve played Division I sports of all kinds, you are tennis stars,

swimmers, divers, trap, skeet, soccer players – one of the women in your class competed in an Ironman triathlon. Oh yes – I challenge you to find out who was Miss South Hill – she’s also an avid hunter; deer hunting is her forte. She owns her own shotgun and “Cover Girl” is her CB handle. Or you might want to meet your classmate who is a serious competitor in ultimate Frisbee and ask about his time as captain of the “Spidermonkeys”. Sounds a little kinky to me. Jumping from airplanes – you do it all. Have you heard about our upper class students’ passion for flag football? I’ve paid attention, while reading your files, (tho’ I tried to show no bias) to those of you who may provide “new blood” in the constant search for t-shirt power (otherwise known as beating up on the poor undergrads on Sunday mornings). I know who you are out there who was

named by Soccer Buzz Magazine as a member of the National Elite Feet of the Week Team!

Again this year I've been gratified to so often see words such as integrity, commitment, honesty, public service, ethics and loyalty permeate your narrative statements. One of you wrote, "It's about humanity, and that's worth more to me than money and morality combined". I suspect each of you has encountered a naysayer who has questioned your joining the legal profession. One of you countered by saying, "If having a true altruistic nature is now considered unrealistic, how will we better society? The world needs a call to action, not the dismissal of a young man's dreams". I've been thrilled to see that the reasons so many of you have chosen to go to law school remain the selfless desire to contribute to making our world a better place to be...to make a difference...to contribute

to mankind. Someone told me that life is a contact sport and so many of you are survivors of life's more difficult times yet you endure and strive to be better. You don't give up; you are winners.

I could go on and on telling you about yourselves for there are truly 150 stories amongst you and all of them shed light on your personalities, hopes and dreams. But, half the fun of being in this law school is getting to know those who are sitting beside you destined 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 now embarking.