Your Connections to the College and Each Other
On the Cover
A picture tells a thousand words: To celebrate the College of Law’s 125th anniversary, this year’s Stories Book cover gathers snapshots of our journey together! A few of the archived photos don’t identify their subjects, so let us know if you recognize the people or the scenes in photos marked with an * below (email Director of Alumni Relations Kristen Duggleby at klduggle@law.syr.edu).

Front Cover (clockwise from top left): JD interactive students gather in Dineen Hall during their January 2019 residency; a classroom scene from the 1970s*; students recite the Student Oath at the 2019 Convocation; fine weather sees the bike rack full outside Dineen Hall in 2014; a gathering of law students in the 1960s: Portia L. Strausman L’64, Rosemary Bucci L’64, M.J. Lockwood L’63, Louise E Dembeck L’65, and Sharon O’Brien Allen L’73; on the way to Commencement 2019; the 1905 Debate Club.

Back Cover (clockwise from left): Former College of Law headquarters Hackett Hall in the 1940s; “Where the vale of Onondaga / Meets the eastern sky”; the opening of Dineen Hall in 2014; studying in the 1980s*; Davida M. Hawkes L’20 arguing during the annual Lionel O. Grossman Trial Competition; a student outside the law clinic building on Irving Avenue in 1974*; and inside the clinic suite with Professor Suzette Meléndez and students in 2016*; LL.M. students at the 2019 Commencement; Professor Travis H.D. Lewin presides at a mock trial*.

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I write this letter from my office in Dineen Hall, where I am one of only three “essential” people still permitted in the building as a result of COVID-19 and the global public health crisis that has brought a swift end to residential learning this semester, closed the doors of Dineen Hall, and profoundly affected our lives and work.

Wherever they may be, like you, our always-resilient students, faculty, and staff are rising to the occasion and writing the stories we will read about for years to come.

Normally, spring is when we take time to appreciate in print our alumni and your stories. The Stories Book is our compendium of your fascinating achievements, your contributions to law and your communities, and your deep connections to your alma mater and one another.

This year our plan is no different. Because of COVID-19, however, our 2020 Stories Book must be an electronic edition, but rest assured, it is no less filled with inspiring histories and anecdotes.

The health crisis has led me to reflect about how much a law school education prepares us for leadership and management challenges, both predictable and unforeseen. In moments of crisis, that legal training comes to the fore and we have an opportunity to shine as leaders. It is serendipitous, then, that we chose leadership as a theme for this Stories Book—which also celebrates the College’s 125th anniversary this year.

In these pages, we profile four alumni (p.8) whose path from law school has led them to the executive suite, where—in the words of one of them—“the drive, resilience, critical thinking, discipline, and time management that is demanded by legal studies” are indispensable. These profiles include that of 2020 Commencement speaker Joanna Geraghty L’97, whose consummate leadership skills are helping her pilot JetBlue—where she is President and COO—through these turbulent days.

In this edition, we also catch up with leaders in another field: literature. Communication is a key element of leadership, and the superior communications skills of these four alums have led them to publish critically acclaimed and best-selling works of both fiction and nonfiction. Starting with Pulitzer Prize-winner Elizabeth Strout L’82 (p.18), our four writers examine how their law school careers influenced their life’s work.

Our quasquicentennial celebration continues with profiles of our first African American alumnus, William H. Johnson L’1903 (p.26) and of the President and President-Elect of the New York State Bar Association, both proudly Orange (p.4). Sarah Shepp L’19 reflects on her family’s long history with the University and College, stretching back more than 100 years (p.36). And we meet two alums—John Elmore L’84 (p.16) and Kevin Belbey L’16 (p.12)—whose connections to sports and the law have strengthened their community ties.

These are your stories. Let them inspire and warm you during these challenging times with the knowledge that across many industries—and in many communities around the world—there are Orange lawyers doing their best work and always making us proud.

Very truly yours,

Craig M. Boise
Dean and Professor of Law
Karson’s rise through the ranks of the Suffolk County Bar Association started after his seven-year stint as a county assistant district attorney, during his career as a law secretary to Justice Lawrence J. Bracken of the Appellate Division, Second Department. “As a prosecutor, I spent a significant portion of my time in court and regularly interacted with my peers in the profession. However, as a law secretary, you lead a monastic life, spending hours alone in a law library researching and writing. After being so visible in court nearly every day, I seemingly disappeared. That’s when Justice Bracken suggested that I get involved in the bar association.”

And get involved he did. In addition to attaining the presidency of the Suffolk County Bar Association in 2004, Karson became more involved with the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) over the years. His involvement included, among other things, election to the NYSBA House of Delegates, serving as chair of the Committee on Courts of Appellate Jurisdiction and the Audit Committee, serving on the Committee to Review Judicial Nominations, and election to three one-year terms as Treasurer. He also became a member of the American Bar Association House of Delegates.

Unique Position

This ascension up the ranks will culminate on June 1, 2020, when Karson becomes the 123rd President of NYSBA. He will take over from fellow alum Henry (Hank) Greenberg L’86, marking the first instance of back-to-back College of Law alums serving as NYSBA President, and he will be the 10th graduate overall to hold the position.

Giving back to the legal community and supporting bar associations are important to the partners of his firm. “My partners at Lamb & Barnosky understand that the NYSBA presidency is virtually a full-time job, and they are supportive of me and my service to our bar association,” he says. In fact, two of his partners currently serve as chairs of NYSBA sections, and another is a county bar committee chair. At the firm, Karson is a commercial, municipal, and real estate litigator concentrating on appellate work, taking advantage of his experience in appellate courts. He has argued more than 100 appeals during his career. Upon taking office, Karson says he plans to maintain the same mantra that has guided him throughout his career: Lawyers are the guardians of justice. “By virtue of a license to practice law, attorneys are in a unique position to ensure that we live in a just society, representing clients and resolving disputes in accordance with the rule of law.”

To that point, Karson says he wants to place an emphasis on civic education. He and Greenberg have agreed to work together—along with New York Chief Judge Janet DiFiore—on a joint bar/bench convocation around this topic. “We have many citizens who can name all the judges on American Idol but who can’t name a justice of the US Supreme Court,” he observes. “A viable democracy requires an informed citizenry.”

Varied Audience

Gun violence is another focus area for Karson. “NYSBA has had two task forces looking at the topic of gun violence. The reports and recommendations of those task forces will be evaluated to determine what NYSBA’s next step ought to be in its continuing effort to curb the horrific and all-too-frequent incidents of gun violence that we have witnessed.”

Having practiced his entire career on Long Island—but with substantial time spent on statewide NYSBA activities—Karson says he understands the challenge of bringing together an organization that stretches over a geographically large and diverse area, from metropolitan Manhattan to rural Upstate.

““The state bar association serves a varied audience of practitioners,” notes Karson. “Topics such as gun violence may mean something different to someone in Upstate New York compared to a New York City attorney. It’s not always an easy task to develop positions that fairly represent all voices, but I am confident we can establish agreeable policy positions on guns and other important issues.”

While at the College of Law, Karson served as the senior editor of the Syracuse Law Review Annual Survey of New York Law. He returned for Law Alumni Weekend in 2019 to reengage with alums and to see Dineen Hall for the first time. Karson observed, “The new building is magnificent and will serve future generations of law students well.”

Karson concludes, “Representing the members of NYSBA as its President is truly an honor. I look forward to leading the association and building on the important work of advancing our great profession, the public which it serves and, of course, the cause of justice.”
“At the forefront of shaping the future of the legal profession.”

Hank Greenberg L’86 Concludes
His Term as NYSBA President

At the end of May 2020, Henry (Hank) Greenberg will conclude his term as New York State Bar Association (NYSBA) President. It’s been a highly productive term, with Greenberg addressing diversity in the profession, launching global initiatives, embracing emerging technologies, and—as his term comes to an end—responding to COVID-19’s impact on our profession and law students.

Among the many accomplishments during Greenberg’s tenure:

Diversity in Leadership Roles

- Appointed a diverse chair, co-chair, or vice-chair to all 59 of NYSBA’s committees.
- Adopted an association-wide diversity and inclusion plan.

  Hank Greenberg: “I am most proud of our diversity initiatives, among these many other achievements.”

Global Membership Initiative

- Entered into memoranda of understanding with bars associations in Seoul, Korea, Tokyo, and elsewhere to meet its members—180,000 who work outside of New York—where they live and work.
- Launched a quarterly global newsletter to international members.

While NYSBA is the voice of the New York state legal profession, the Association has members in all 50 states and in more than 100 countries, making it a global organization. These global initiatives will contribute to the Association’s Virtual Bar Center.

Virtual Bar Center

- Launched Virtual Bar Center initiative, which involved deep investments in technical infrastructure for virtual meetings, online education, and enhanced communications with and among members and the public at large.
- Launched a new website, online store, and member database.

The Virtual Bar Center currently provides information about COVID-19 and serves as a command center for COVID-19 related communications with members and other constituencies worldwide.
Cutting-Edge Public Policy Initiatives

> Rural Justice (investigating the impact of rural attorney shortages on access to justice, challenges in delivering legal services in rural areas, and the unique practice needs of rural practitioners).
> Free Expression in the Digital Age (examining how free expression has evolved in the digital age and, in particular, how the law has impacted—and can impact—this evolution).
> Autonomous Vehicles and the Law (investigating how the law and legal profession adapt to the rise of autonomous vehicles as autonomous vehicles, raise novel and potentially far-reaching challenges to the law in a variety of areas.)
> Legalization of Cannabis (providing NYSBA lawyers with shared educational resources, and otherwise helping New York set the highest possible legal and business practices, including advice to medical professionals and standards for legalized cannabis products).
> Domestic Terrorism and Hate Crimes (examining the factors that have led to the increase in hate crimes, including legislative and policy recommendations, suggestions for improvements to the federal and state legal system’s response to hate crimes, and helping to better educate the public on the value of diversity and inclusion).
> Parole Reform (studying the current system of parole, focusing on release practices and revocation and reincarceration.)
> Future of the New York Bar Exam (investigating the experience and impact of New York’s adoption of the Uniform Bar Examination).

Hank Greenberg: “The Association has never been more prolific in developing policy positions on cutting-edge topics that lawyers are grappling with now. From our groundbreaking initiatives to support and save local news outlets to our efforts to examine autonomous vehicles, NYSBA is at the forefront of shaping not only the future of the legal profession but also the societal trends impacting us all.”

National and State Leadership

> Led the American Bar Association’s adoption of a resolution to explore innovative approaches to expand access to justice and the adoption of a resolution encouraging online providers of legal documents to adopt the ABA’s “Best Practice Guidelines for Online Legal Document Providers.”
> Led effort to successfully remove mental health questions from the New York bar admissions application.
> Worked with the chief judge of the Court of Appeals of the State of New York to announce a future convocation on civics education.

Rapid Response to the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis

> Oversaw transformation of NYSBA’s website, social media outlets, and other digital platforms to provide real-time information regarding the crisis through eblasts, webinars, publications, and an online information center.
> Partnered with the NYS Court System to build and coordinate a statewide pro bono network of lawyers to handle the expected surge in legal matters resulting from pandemic and enduring economic fallout.
> Recommendations from Task Force regarding next bar exam in New York immediately adopted by the Court of Appeals.
> Created an Emergency Task Force for Solo and Small Firm Practitioners impacted by the crisis.

NYSBA’s communications channels continue to provide updated resources to assist attorneys, law firms, the court system, and others navigating the crisis.

A Boost to the Annual Meeting

> Posted record attendance at dozens of events at the 2020 Annual Meeting.
> Held a centerpiece Presidential Summit on Domestic Terrorism, moderated by Dean Craig M. Boise.
> Hosted a sold-out Gala Dinner at the American Museum of Natural History honoring US Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan and the judges of the New York Court of Appeals.

Greenberg says he is confident that president-elect Scott Karson L’75 will maintain NYSBA’s momentum: “Scott’s many years of leadership experience in bar associations—from the local level to the national level—and his forward-thinking agenda will continue NYSBA’s upward trajectory as we face new challenges and opportunities.”
The College of Law has produced countless leaders throughout its 125-year history. These include a vice president of the United States, a state attorney general, college presidents, numerous judges, public servants, business and nonprofit executives, entrepreneurs, and many others in positions of influence.

In this new Stories Book section, we celebrate some of the journeys that alums have taken from the classroom to the business executive suite, and we learn that for an Orange lawyer, almost any career is advantaged by a Syracuse law diploma.

We present four alums in this issue. Look for more stories in future issues!
A trailblazer in a traditionally male-dominated industry, Joanna Geraghty joined JetBlue Airways in 2005, working her way up to become the company’s President and COO in 2018. Today, JetBlue is the sixth largest airline in the US and a Fortune 500 company, with a fleet of more than 250 planes, a workforce of more than 20,000 employees and service to more than 100 destinations across the US and internationally. Demonstrating her leadership during the COVID-19 crisis, in late March 2020 JetBlue began offering free flights to medical professionals volunteering to help fight the pandemic.

In her role, Geraghty oversees the airline’s day-to-day operations, including customer experience, flight operations, technical operations, and commercial functions. She is the first female president at a large US airline since the early 2000s. Her job has been described as one of the most challenging in the airline industry.

“Through her rise in a competitive industry,” observes Dean Boise, “Joanna has never forgotten the value of a Syracuse law degree, citing it as important training for the problem-solving and leadership required in her high-profile career.”

A joint degree student at Syracuse, Geraghty earned a master’s in international relations from the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs along with her juris doctor degree. Before joining JetBlue, she was a partner at Holland and Knight, a New York law firm. She was a member of the airline’s legal department, before being promoted to Associate General Counsel. She then became head of the company’s human resources team—what JetBlue calls its “Chief People Officer”—before being named Executive Vice President of Customer Experience in 2014.

Kim Townsend is President and CEO of Loretto Management, a continuing health care organization that provides services for older adults throughout Central New York. Townsend holds Master of Business Administration degrees from Syracuse University and an Ed.D. in executive leadership from St. John Fisher College. An expert in health care management, governance, and leadership, she is the author of LifeCircle Leadership: How Exceptional People Make Every Day Extraordinary (Advantage Media Group, 2018).

Did you imagine in law school that you’d eventually land in a corporate leadership role?

Absolutely! I felt strongly that my experiences at law school and that I continue to use every day. Law school teaches you to think about problems differently than other disciplines. The precise and clarity of presentation, are skills that I honed in law school and that I continue to use every day.

In a rapidly changing world, what innovation has most affected your industry?

An exciting time to be in health care, with the growing demand for high quality at low cost. That is a quadrant of the cost-quality matrix that was viewed as unachievable when I got my M.B.A. at Whitman in 1999. Through intelligent use of data, health care can meet both cost and demographic challenges.

What memory from your law school days is dearest to you?

My favorite memory is of then-Sen. Joseph R. Biden ‘68 speaking at my graduation in 2001. Who knew that one day he would become Vice President of the United States?!
Luke Cooper is CEO and Founder of Baltimore-based Fixt, the first enterprise-level, on-demand device repair platform that supplies “concierge technicians” to businesses as a cost-effective tech solution. A renowned entrepreneur, Cooper has been named EY Entrepreneur of the Year and one of Baltimore’s “40 Under 40” business leaders. Before Fixt, Cooper was a founding team member of CTS Inc.—a leader in cybersecurity information assurance systems that was acquired by Paradigm Holding Solutions and CACI International.

Did you imagine in law school that you'd eventually land in a corporate leadership role?

Yes. Being a lawyer puts you right in the mix of things, but you need to see the whole picture. To build something great, you need a holistic perspective of your business, your market, and yourself. I learned this from a mentor at Skadden Arps. This aspect of my journey was very important to me creative problem-solving strategies to help me understand how the corporate world operates within legal frameworks, something I deal with every day as an executive.

What do you apply in your position at Fixt?

Critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and time management are just a few I use daily. Additionally, research skills are quite important to all aspects of my business. This is a skill I did not have before law school but—after a great first year Legal Research and Writing class—my strength in this area has never stopped flourishing. Consequently, I know I can get to 70% of the right answers by knowing how to access the most accurate data really fast.

In a rapidly changing world, what innovation has most affected your industry?

Cloud computing has hugely impacted the way people interact with the goods and services they buy. For Fixt, cloud-based payment solutions like Stripe are embedded in our product, making it possible to automate payments to our techs. Plus, machine learning has unlocked huge benefits by allowing our logic to automatically dispatch the right tech for any job in four hours or less, globally. Advanced GPS and map capabilities have helped us achieve a 95% on-time rate. Today, if you are not a technology company first, you die. As a trustee of the University of Maryland Baltimore, I know this applies to law schools too.

What memory from your law school days is dearest to you?

I once convinced Wegmans to stay open until 2 a.m. for a fellow law school friend and I could continue sparring over contracts law in preparation for finals. A close second: I remember one football game when Donovan McNabb, sacked with five seconds to go, tosses one up to the tight end for an amazing win—so deeply emblematic of our underdog culture. Go Orange!

Jared Turner has been President and Chief Operating Officer of Young Living Essential Oils for four years. He joined the company as Associate General Counsel in charge of international legal affairs. “But within weeks, the owner and board promoted me onto the business track,” he recalls. Young Living is a nearly $2 billion company based in Lehi, UT. It has 3,500 global employees, 25 farms, and does business in 25 countries. The Young Living Foundation supports around 250,000 children a year with malaria abatement, trafficking rescue, education, and other initiatives.

What elements of your legal training do you apply in your position at Young Living?

Time management, critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and the ability to translate into a business-related job; what I didn’t realize was how advantageous my legal training would be for a corporate leadership role.

How did law school prepare you for your current role?

Professor Donna Arzt’s international law courses were my foundation, and the Community Development Law Clinic was invaluable, as it taught me creative problem-solving strategies to help create value for Syracuse community nonprofits. The corporate law classes were very important for helping me understand how the corporate world operates within legal frameworks, something I deal with every day as an executive.

What memory from your law school days is dearest to you?

Lifelong bonds are formed in the challenging work, and I still maintain friendships from this time in my life. I had special relationships with professors Deborah Kenn and Donna Arzt. I was a graduate assistant to Professor Arzt at the Global Law and Practice Center, and I enjoyed dialoging with her on international legal topics when I assisted her at the school and at her home helping her to landscape her backyard.

To current law students, I recommend building relationships with faculty mentors, immersing yourself in the adventure of legal practice, and canoeing on the Finger Lakes!
Kevin Belbey ’13, C’16, L’16, Vice President of Sports Broadcasting with The Montag Group, might have more orange clothing in his wardrobe than Jim Boeheim ’66, G’73, the storied men’s basketball coach. That’s because Belbey created the fan-favorite team Boeheim’s Army that competes in The Basketball Tournament (TBT), a single-elimination, winner-take-all competition with a $2 million payout broadcast each summer on ESPN. Summer 2020 will be the sixth year Belbey has served as the general manager for Syracuse’s alumni team that he launched while a second-year law student.

Too Good to Be True
First approached by TBT organizers before the tournament’s inaugural year, Belbey says the offer “sounded too good to be true.” It wasn’t until he watched the first games on ESPNU in 2014 that he took the organizers seriously. After witnessing The Fighting Irish win the $500,000 championship title, Belbey thought to himself, “If this is something Notre Dame can do, this is something SU should do for sure.”

Belbey was an excellent fit to pull together a Syracuse team because of the connections he made as an undergraduate at Syracuse while serving as the Head Manager for the Men’s Basketball Team. “While the tournament is open to anyone who wants to organize a team, the guys who created it thought that to have the greatest exposure and broad appeal, they needed to have teams with built-in fan bases,” he says. Thus, for the organizers, collaborations with individuals having strong ties to alumni players were key.

With the tournament’s prize money doubled in 2015, Belbey recruited his first two players: Eric Devendorf ’09 and Hakim Warrick ’05, both highly respected by former and current players and fans. “Having them on board made my job easier to recruit the rest of the team,” he says.

The Best Fans
Since Notre Dame’s initial win, a team called Overseas Elite has dominated TBT, winning five consecutive titles as the prize money grew over the years. Still, Belbey says he feels SU’s alumni teams have the strongest chemistry and greatest fan base.

Belbey says he uses social media to create interest and attract fan votes, finishing with almost 1,000 more fan votes than any other team last year, which just happened to be the first year tournament games were played in Syracuse. The fan base in TBT is important because top fans—those whose dedication is shown by garnering votes in support of their team—receive a cut. Fans must register online, and the top 1,000 supporters of the winning team share $200,000.

“Last summer, with the tournament coming to Syracuse, it was a real testament to what we’ve built and the demand our fans have for this tourney,” he says. “We have the best fans in the entire tournament.” 2019 was also the first time the team’s namesake watched from the stands. “That was awesome and a little nerve-wracking,” Belbey says of Boeheim’s
“Last summer, with the tournament coming to Syracuse, it was a real testament for what we’ve built and the demand fans have for this tourney. We have the best fans in the entire tournament.”

presence. “I think he gets a real kick out of it, and it’s really special for him to see all these guys he’s brought into the program coming back to Syracuse and wanting to play with each other for no guaranteed money.”

Everybody on Their Toes
TBT is like an NCAA tournament with 64 teams competing in games held over two weekends. To make it to the prize pot, teams must win six games. In summer 2020, three games are planned for Syracuse, from July 31 through Aug. 2, at the SRC Arena on the Onondaga Community College campus. The championship games will be held the following weekend elsewhere.

To make TBT games as friendly to fans and as exciting as possible, some rules have been adjusted. A shorter game clock is used, for instance, and then there’s the “Elam Ending”—at the four-minute mark in the fourth quarter, the game clock shuts off and a target score is set by adding eight points to the leading team’s score. The Elam Ending format was recently used in the 2020 NBA All-Star game for the first time.

“So instead of playing to zero on a timer, you’re playing to a target score, and the first team to that score wins,” Belbey explained. “This makes games more exciting for fans because you don’t have to sit through foul shots. Also, every game ends on a game-winning shot. It just changes the whole energy of the game and puts everybody on their toes”.

Never Regret It
In addition to his J.D. from the College of Law, Belbey received his bachelor’s degree in broadcast journalism from the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and his Master’s Degree in New Media Management from Newhouse. As a senior at SU, he knew he wanted to go into the business side of sports and media and thought law school might be a good fit. It was ESPN announcer Jay Bilas who convinced him.

Belbey met Bilas during a Syracuse basketball game. Bilas, who works as an attorney when he’s not on air with ESPN, advised Belbey to attend law school without hesitation. “He told me I’d never regret it a day in my life, even if I never end up practicing,” Belbey recalled. He said, “The skills I would learn will help me think critically, take me to a whole other level, and help separate myself.”

Once he heard Bilas advice, Belbey’s decision was made. Belbey now works as a sports agent, representing broadcasting clients from national networks to local markets, including play-by-play announcers, analysts, radio hosts, writers, and reporters.

Now, Belbey says his law degree helps in his current role and in running the tournament. “Once, I was trying to convince a player to play for us and he wasn’t sure. But we really needed a center, and this guy was about 7 feet tall and 245 pounds. He was going to be a big difference-maker for us,” Belbey shared. “He ended up committing to us and told The Post-Standard later – ‘Yeah, Kevin pulled some of that lawyer stuff on me in negotiations.’ So it worked out great.”

That Next Step
Boeheim’s Army isn’t Belbey’s only service to his alma mater. He currently serves on several Syracuse boards including the Syracuse University Law Alumni Association, The Newhouse 44, and the Generation Orange Leadership Council. “I believe, once we graduate, we are connected to the school forever,” Belbey says. “We can continue to improve on our own degree by investing back into the school and its students who come after us.”

In 2019, Syracuse University honored Belbey during the Orange Central weekend with a Generation Orange Alumni Award for his continued University involvement in support of Boeheim’s Army, students, and the community.

While Boeheim’s Army hasn’t won the big money yet, Belbey says he finds camaraderie each year in reuniting with alumni players and visiting Syracuse. The team spends a week in Syracuse to run a clinic, sign autographs for fans during special appearances, and partner with the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation. “They supported us from the beginning, so we want to give back that support,” says Belbey, noting that last year, members of Boeheim’s Army helped raise close to $20,000 for the Foundation.

“TBT is like Orange Central but with $2 million on the line,” observes Belbey. “This summer, I’m looking forward to us taking that next step. We want to win the championship and take home the prize money!”
Elmore always wanted to be a lawyer, but he didn’t feel he had the confidence or understanding of how to apply to law school. Instead he joined the state police with a plan to apply later.

Elmore says he is eternally grateful for help from Thomas Maroney L’63, a College of Law professor who was on leave and running the state attorney general’s Syracuse Regional Office while Elmore was a New York State trooper. That chance meeting next led to an introduction to Paul Richardson, the first African American lawyer Elmore ever met. Their guidance, he says, was instrumental in navigating his path to the law.

Once a student, Elmore says he was laser-focused on his studies because he gave up a career to be there. He most enjoyed Professor Emeritus Travis H.D. Lewin’s advanced trial practice class that he credits for preparing him for his career as a litigator.

“When I was interviewing at the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, I met with Professor Lewin beforehand,” Elmore recalls. “One of the questions he prepared me for was, ‘If you’re a prosecutor and your main witness in a homicide dies, do you have an obligation to tell the defense attorney even though you’re confident you have the right person?’ The answer was Brady v. Maryland, a US Supreme Court case that established the prosecution must turn over all exculpatory evidence that might exonerate the defendant to the defense.”

He continues, “I answered the question very, very well, made it to a second interview, and was hired.”

After leaving law school, Elmore spent three years in the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, which he says was great courtroom experience. “It offered incredible training on criminal procedure law, how to try a case, plea-bargaining, and search and seizure law.”

However, Elmore says he prefers Upstate living, so his next job was in the Attorney General’s Office in the Environmental Crimes Unit in Western New York, where he investigated illegal storage and disposal of hazardous waste. He remained there a couple of years. This work, he says, strengthened his investigative skills, but he missed the fast pace of the courtroom.

Moving on to private practice in criminal defense, Elmore tried the only death penalty case in Western New York, which resulted in a life without parole for Jonathan Parker, who shot and killed one police officer and wounded another. “As a criminal defense attorney, that is where all my skills as a police officer, prosecutor, and defense attorney came together,” he says of the case. “I had to give 100% to keep him off death row.”

A judge pushed Elmore to take the case but warned him it would be life-changing. “But I felt like I had to take it,” he says. “You’re placed on this Earth with a purpose. Being a lawyer is a privilege, so sometimes we have to take on unpopular cases because that’s what makes our system work.”

After more than two decades of handling very serious criminal cases, Elmore now focuses his practice on representing individuals who have been seriously injured in accidents caused by the negligence of others. “Ironically my law partner, Steve Boyd, was a news reporter who covered the Jonathan Parker death penalty trial,” says Elmore, adding Boyd enrolled in law school after the trial.

Helping to change lives is what Elmore does in his off-hours, too. When coaching 32 kids at the Bomb Squad Academy Center, his focus is to toughen them up and provide discipline, but he observes, it’s also to give life lessons. Bringing his skills as an amateur boxer, he helps run the program as a way to mentor local youth. Elmore started boxing at age 13. By 16—the youngest age to compete—he made the semifinals of the Golden Gloves in the welterweight division, where he knocked out a 27-year-old to take the title. “Boxing gave me just a little bit of toughness, confidence, and maybe swagger,” he says of his training. “And those have helped me in all aspects of my life.”

As far as his own mentors, Elmore says Maroney and Richardson are high on that list for their help in navigating his path to law school. But at the very top is his father Herbert Elmore, the first African American firefighter in his hometown of Olean, NY. Herbert never attended college, but he knew the importance of education.

His father’s advice that most resonated with Elmore: “It’s better to get an education and use your brain than work hard and use your back.”
The Write Stuff

Pulitzer Prize-Winning Novelist Elizabeth Strout L’82 Examines Law School’s Influence on Her Writing Career.

By her own admission, Elizabeth Strout did not do well in her legal writing class.

“I received a C+, and my teacher was never able to communicate to me what I was doing wrong. I found the conflict between legal writing and creative writing tremendously difficult, although I could never figure out why.”

That first-year setback was not an impediment to Strout’s law school or her writing career. Dropping out after her first year, she eventually returned to law school and graduated cum laude in 1982, “which still tickles me,” she says.

Something Furtive

Throughout law school, Strout pursued her creative writing passion, hanging out with the students from the University’s famous M.F.A. program and writing “furtively” in between her assignments. “There was always something furtive about my writing,” Strout explains. “The furtiveness kept me writing under wraps, which was good. It meant the pressure kept building.”

In fact the pressure built and built until Strout began publishing her short stories and eventually her first novel Amy and Isabelle (1998), which was adapted into an “Oprah Winfrey Presents” movie starring Elisabeth Shue.

Amy and Isabelle was the beginning of Strout’s career as an acclaimed novelist, a career which to date includes seven works of fiction; a Pulitzer Prize for Olive Kitteridge (2008), and its adaptation into an Emmy Award-winning mini-series starring Frances McDormand; a Story Prize for Anything Is Possible (2017); and an Oprah’s Book Club pick for her latest novel, Olive, Again (2019).

Taking a Chance

Like the eponymous character of Olive Kitteridge, Strout is a native of Maine. Born in Portland, she grew up in small towns in Maine and New Hampshire. As an adolescent, she wrote avidly in notebooks and received her degree in English from Bates College in 1977. Two years later, she arrived in Syracuse.

“When I went to law school, I knew I wanted to be a fiction writer, but no one at that point was interested in my writing,” recalls Strout. “So I thought, I have a social conscience. I will be a lawyer during the day and write at night.” Strout admits—with some modesty—that her application was perhaps not the strongest Syracuse reviewed that year. “But I am grateful to Syracuse for taking a chance on me.”

Strout also admits that her lawyer-by-day/writer-by-night idea was a little “ill conceived.” Nevertheless, she says, “going to Syracuse changed my life. For many years, I did not realize the extent of this truth, but time has gone by and many different dusts have settled, and I see how much the law school helped shape me as a person and a writer of fiction.”

Learning at Syracuse, continues Strout, “taught me to think differently. It helped strip me of that excessive emotion which I have always felt, an emotion that is necessary for a fiction writer but not one that should be brought to the page in all its sloppiness.”

Strout says she noticed herself thinking differently even after her first semester. “When I went home for break, I realized that friends and family—people who were intelligent—were somehow not thinking that well. They were thinking with emotions and not with solid thoughts.”

Eager to Do It

After graduation, Strout worked for a Syracuse legal services office. “I think I was not a good lawyer,” Strout admits. “I was in charge of the Developmentally Disabled Unit. I remember one client who fell asleep on a bench while an administrative law judge told me I had good legs, and then found against my client.”

Always the observant writer, Strout preferred doing office intakes. “I was eager to do it. It involved listening to people who had come in with any number of problems. My job was to figure out whether their problems were legal or not, and often they were not. Their stories were so meaningful to me! They spoke of not being able to pay their bills, having their electricity turned off, and things of that nature.”

“Going to Syracuse changed my life. For many years, I did not realize the extent of this truth.”

—Elizabeth Strout L’82
“I learned how to negotiate in law school, and I loved that class.”
—Elizabeth Strout L’82

Syracuse became close to Strout’s heart for another reason: her daughter was born in the city. “I met my first husband in Syracuse and had my daughter. But I was let go from my legal services job after about six months because of cuts, and then my husband, daughter, and I moved to New York City, where he had a clerkship.”

At that point—graduate degree in hand and some short stories published—Strout began teaching English at Manhattan Community College. Her class had a legal flavor: “The department chair allowed me to teach my composition class around the concept of criminal law.”

Many, Many Things

Strout taught at Manhattan for 13 years, leaving this vocation once she published her first novel, Amy and Isabelle, an “expansive and inventive” story of a teenage daughter’s alienation from a distant mother. The novel—which introduces readers to the fictional town of Shirley Falls—was a finalist for the prestigious PEN/Faulkner Award.

“After that, I wrote full time,” says Strout. “If I had not gone to Syracuse, I would never have ended up in New York City, and if I had not ended up there, I would never have been able to write as I have about New England. I needed that distance from it; the two cultures are stunningly different.”

Continues Strout, “There were times when I thought, ‘What was that all about?’ Meaning my short legal career. But it was about many, many things—mostly, it was about learning to think differently and the exposure it gave me to many different kinds of people.”

Although she does not write procedurals, Strout notes that her legal training has been useful for her novel writing, especially The Burgess Boys (2013), a story of two brothers from Shirley Falls: Jim, a corporate lawyer, and Bob, a legal aid attorney. “When I wrote The Burgess Boys, the legal aspects of the case the plot hinges on were clear to me only because I had gone to law school,” says Strout. “I was tremendously relieved when I realized how the case would unfold because it meant I could concentrate on understanding the Burgess family and the Somali community, both of which are crucial to the story.”

There’s one more advantage that a lawyer-turned-writer can count on: advocating for oneself when it comes to contracts. Strout explains: “When I was approached about movie rights for Olive Kitteridge, I took the contract to a fancy entertainment lawyer, thinking someone like that should look it over.”

Strout continues, “I paid him a great deal of money, and he had no objections. But after reading it, I realized I did. I didn’t want the stage rights to be deferred for five years, which the contract stipulated—so all by myself, I negotiated that with the other party.”

“I learned how to negotiate in law school, and I loved that class,” says Strout. “What I remembered so clearly from it was, ‘Know your bottom line and stick with it!’”

By Elizabeth Strout

Olive, Again (2019)
Oprah’s Book Club Pick

Anything Is Possible (2017)
The Story Prize

My Name Is Lucy Barton (2016)
Malaparte Prize

The Burgess Boys (2013)

Olive Kitteridge (2008)
Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

Abide with Me (2006)

Amy and Isabelle (1998)
Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction

elizabethstrout.com
The profile of Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Elizabeth Strout L’82 began with a central question that moved Strout to think about how her law school training influenced her writing career: To what extent does a background in law and legal writing help an author find success writing fiction?

We posed the same question to three other alumni who have found success both as lawyers and writers. Like Strout, the question led to deep reflection—not surprising, given their love of the written word.

Ronald Goldfarb L’56

For Ronald Goldfarb, the law represents his education, while he describes writing as his “passion.” “I never consider them distinct skills,” he says. “They are a natural combination, so when asked what I do, I answer in a trilecta: lawyer, author, literary agent.”

Goldfarb says his writing career began in earnest at the College of Law, where he was a member of the Law Review. It further developed at Yale Law School, where he collaborated with a criminal law professor on an article about contempt for a British journal. “That led to my master’s and doctorate thesis on ‘The Contempt Power.’ At New York University Law School, a Hays Fellowship allowed me to complete that manuscript, which Columbia University Press published while I was working at the Department of Justice.”


At the same time, Goldfarb’s career as a literary agent blossomed. “I was seen as a lawyer who knew about book contracts and publishing, so writer clients came to me. I also became counsel to the Washington Independent Writers (representing more than 2,000 freelance writers) and the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, the national organization for teachers of writing.”

Goldfarb turned teacher himself with Clear Understandings: A Guide to Legal Writing (1982), a project sponsored by the Association of State Trial Judges. He returned to legal subjects with Migrant Farm Workers: A Caste of Despair (Iowa State, 1981), written as a result of his two-year court appointment by a federal court to oversee the reform of migrant farmworker laws; In Confidence: When to Protect Secrecy and When to Require Disclosure (Yale, 2009); and After Snowden: Privacy, Secrecy, and Security in the Information Age (St. Martin’s, 2015).

Recently, Goldfarb has turned to fiction—as the pseudonymous R.L. Sommer—with Courtship (2015) and Recusal (2020). “My two novels—a third is in the works for next year—come at a perfect time in my life,” Goldfarb observes. “Nonfiction writing is work; fiction is fun. It can be done wherever I sit with a pen and a pad.”

Through writing fiction, Goldfarb says he has learned how autobiographical a novel can be. “It’s a conclusion I denied until I re-read my novels and realized that while they were not about me, only I could have written them. What I write evolved from my life in law.”

“Recusal blew out of Zeus’ forehead,” Goldfarb continues. “I was watching the Kavanaugh hearings, sat down, and wrote it in about a month. While writing, I imagined its sequel—The Gender War—which will be published in 2021.”

When writing Recusal, Goldfarb says he “wrote and edited endlessly, following my imagination.” His advice to young lawyers thinking of writing themselves is to “learn the basics so they come naturally to everything you write. Never mimic a writer you admire. And between heart and gut and brain, follow your heart and gut.”

Jodé Millman L’79

Asked about the connection between legal writing and creative writing, legal writing expert Professor Ian Gallacher observes that while the law prizes logical thinking, “good legal writing also relies heavily on narrative skill. There’s even a branch of legal writing scholarship called legal storytelling, which studies how narrative theory can be applied to the documents lawyers write so as to improve their communication.”

That’s an idea that Jodé Millman subscribes to. “I have been an attorney for many decades,” she says. “During that time, I realized that whether it was a divorce, personal injury, or contested will case, it was not only important to be an advocate for my clients, it was equally important to be a storyteller.”

For Millman, storytelling is an extraordinary tool because it contains the power of persuasion. “As champion of my client’s story, it was my job to weave a tale that would convince the court or my adversary that my client was in the right,” she says. “A successful writer understands the power of storytelling and can transcend from legal writing into the creative realm.”

Millman is the author of legal thriller The Midnight Call (2019), praised as a “must-read” by USA Today. “It was my first attempt at crime fiction, and honestly, I didn’t have a clue how to do it,” she admits. The craft of legal writing and creative writing sometimes clashed for Millman—“legal writing is objective, while fiction writing is deeply subjective”—but nevertheless she found that her legal training provided four essential tools for novel writing: discipline, vocabulary, plotting, and research.
“Unfortunately, attorneys are not trained to be brief,” she adds. “Overwriting can be a difficult habit to break. In fiction writing, less is more. As poet Allen Ginsberg wrote, writers must ‘kill their darlings.’”

Millman says her writing life began in earnest when she became semi-retired. With her children in high school and her family relocated to Ann Arbor, Mi, she decided she wasn’t interested in practicing law in a new jurisdiction. Instead, she took a master’s in English literature from Eastern Michigan University, continued a project of her father’s—the “Seats” theater guides—and began teaching part time at the University of Detroit Mercy Law School.

“I’ve been fortunate to begin a new career at a stage in life when I’m in control of my time, most of the time!” she says.

Like other Syracuse law authors, Millman says her legal training is useful when it comes to the contractual side of the writer’s life. “While it’s best not to represent yourself, having the ability to draft and understand contracts has been priceless in negotiating my various agreements for fiction and nonfiction projects,” she says. “Most publishing agreements are drafted in favor of the publisher. Caveat Emptor. In fact, based upon my suggestions, my fiction publisher—Immortal Works—incorporated my contract changes into their standard contract.”

“The law and literature are demanding disciplines” Millman adds. “They require a resource that is limited to us: our time.” That limitation was evident when Millman first attempted a creative writing project—a middle grade children’s novel—while she was in practice and raising her children. “I felt like I was stealing hours to write by staying up late and rising early to put my creative time in. That novel remains unpublished, but maybe someday I’ll return to it.”

Green cites Professor Emeritus Travis H.D. Lewin as a major influence on both his legal and writing career. “Professor Lewin taught me evidence,” says Green. “He gave me confidence to write about courtroom drama, so I began writing a series of legal thrillers—instead of sports thrillers—and my book sales went from the tens of thousands to the millions. Thanks, Professor Lewin!”

Green’s expertise in contracts also has had a positive effect on his writing career: “My legal training has helped my writing, especially with my ability to read complex contracts and understand the terms, which I am then able to discuss with my agent.”

“I have been fortunate that my legal career has been as a rainmaker,” continues Green. “This has afforded me the flexibility during workdays to carve out time for writing.” Green says that through his books he has been able to build strong relationships—“really, friendships”—with clients. “Whether it’s suspense novels for them, or middle grade sports novels for their kids, my writing has paid for itself 10 times over.”

As for the influence of legal writing on his creative writing, Green is adamant that it’s had a compelling, positive effect. He uses, appropriately, a sports metaphor to describe the relationship: “Legal writing requires discipline and accuracy. It’s like weightlifting for football; the exercise enhances your performance.”

Tim Green L’94 traveled the country, inspiring children to read through his book series Football Genius and Baseball Genius.

Tim Green L’94

Called the “Renaissance Man of Sports,” Tim Green graduated magna cum laude from Syracuse University with a degree in English in 1986 and from the College of Law cum laude in 1994. A legendary member of the Orange football team from 1982 to 1985, Green enjoyed success in the National Football League before becoming a football commentator, an accomplished attorney at Barclay Damon, a legal commentator for NPR, a TV host, and a best-selling author. Green’s diagnosis with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis was the subject of a 60 Minutes profile in November 2018.

After writing more than a dozen best-selling books for adults, Green began a series of novels for young readers set in a world of sports. Football Genius reached The New York Times best-seller list of children’s chapter books. Then, in 2017, Green and baseball legend Derek Jeter teamed up to write the Baseball Genius series. Green has traveled the United States speaking at schools, inspiring thousands of kids to discover the joys of reading. Passionate about children becoming kinder people and being more understanding of other people through the act of reading, he has used his speaking fees to buy books for children, schools, and libraries that can’t otherwise afford them.
That wrong involved the first African American graduate of Syracuse University’s College of Law, William Herbert Johnson L’1903, who excelled in his studies. He passed his bar exam, but he was denied admission to the New York State Bar. “The challenge facing him was the character and fitness part of the bar admission process,” explains Dean Boise. “Admission to the bar required references, and white lawyers were unwilling to sign a statement confirming the good character and fitness of black graduates.”

Hearing the judges speak of such blatant racism and injustice was “overwhelming” for William Johnson’s grandson Tom Johnson, who, together with his brothers Calvin and Donald and cousin Dorothy Jefferson, had submitted affidavits to the court in support of their grandfather’s posthumous admission to the bar. “During his lifetime, lawyers in the community sought his legal opinion on cases,” says Tom Johnson. “If he was good enough to assist them with their cases, why didn’t they have the intestinal fortitude to write those character references he needed to practice?”

According to Paula C. Johnson (no relation), Professor of Law and Co-Director of the Cold Case Justice Initiative, William Johnson expressed his disappointment to his family. Professor Johnson writes in a 2005 article in the Syracuse Law Review: “William Johnson once remarked to his grandson Calvin, ‘I may not be able to do this now, but there are others who are going to do these types of things.’”

The Onondaga County courtroom was packed. Standing room only. Voices cracked. Tears flowed. The justices of the appellate division were about to hand down a decision that would make history. As Presiding Justice Gerald Whalen, Appellate Division, Fourth Department, proclaimed: “We are going to right that wrong in the only way we can.”
Those “others” were indeed instrumental in “righting the wrong” more than a century later. Black alumni of the College of Law, members of The Syracuse Black Law Alumni Collective (Syracuse BLAC), petitioned the court for the posthumous admission. The New York Court of Appeals granted the application. “The ceremony held in Onondaga County Court (on Oct. 18) was a historical display of community unity and commitment to justice,” says Felicia Collins Ocumarez L’98, G’98, co-founder of Syracuse BLAC. “We are committed to the Syracuse community and contributing to a positive narrative of hope and new beginnings.”

Though denied admission to the bar more than a century ago, Johnson found ways to use his legal acumen to help others. Though his official job was as a mail room clerk for the New York Fire Insurance Rating Organization, an underwriting firm, he remained active in legal circles, doing research for some of his white classmates. He offered legal guidance informally to many who sought his counsel, was active in the Syracuse community advocating for fair treatment of black residents in housing and financial matters, and helped clear the way for African Americans to be employed in law enforcement and firefighting.

William Johnson persevered. By his death in 1965, at age 90, he was a Syracuse legend who fought to right wrongs in the town he loved. Despite its history of anti-slavery activism and as a stop on the Underground Railroad, Syracuse was not a city where blacks could easily break through into the professional ranks. They worked mostly in manual labor or service industries. Johnson was born in Syracuse in 1875, went to Boston University, served in the Spanish-American War of 1898, and returned home to Syracuse to marry Katherine Simmons. When he got a job working as a clerk in a law firm, his passion for the law was ignited.

Syracuse nurtures a similar passion in Professor Johnson, whose writings and advocacy helped keep the William Johnson story alive. “I do this work as a matter of legal theory,” she explains. “But it is also about uncovering the important history that is here in Syracuse. Harriet Tubman lived her final days nearby in Auburn. Abolitionists did their work here. The suffragist movement found a home not far from here in Seneca Falls. There’s a rich history that we must not forget. William Johnson is part of that history as a trailblazer.”

Professor Johnson points to examples of the living legacy left by the trailblazer. The minority bar association of Central New York was named the William Herbert Johnson Bar Association in his honor. The Syracuse University Black Law Students Association (BLSA) presents the William H. Johnson Legacy Award to a distinguished alumnus during Law Alumni Weekend at the Alumni of Color Reception. The College of Law provides to a woman of color in the graduating class an award for outstanding achievement, jointly named for William Johnson and Bessie Seeley L’1903, a suffragist and the only woman in a class of 64 men.

Kristian Walker is the graduate who received the 2019 Seeley-Johnson Award. “His perseverance built a foundation for many African American students to pursue their dreams of law school. And the injustice he faced taught us that mastering law school courses is only part of the battle,” Walker says. “He taught us that it is what we do with the knowledge we gained after we leave the halls of the college that creates change.”

I think honoring William Herbert Johnson will shed light on his very important story and be a step in the right direction of rectifying injustices. I also hope it brings awareness to the fact that it took 116 years to right this wrong, yet in 2019 racial injustices are still very prevalent.”

“The fact is that the legal profession remains one of the least diverse of all professions today,” notes Dean Boise. “We have many more African American students pursuing a law degree, and the number of black associates at law firms has certainly increased. But we are not well-represented at the partner levels of law firms and in leadership roles. I am hoping that by bringing greater awareness to what happened to one of our graduates in 1903, we are shining a spotlight on a problem still facing the graduates of today.”

In the days following William Herbert Johnson’s posthumous admission to the bar, his grandsons reflected on what had become far more than a family campaign to give their grandfather the validation he so deserved.

“I was talking with my brother Don and he told me, ‘Tom, do you realize that we were a part of history being made?’” Tom Johnson says. Their grandfather had, indeed, blazed a trail for others. His descendants, with the support of so many others, had made that trail easier to follow.

There’s a rich history that we must not forget. William Johnson is part of that history as a trailblazer.”

–Professor Paula C. Johnson

William Johnson is part of that history as a trailblazer.”

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According to Brian N. Bauersfeld L’04, there is rarely anything routine about his job at the Auburn Correctional Facility in Auburn, NY. “Every day you might happen upon a new obstacle, and just when you think you’ve seen it all, you can get a shock!”

Bauersfeld is one of a new generation of lawyers working inside the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision as a commissioner’s hearing officer. His task is to ensure that prisoner discipline is performed professionally and justly.

“Hearing officers preside over disciplinary hearings of inmates who have violated the prison’s internal rules,” says Bauersfeld, explaining that inmates must abide by a rule book they receive when they enter the prison. Although prison officials from various departments may preside over a disciplinary hearing—a deputy superintendent, say, or an education supervisor—in the early 1980s, New York State pledged to hire more trained lawyers to act as hearing officers in order to bring more expertise to the work.

As an experienced attorney, Bauersfeld conducts some of the more difficult cases, and not just at Auburn. “Occasionally, I go on the road to Sing Sing, Attica, Clinton, and Great Meadow.”

Typically, a prisoner accused of violating rules will be issued a misbehavior report. “That acts as a charging report,” explains Bauersfeld. “Then, in the hearing, I act as prosecutor, defense advocate, and judge. I must remain fair and impartial, holding inmates accountable yet keeping their limited due process rights intact.”
Infractions Bauersfeld encounters can be as simple as a refusal to follow orders “all the way up to assaults on an officer and even one inmate beating another to death,” he says. “Over the years, I’ve seen it all. Nothing is ever routine, and every day is different.”

On the other hand, explains Bauersfeld, there are strict rules against taking casework beyond the facility’s walls, so his is an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. job. “That helps me recharge my batteries.”

How did Bauersfeld’s legal training qualify him to be a hearing officer? “I pretty much checked every box when it came to preparing for this career, doing defense, appellate, and prosecutorial work,” he says. “Given my career trajectory, I encourage students to embrace law school for everything it can offer. Pigeon-holing yourself can be a disservice.”

Bauersfeld was on a financial career path at first, working for Morgan Stanley after receiving his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame. That was until a colleague suggested that the law might be a better fit for him. At Syracuse, he enjoyed courses in contracts and business law, as well as criminal defense practice in Auburn and acted as an assigned counsel throughout Cayuga County. This work put him into contact—albeit across the table—with the Cayuga County District Attorney, and soon he was working inside the busy DA’s office. “I was there for almost seven years, working on every type of case—financial crimes, drug cases, and felonies—in 26 city, town, and village courts.”

A contact in Auburn encouraged Bauersfeld to apply for the commissioner’s hearing officer job, citing the state’s need for more lawyers to work within the prison system. Today, he is among 16 hearing officers across 52 facilities whose background, experience, and skills are bringing more rigor and integrity to prison discipline.

“We are invested in rehabilitating prisoners, so they must trust that the system is going to work for them,” explains Bauersfeld. “Therefore, prisoners must be treated fairly, their version of the story must be heard, the process must be impartial, and appropriate penalties must be given.”

“Because of the ‘all-in-one’ nature of my current role—prosecutor, advocate, and judge—I’d have to say that everything in law school at Syracuse prepared me.”

—Brian N. Bauersfeld L’04
Michelle Rafenomanjato LL.M. ’19 is Building Her IP Career on Her Syracuse Training—And Missing the Snow!

It’s a long, long way from Madagascar to Syracuse, NY, but intellectual property lawyer Noro Michelle Rafenomanjato LL.M. ’19 is living proof—both in her cosmopolitan education and her burgeoning internationally focused career—that in a global economy, distance is just another number.

Since graduating from Syracuse—where she pursued a master of laws degree as a Fulbright scholar—Michelle has been appointed Director of the Intellectual Property (IP) Department of Madagascar Conseil International (MCI). A Malagasy law firm founded in 1999, MCI advises international clients on legal and tax strategies when doing business in the French-speaking island nation.

“The work I perform is diverse: clearance searches, drafting and filing applications, IP due diligence, and legal advice on trademarks, designs, and patents,” explains Rafenomanjato, who also holds a master’s in public international law from Versailles University, France, and a Ph.D. in international law from Zhongnan University, China. “I also attend international conferences, the most recent one being the January 2020 Innovation & IP Forum and Awards in Paris.”

In addition to being in charge of the IP department, Rafenomanjato works with the rest of her team on business law-related issues—such as arbitration and contracts—and, given her language skills, on cases involving English-speaking clients.

How has your training at the College of Law helped you in your position at MCI?

My training has helped me deepen my knowledge of IP law, and it complements the legal training I did in France and China.

First, my courses—in legal writing, contracts, international business transactions, and business associations—provided me with a solid legal background in business law and legal English. As a lawyer working with international law firms and English-speaking clients, I now feel more confident communicating in English, both orally and in writing.

I also took IP and trademark courses with professors Shubha Gosh and Howard Leib. I truly appreciate Professor Ghosh’s cross-cutting approach and his close-to-real-life assignments. Plus, I benefited from Professor Leib’s out-of-the-box thinking and practical tips from his 35 years of experience as a trademark attorney. Apart from the courses, conferences with IP practitioners organized by the Office of Career Services and the Intellectual Property Law Society were a unique opportunity to meet like-minded people and build a network of IP experts. This comes in handy as my firm’s IP department wants to increase collaborations.

What do you miss most about Central New York?

Although this may sound cliché, I miss the snow. Since we do not have snow in Madagascar, it was always mesmerizing to watch it fall and to admire the already breathtaking campus covered with a white blanket. Living in a snow globe for six months was an unforgettable experience. I also miss Christmas in Skaneateles, NY—a snowy village, with people dressing as characters from A Christmas Carol.

What advice do you have for a foreign lawyer who wishes to study the law in the United States?

Studying in a language different from yours, in a country with a culture different from yours, or in a country with a legal system that is different from yours can be quite daunting and perhaps disorienting at times. Preparation is key. The more prepared you are, the better. Before you leave, gather as much information as you can about academic and non-academic expectations and requirements.

Once you are in the United States, build and rely upon a strong support network, including administrative and teaching staff, classmates, and associations. I counted on Assistant Dean of International Programs Andrew Horsfall L’10 and International Programs Academic Coordinator Kate Shannon, my family and friends, my classmates, the Fulbright family, Orange Orators members, the Success Saturday team, MCI colleagues, as well as the US Embassy in Madagascar. This support network made Syracuse and the US feel like home, and I must acknowledge that those people played a tremendous role in helping me adjust, succeed, and grow as a professional.
Syracuse University was a major part of Sarah Shepp L’19’s childhood in Allendale, NJ, situated close to the New York state border. She recalled family gatherings to watch Syracuse games as a child when she and her cousin would wear cheerleading outfits and root for the Orange.

“Syracuse was always an important place for our family,” Shepp says. She is keenly aware of following in the footsteps of her family members who have attended Syracuse for undergraduate study, and for a law degree from the College of Law.

**Family Tradition**

The family tradition began with Sarah’s great-grandfather Walter Rose, who attended Syracuse on an athletic scholarship. Rose lettered in cross country and graduated in 1919. Rose then graduated from the College of Law in 1922. He went on to take over his father’s furniture store, Joseph Rose & Sons, which was originally located in Manhattan and then relocated to Astoria, Queens.

Rose continued to support the Orange and attended homecoming games up until he was 99 years old. He passed away in 1999 at the age of 101, when Shepp was 4 years old.

Walter Rose was not Shepp’s only family member to attend Syracuse, however. On her maternal great-grandmother’s side, Shepp had two great uncles who graduated from Syracuse: Bill Gold, who graduated from the College of Law in 1922, the same year as Walter, and Abe Gold, whose graduation date is unknown. Bill introduced Walter to his sister Rose Gold who later became Walter’s wife. Walter and Rose were married for over 60 years.

**Loyalty & Service**


Walter, Stanley, Martin, and Kenneth were all active in the Sigma Alpha Mu (Sammy) fraternity at Syracuse, and there is a Sammy scholarship named after Walter. In 1950, Walter received the Eggers Senior Alumni Award, which honors alumni whose leadership and service to society has been joined with loyalty and service to the University.

For Shepp, Syracuse University has been a family tradition for four generations, and the tradition is set to continue. Shepp currently has a second cousin, Margaret Rose, who is a first-year student at Syracuse in the honors program majoring in public health. Margaret is the great-granddaughter of Walter Rose, the granddaughter of Stanley Rose, and the daughter of Gordon Rose. That makes 10 Syracuse University connections in her family.

**“With this family history, it just seemed appropriate for me to go to Syracuse and continue the legacy.”**

—Sarah Shepp L’19

**Continue the Legacy**

Shepp says she pursued a legal education in order to advocate for individuals and to help people with complex issues in their time of need. The College of Law seemed the supportive, collaborative environment that Shepp was looking for, and she found that the professors wanted their students to succeed.

“To top all that off with this family history, it just seemed appropriate for me to go to Syracuse and continue the legacy,” she explains, praising the quality of the legal education she received at Syracuse.

Currently, Shepp works as a law clerk for the Hon. Alan G. Lesnewich, J.S.C., a civil division judge in Union County, NJ. She passed the New Jersey bar exam and works on a variety of civil cases, from contract disputes to personal injury litigation.

Shepp is interested in insurance defense, medical malpractice defense, and product liability, and she hopes to pursue that work in the future. She notes that her education at Syracuse prepared her for her current position thanks to opportunities such as the Hancock Estabrook 1L Oral Advocacy Competition, the Lionel O. Grossman Trial Competition, and the Bond, Schoeneck & King Alternative Dispute Resolution Competition, as well as her service as the Associate Editor of the Journal of International Law and Commerce. Her article “Priceless Kidney: The Ineffectiveness of Organ Trafficking Legislation” was published in the Spring 2019 edition.

When reflecting on her family’s Orange history, Shepp says, “I hope I made Walter Rose proud. It’s really nice to be involved in a profession that so many of my relatives chose for themselves.” Before she arrived in Syracuse, she imagined being on the same campus they lived on decades before her and reading the same legal cases that they did. Reflecting on what it felt to be at the College, and reading those cases, she says, “It’s been a blessing and an incredible experience.”
“Most of the people I grew up with—people who look like me—were good, honest, hard-working folks,” says Judge Thompson. “It was often difficult, however, to locate an attorney who was from where you were from and who understood your circumstances. I just really wanted to help my community.”
Since Castillo, a number of Syracuse graduates have worked for Judge Thompson. Lishayne King L’18 was his second clerk, and Ursula Simmons L’19 served as an extern in his chambers. William Gould L’19 is his third and current clerk, while Isaac Signorelli L’20 started a nine-month externship last September. Omar Mosqueda L’20 is set to become his fourth clerk in August 2020.

“They all liked her.”

Castillo got to know the other family court judges, and her relationships and job performance continue to benefit College of Law students and graduates. “They all liked her and appreciated her work ethic,” Thompson says, “Anna was the perfect clerk. She was tough. She was smart. I could depend on her to work independently, including day-to-day assignments, drafting opinions, and dealing with court staff, attorneys and stakeholders. She also had excellent sports IQ.”

Thompson says he travels to Syracuse every September for the College’s annual Law Alumni Weekend and interviews an average of 10 students during his visit. He can only hire one clerk, but he distributes the information he acquires on other quality candidates to his colleagues. “Students get hired partly based on my recommendations, but partly based on the fact that my judicial colleagues knew Anna,” Thompson says.

To date, three other Syracuse graduates have been hired at the Mercer County Courthouse because of Judge Thompson’s recommendations. Current clerk William Gould says by hiring Syracuse graduates, Thompson has demonstrated to his colleagues that Syracuse graduates “have a strong work ethic, are critical thinkers, and are effective communicators.”

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—William Gould L’19

“Many of my clerks have also participated in one of the College’s legal clinics or externships and therefore bring valuable real-world experiences on day one.”

—Hon. Rodney Thompson L’93

“Nothing is ever too serious.”

Castillo says clerking for Thompson was one of the best experiences she has had. “Walking into his chambers is like walking into your father’s living room. Nothing is ever too serious. He is very relaxed, which made for a good work environment.”

On Castillo’s last day, Thompson called her into his office, Castillo recalls, “It was like a family goodbye, like ‘talk to you later.’” Gould describes Thompson in the same terms, “as a well-liked and down-to-earth person” making Gould feel like part of the team.

Thompson takes the time to mentor his clerks. “I encourage them and take them to various bar association functions so they can make connections. I see it as my responsibility to mentor clerks, to get them out into the legal profession.” Gould says that the opportunity for mentorship is why he took the position with Thompson. “I appreciated the chance to learn from Judge Thompson about what attributes make an attorney effective” he observes.

“I couldn’t be prouder.”

Castillo is currently an appellate attorney at the US Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC. The high workload and outputs of Thompson’s docket prepared Castillo for her current position. “He provided me with the type of independence I need here,” she says. “I was not micromanaged, and that sort of independence to address a problem on my own really helps me in this job.”

Gould adds, “Judge Thompson has a demanding docket of cases, and each day presents a different challenge that I must work through. However, from day one, he has offered his advice and support.”

Thompson says he feels that Syracuse uniquely prepares graduates for clerkships because of the strong legal writing and research curriculum. “Most of the students I interview participate in some sort of law journal. Many of my clerks have also participated in one of the College’s legal clinics or externships and therefore bring valuable real-world experiences on day one,” Thompson explains.

Thompson, Castillo, and Gould emphasize the need for excellent writing, communication, and interpersonal skills for law clerks, as well as being calm under pressure. “Dean Boise and the current leadership team are moving the College in the right direction, preparing lawyers for the future,” Thompson notes. “I couldn’t be prouder of my Syracuse education.”
husband. Special memory comes to mind: meeting her first day in White and MacNaughton halls, a wedding that August. Now, the Syracuse-made couple in 1997, Jennifer followed in 1998, and the two childhoods spent on Long Island. Eric graduated in common, not just a passion for the law but the orientation group that Eric led as a 2L. The two third floor. Jennifer, a new student, was assigned Eric Klee L’97

Jennifer Klee L’98

When one reminisces about their first day of school, they’re likely flooded with memories of meeting new people, learning their names, finding classrooms, and undertaking their first assignments. However, when one alum looks back on her first day in White and MacNaughton halls, a special memory comes to mind: meeting her husband.

Jennifer and Eric Klee met on the law school’s third floor. Jennifer, a new student, was assigned the orientation group that Eric led as a 2L. The two became close as they discovered what they shared in common, not just a passion for the law but childhoods spent on Long Island. Eric graduated in 1997, Jennifer followed in 1998, and the two wed that August. Now, the Syracuse-made couple resides in the Westchester County community of Somers, NY, with their two daughters—Alyssa and Sammy—and their, dog Brody.

Together as a couple for more than 20 years, Jennifer and Eric practice in different areas of law. Eric’s background is in consumer and business law, with expertise in mergers and acquisitions, securities, and corporate governance. He is Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer at American Media LLC, a New York-based publishing company specializing in news and entertainment publications, including Men’s Fitness, The National Enquirer, OK!, and Star. As head of the legal team, Eric’s role includes branding, trademark, and copyright issues.

Jennifer’s practice, on the other hand, has included work with the New York City Law Department and with law firms specializing in insurance defense and real estate. Now a stay-at-home mom, Jennifer’s interest in the law is undiminished. “Eric and I have this common history and bond, along with shared experiences,” Jennifer explains. “Even though we practice different areas of the law, we are both attorneys, so we can always relate to each other.” Whether it be understanding the pressures and demands that lawyers endure, or picking each other’s brains on legal issues, the Klees believe their shared background in law makes it likely flooded with memories of meeting their future husband and wife met.

Patrick Kennell L’02 & Dawn Krigstin L’03

Since the mid-1980s, the College of Law has been home to countless trial practice classes taught by Adjunct Professor Donald J. Martin L’68, Principal of The Donald J. Martin Law Firm PC.

For two alums, one particular class stood out from the rest: It was where a future husband and wife met. Patrick Kennell and Dawn Krigstin joined Professor Martin’s trial practice class in fall 2001. The rest, as they say, is history. The two spent the remainder of law school together, and they look back upon their law school experiences with fond memories.

One particular memory stands out to the couple—meeting in New York City for the first time when Patrick was on the school’s trial team. Little did the couple know at the time that the city would be their future home. Patrick and Dawn say their relationship is stronger thanks to their Syracuse bond. “Syracuse means a lot to our marriage, and our shared connection with the College has kept us very close,” Dawn explains. “Our kids have learned so much. They now think this advice may seem simple, they say you never know where kindness may lead you—perhaps even to falling in love in your trial practice class!”

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Words to Love By: “Marriage is a mosaic you build with your spouse. Millions of tiny moments that create your love story.”

Words to Love By: “Be kind.”
The College of Law’s photo archive is a fascinating visual history of your alma mater, full of nostalgia, anecdotes—and a few mysteries. That is, some of our prints and slides lack information or captions.

That’s where you come in. In this feature, we challenge you to help us recall the people and scenes in our mystery photos.

This time, we honor Professor Peter Bell, seated at center, who retired from teaching in December 2019. This photo appears to have been taken in one of Professor Bell’s classes, but there is no other information included with the photo.

If you know when this photo was taken, what class is pictured, or any of the students in the photo, please email Director of Alumni Relations Kristen Duggleby at klduggle@law.syr.edu, and we’ll publish what we discover in a future issue.

Erika (Barnes) Holliday L’93 helped identify the mystery photo from the 2019 Giving Book: “I think the young woman three rows back on the right with glasses and a lot of curly black hair is my first-year roommate, Jayne Turner L’93, so this photo was taken between 1990 and 1993.” Thank you, Erika!

Please let us know if you recognize anyone else in this photo, or you know which class is pictured.
Dear College of Law Alumni Family,

I hope this note finds all of you and yours well during this unprecedented public health crisis.

Today, Dineen Hall is eerily quiet. There are no students, faculty, or staff in the building, but for three of us deemed essential. As unfamiliar as this situation is, I know that wherever they are, our always-resilient students, faculty, and staff are rising to the occasion. Thanks to our faculty’s familiarity with online learning, the College of Law was ready for our rapid pivot to distance education.

Our residential students are now online, learning and engaging in classrooms and meeting rooms, planning annual spring banquets on Zoom, representing clients in their externships by working remotely, supporting our faculty whose contributions to the national dialogue on the crisis are making the headlines, and supporting one another virtually.

Nevertheless, COVID-19 has displaced students and created deep and unforeseen financial hardships—and new student needs continue to emerge every day. For example, the mandated closure of the Law Library has meant that many students don’t have the ability to print documents they need for class or to acquire necessary books and other materials. Whether as a result of bar examination deferrals, job market shifts, medical expenses, family care, or social distancing mandates, our students are facing unprecedented financial burdens.

Even as we have been working to help them meet the challenges they face, safeguard their wellness, and ensure their academic success, many of you have asked how you can support our students during this difficult time.

I am deeply moved by your concern for our students because I know that you also are coping with the impacts of this virus.

In response to your outreach, we have decided that while our students are weathering this crisis, we will use gifts from the Annual Fund to support them in this time of need. To make a gift to the Law Annual Fund, visit law.syr.edu and click on the orange Give Now button.

With your support of this fund, we can assist students with their most immediate needs and help them access the basic tools that are the foundation for student success. With the resources you share, we’ll make sure they have the hardware, the internet access, and the connectivity they need to continue their studies, work with student organizations, and interact with their loved ones.

I understand that not all in our alumni family are in a position to help at this time. COVID-19 knows no boundaries, and many of you are experiencing serious difficulties as well. Our thoughts are with you. Know that we and our students are deeply appreciative of whatever gift you can provide.

I am profoundly grateful to alumni, parents, friends, organizations, and interact with their loved ones.

I wish you and yours continued good health and optimism.

Craig M. Boise
Dean and Professor of Law

SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM DEAN BOISE
COVID-19: SUPPORT FOR OUR STUDENTS

ACCESSLEX INSTITUTE DISTRIBUTES $5M IN STUDENT EMERGENCY FUNDING

The College of Law is one of AccessLex Institute’s partner law schools. AccessLex recently announced the creation and distribution of a $5 million Law Student Emergency Relief Program that will provide direct resources to law students in need of emergency funds during this global crisis.

As part of our partnership, AccessLex will donate up to $25,000 to Syracuse University College of Law for this purpose. This funding will be combined with other available resources in the Law Annual Fund to provide meaningful and much-needed emergency support to College of Law students.