

Curriculum Verite: A Modest Proposal

By Lawrence Edward Savell

A LONG WITH THE usual direct mail solicitations for bronze-plated Statutes of Justice, continuing education seminars held in Monaco, and newly-published treatises on Bolivian admiralty law, I recently received a letter from my legal alma mater requesting a donation. True to form, this missive reminded me of the need for contributions from alumni to continue the traditions of the school as well as to allow the pursuit of new areas of study.

New areas of study. The prospect intrigued me. I glanced at the proposed offerings: greater examination of foreign law, additional clinical experience, more pro bono projects. While these proposals were interesting, my five years of experience as an associate in a large New York City firm convinced me that the planners of the curriculum could have done better. Here, therefore, are my suggestions for courses which should be offered if law schools truly want to prepare their students for practice in the real world.

Advanced Photocopying (Professor Jack Klugman): As is true for any organism, in order for an associate to survive he must be able to reproduce. This course will instruct students on how to prevent photocopying machines from acting like shredders, what "E4" means outside the baseball world, and how to maintain a fading tan by leaving the cover open while copying. Additional instruction will be provided by assistant professors Jean Nidetch (reducing) and Charles Atlas (enlarging), with visiting professor Ruth Westheimer reminding that size is not determinative of quality.

Narcoleptic Avoidance (Professor Jerry Lewis): Taught by the master of the telethon, this course will instruct students on how to stay awake through the most boring and sleep-inducing conferences, meetings, and depositions. Students enrolling in this course must pay a \$50 materials fee, to cover the cost of the industrial-strength Wash-N-Dry's and No-Doz, pocket-sized electronic shock generator, and wallet-sized photograph of Shelley Winters they will receive upon registration.

Liability of Common Carriers (Professor Arnold Schwarznegger): A fledgling associate, like his ancestors who similarly toiled at the base of a pyramid structure, is frequently assigned the ponderous task of lugging around litigation bags engorged with "the weight of the evidence." Extended disability leave can be avoided through a careful program of weight training, beginning

with lifting a volume of the *Federal Reporter*, progressing to the New York section of *Martindale-Hubbell*, and, finally, graduating to the entire series of *Moore's Federal Practice* (including updates).

Dealing With Travel Agents, Hotels, and Airlines (Professor Clint Eastwood): Having trouble getting booked on that red-eye to Chernobyl? If you had taken this course, you would have known that civility and politeness are inappropriate when travel arrangements are being requested. Professor Eastwood's more direct approach ("Go ahead, make my reservations.") incorporates the intimidation and threats necessary for a successful booking.

Law and Ordering (Professor Bob Lape): If "you are what you eat," then the average New York associate is 45 percent pastrami. Students planning a high-powered legal career need to know where to call for fuel, what to order, and, more importantly, what not to order. This offering, for which a first course in basic chemistry is a prerequisite, will instruct students on the half-lives of various luncheon meats as well as the ability of particular over-the-counter gastrointestinal remedies to "white-out" the effects of ethnic *haute cuisine*. Condensed reviews of leading area restaurants will be provided, along with a delineation of those whose delivery services can be measured with a stopwatch, as opposed to a calendar.

Interviewing New Recruits (Professor Johnny Carson): Like any fighting organization, a law firm needs a constant supply of fresh troops to continue its campaigns. Unfortunately, law schools only attempt to train students to be interviewed, not to interview. This course will remedy such a shortcoming by instructing students on how to open a session with a short comical monologue (while dealing with hecklers from the next office), how to ask questions while not looking down at the applicant's resume, and how to pause politely when a headhunter calls. Moreover, a thoughtful host will allow guests to plug their most recent work, observing, for example, "I see your Note on Burmese bailment law is due out Tuesday ..."

* * *

Admittedly, some of these suggestions may be a bit too progressive for today's law schools. Yet, the point they were created to illustrate seems valid: a dose of practical preparation for life in a law office could be a valuable part of a student's legal training, complementing traditional studies of torts, contracts, and property. As the noted Long Islander Walt Whitman observed in an analogous context, "[t]he real war will never get in the books."

Lawrence Edward Savell is an associate at Chadbourne & Parke.