

Scott W. Cameron first came to BYU Law School as a student in the charter class. He returned 13 years later to head up admissions, serve as liaison for the Law Society and for the Alumni Association, envision and enlarge the Clark Memorandum, and work as associate dean for external relations, serving with four deans. Retiring after 24 years with the Law School, Dean Cameron takes a look back.



## FAREWELL TO ST. REUBEN'S

INTERVIEW BY JANE H. WISE

### **Why did you choose to attend BYU Law School?**

I was teaching at Ricks College when I received a letter from Bruce Hafen asking me to apply to be in BYU Law School's charter class. A friend of mine, Lew Cramer, whom I knew from Stanford, had suggested I might apply. I really wanted to get a PhD in English, but there was a glut in the market. I was also interested in university administration. I thought a doctorate in education wouldn't give me a lot of new skills but that a law degree might.

When I told Bruce that I hadn't taken the LSAT, he said, "It's being given next Saturday. See if you can sign up for it."

So I drove to Salt Lake City and took the LSAT cold.

Law school didn't come easily. I loved reading the cases because I loved the facts, but I wasn't as interested in the law. If the first semester exams had been on facts, I'm sure I would have done very well, but I didn't understand that we were supposed to focus on the progression of legal principles.

One day I was playing tennis with a left-handed friend who was playing right-handed. I asked him why he was playing right-handed. He replied, "Scott, why are you in law school?"

### **What was the Law School like when you attended (1973-76)?**

For its first two years the Law School was held in the little Catholic school, St. Francis of Assisi, on Ninth East. I love that the Law School started there because St. Francis of Assisi had turned away from wealth to a very simple life in order to benefit others. We used to call the school St. Reuben's for J. Reuben Clark.

But things were cramped there. Instead of study carrels we had banquet tables—the kind used at ward dinners—sectioned into four places with tape. All the books were kept in the small auditorium, which Rex Lee called "the great hall." Everything was constricted. There was no place to hide. We definitely got to know one another and the faculty.

It was a great learning environment and a great pioneering effort. That's the way Rex Lee sold it to us: we were part of a great adventure; we were starting something new and exciting; we were lucky to be part of this group.

On graduation day there were only about seven students who had jobs. The rest of us had confidence in our degree, studied hard for the bar, and spent time knocking on doors. Even though a lot of effort had gone into helping us, it took a while to break through and be competitive in the market.

### **Was there an alumni association then?**

The Alumni Association wasn't formally organized until 14 years after we had graduated. The Law School engaged the larger LDS legal community by starting the Board of Visitors, inviting prominent attorneys across the country to come give advice and assist students.

The idea for the Law Society came from a meeting between Dean Bruce Hafen and Ralph Hardy in Washington, D.C., in 1987. Hardy commented that although he had attended law school at Boalt Hall, people thought that as a Mormon he must have graduated from BYU Law School. He opined that, therefore, it was important to his own career that BYU Law School be as strong as possible. Dean Hafen felt the help of attorneys like Hardy would be essential to making that happen, and the two agreed that cooperation between the fledgling Law School and LDS attorneys would be mutually beneficial. Out of that conversation the J. Reuben Clark Law Society began to take shape.

Another early leader of the Law Society, Gary Anderson,

was also a graduate from Boalt Hall. When he started practicing law in San Francisco, there were no Latter-day Saint attorneys who were active in the Church who could provide excellent attorney-examples of living a balanced life. He felt that the establishment of the Law Society would provide those examples. One of the strengths of the Law Society today is mentoring new attorneys. They are introduced to clerks of the court and to judges and are acclimated to a new legal community. They have someone to talk to and consult with and someone to give them encouragement.

To keep the Law Society from stepping on the toes of other law schools that valued their LDS alumni, the Law School started the Alumni Association to raise money, engender loyalty, and make certain that the needs of graduates are met.

### **How did you come to work at the Law School?**

Before I came to the Law School in 1989 I was assistant superintendent of schools for Utah and the federal liaison officer. I spent time every month in Washington, D.C., trying to influence federal legislation on behalf of education in Utah.

It was then that the Law School's assistant dean over admissions decided to go back into private practice, and the Law School was looking to expand his position. I was asked to interview for the job.

I replied that I couldn't because I would be in Washington, D.C.

This was just after Rex Lee was named president of BYU, and several alumni were going to have a celebration for him in Washington, D.C. I was told to come to the reception.

When I went through the line, Rex said, "I'm so glad you're coming back to the Law School."

Reese Hansen was there and said, "We really need you."

I had taken a leave of absence from my law firm to work at the state office. But the practice of law was not a natural fit for me, just as law school had not been a natural fit.

I had always wanted to be in administration, and I had strong feelings about the Law School. So I accepted.

### **Describe your work as an administrator at the Law School.**

I was given the task of a utility infielder. I handled admissions and was over the fledgling Law Society that had been organized the previous year. In 1990 we started an alumni association. I also became the editor of the fledgling *Clark Memorandum*. I worked for almost 13 years doing all those things, and then I was called to preside over the Pennsylvania Pittsburg Mission. I came back 21 months later in an untimely way for an operation for cancer.

Dean Reese Hansen called me after learning that I had cancer. He said, "We haven't been able to exist without you at the Law School. You need to come back here." He did that even though there was no budgetary line for me.

My first day back was on a Thursday, and I had my first session of chemotherapy on Friday. I continued to work, taking Friday mornings off for chemotherapy. Coming back to the Law School was a lifesaver because it was hard to adjust to being back and to my illness.

### **What is your history with the Clark Memorandum?**

The *Clark Memorandum* had its start under Dean Hafen, with the

first issue published in 1986. We didn't have any writers, so we had to work hard to find materials. Then I thought of using the speeches given at the Law School or to the J. Reuben Clark Law Society, and that became the format.

The graphics have always been wonderful because BYU Publications & Graphics does such an excellent job. But because this was something we did on a shoestring with no staff, there has been a progression in terms of quality and content. Now people want to be in the *Clark Memorandum*, and it has won many awards—almost one for every issue.

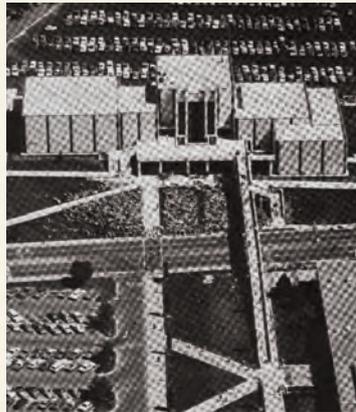
On one occasion a Law School acquaintance said, somewhat dismissively, "The *Clark Memorandum* is little more than an *Ensign* for attorneys." I thought what a great compliment that was. From the beginning the founders of the Law School and the organizers of the Law Society desired that graduates and society members honor the religious dimension of their lives, believing that doing so makes a lawyer better and more ethical in his or her work. I hope the *Clark Memorandum* has filled a niche in people's lives that other alumni or scholarly publications haven't met.

### **What do you anticipate your ties to the Law School will be after you retire?**

After I return from a two-year mission for the Church as director of the Mesa Arizona Temple Visitors' Center, I anticipate staying close to the Law School and the Law Society. I have also enjoyed my work with the International Center for Law and Religion Studies and hope to continue to work for the center as a volunteer.

## Becoming J. Reuben Clark's Law School

The first three classes of law students attended the dedication of the Law School's new home on September 5, 1975. ▼



Affectionately called St. Reuben's, this former Catholic school housed the Law School for its first two years in 1973-75. ▼



▲ The Law School expanded in 1995-97 to accommodate a larger library, subsequently named the Howard W. Hunter Law Library.



▲ The bridge and patio were erected on the west side of the new law school building in 1975.

▲ The patio and bridge were demolished in May 2013 as part of a project to unify campus. The road west of the Law School was also removed and replaced with a plaza.

The *Clark Memorandum* welcomes the submission of short essays and anecdotes from its readers. Send your article (650 words or fewer) for "Life in the Law" to [wisewj@law.byu.edu](mailto:wisewj@law.byu.edu).