Interns Work in the Public Interest

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol4/iss1/4

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact lawscholar@buffalo.edu.
“Lawyers can make a
difference in this society
and we want our students to
be among those that do.”
—Dean Filvaroff

Interns Work
in the Public Interest

While many of their friends were toiling away in routine legal jobs last summer, six third-year UB Law School students had dream jobs in some of the country’s most prestigious legal and public interest organizations. Peter M. Carter, for example, did legal research and writing for Lawrence E. Walsh in the Office of the Independent Counsel in Washington, D.C. The chance to participate in the continuing investigation of the Iran-contra matter “has been a great experience,” Carter said during a telephone interview from his office. “Just being here among all these lawyers . . . well, it’s like being on an all-star team of attorneys.”

A few blocks away, Karen Comstock worked for the Office of Legal Counsel, United States Senate. They represent the institutional interests of the Senate against outside challenge, primarily by defending the Senate in high profile, constitutionally critical litigation.

One of their recent endeavors was defending the independent counsel against challenge in the United States Supreme Court. “I was an intern here when that decision came down. It was really exciting,” Comstock reported from her Washington office.

Along with four other bright, committed law students, they were able to take advantage of such extraordinary opportunities thanks to funding provided by the Law School’s first Public Service Fellows Program.

According to Dean David B. Filvaroff, all of the fellows for this new honors program in public interest law were selected on a competitive basis, taking into account their academic qualifications and public service commitment.

“The jobs represent a significant finan-
cial commitment on the part of the Law School,” said the dean. “Our goals are threefold.”

“First, as a state law school, I believe UB has a special obligation to encourage its graduates to pursue public service careers — to give a little something back.

“Second and equally important, UB Law School has had a long history of public service commitment and our desire is to sustain and expand that distinguished tradition.

“Third, by creating a high profile honors program in public interest law, we want to send a message to our students in the community that having a law degree is a special type of public trust. Lawyers can make a difference in this society and we want our students to be among those that do.”

In addition to Carter and Comstock, the fellows and their positions were:

• Lorraine C. Brown, who worked on the American Civil Liberties Union Women’s Rights Project in New York City. This is one of the leading litigation-oriented women’s rights groups in the country, actively engaged in test case litigation in courts throughout the country and a frequent litigant in the Supreme Court of the United States.

• Jeannine S. Coggeshall was employed in the Governor’s Office of Employment Relations in Albany. That office is responsible on policy and individual collective bargaining levels for insuring the safe and equitable management of state government.

• Kenneth J. Yood went to the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in Albany. This is an agency of exceptionally broad scope with a duty to oversee the care and treatment of some of our most disadvan-

2
taged citizens by monitoring the performance of those who have been entrusted with their care.

- Sue-Ann Nazario, who went to work at the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in Washington, D.C. This is the premier litigation and advocacy organization for Spanish-speaking Americans, the equivalent of the NAACP. Its concerns include discrimination, voting-rights, education and immigration. The Washington Office is responsible for MALDEF'S national legislative program.

Nor has the school overlooked its responsibility to its own local community. In addition to the six national placements, four summer internships were placed at Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. of Buffalo. These internships were jointly funded by the Law School and NLS. Those interns were: Daniel Boeck, Thomas Fusco, Olga Molina and Sandra Bispham.

Peter Carter feels his Washington stint for the special prosecutor has been "extremely worthwhile, interesting and exciting." It piqued his interest in prosecution work and strengthened his overall desire to go into public service.

"This has been an educational experience as well as an historical one. I feel involved in something that's very important in many different ways. I'm really happy about it and I greatly appreciate the involvement of everyone who helped me."

Karen Comstock spent her summer at the Senate's Office of Legal Counsel doing historical research for a brief that will be submitted to the Supreme Court on behalf of the Federal Sentencing Commission (FSC). The high court has been asked to rule on the constitutionality of the FSC, which is a part of the judicial branch.

"The people are really great, especially Michael Davidson," said Comstock. Davidson, a former professor at UB Law, is now chief counsel for the Senate. "Just hearing the attorneys talk is interesting."

As for pursuing a public interest law career, "It's what I'm going to do. I strongly believe in it."

Lorraine Brown, who worked for the Women's Rights Project at the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in New York City, spent the bulk of her time researching statutes on neglected children. "We are looking into the constitutionality of testing newborn babies for the presence of drugs in their urine. A positive finding may be used someday to charge the mother with neglect," she explained.

Her work at the ACLU "solidified my convictions about going into public interest law. At this level, you get to see the big picture."
While a large crowd of parents, spouses, children and friends looked on, 263 Law School graduates heard those short but glorious sentences and marched across the stage of Alumni Arena to receive their coveted diplomas from the dean.

Evidencing both pride and satisfaction—and a few even a tinge of relief—the grads hugged, kissed, pumped arms, posed for snapshots, sipped champagne and contemplated careers bright with promise and possibility. To guide them on their way, speakers at the Law School’s 99th commencement exhorted them to cherish life, foster freedom, improve the world and shun materialism.

Chosen by her fellow graduates to give the student address, Mary M. Gennaro implored classmates to regard each day as sacred. “Graduation is special, but so too is each day. Each day we live can or should be for us a celebration of life, a celebration of all the good that exists in us,” she observed.

Other program participants included UB President Steven B. Sample, Dean David B. Filvaroff, Erie County Bar Association President Joseph D. Beminghame, Jr., and

"President Sample . . .
On behalf of the Faculty of
Law and Jurisprudence,
I have the honor to present
these candidates.
They have met all the
requirements of the
University and are
recommended to you by
the faculty for the degree
of Juris Doctor."

—Dean Filvaroff