

the
ALUMNI
Profiles

by Professor Eric Pearson
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Professor Pearson

Creighton is a national institution of learning. It draws students not only from Nebraska and Iowa, but also from the coasts. And it places students nationally. The Law School, for example, boasts graduates in every state in the nation — and, especially, in the District of Columbia.

The nation's capital has attracted a good number of Creighton Law's finest over the years, undoubtedly because of the challenges of federal service and the plethora of legal work. Law School records list no fewer than 77 Creighton lawyers in practice there. Washington's Creighton lawyers have found themselves front and center in virtually every arena of federal activity. They formulate national policy, assure the defense, lobby the Congress and the executive, orchestrate international trade — you name it.

Those of us back at the Law School often wonder about our grads, not only those in Washington but all whom we don't see too often. I lived in Washington, D.C., during 1994, on sabbatical while my wife, Lorraine, joined the ranks of the United States Department of Labor, and I had the opportunity to visit with some of our grads in the District of Columbia. I met with these folks and learned what they are doing and how they like it. In some cases, I met Creighton Law grads for the first time; in others, I revived old friendships. In all cases, it was a real pleasure and I am sad that I could not link up with all our grads in Washington.

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What follows is a written report of my conversations with Creighton Law alums in D.C.

Bernard S. White, '40

Bernard White is a man who made his own circumstances, not one who was made by them. First, he made his way east to the nation's capital in January, 1941, shortly after graduating from Creighton Law. It was a big move for a young man raised in Omaha who had never been east of Chicago. He had a reason for going that we can all understand — he wanted a job. The job market for lawyers in Omaha at that time was anything but robust, and White — young, restless, and unmarried — decided to take his chances in Washington.

That first gamble worked out well. By March, White had landed a job with the Navy Department, which was hiring in preparation for a protracted war effort looming on the horizon. White joined what is now the Naval Facilities Command and he continued service with the Navy throughout World War II.

Then, in 1949, he again struck out on his own, this time in solo private



Bernard S. White



Virginia F. and C. Benjamin Crisman, Jr.

practice, still in Washington, D.C. He set up his own office and began a successful commercial real estate practice which continued until his decision to “retire” in 1977. Retire is in quotes for good reason. Not one to sit back and rest, after leaving law practice White devoted himself to serving the community as president of at least a dozen major Jewish organizations. He still maintains an office a stone’s throw from the White House just for his volunteer activities and he works every day. Evenings are often consumed with organizational meetings and functions.

Married for 50 years, the Whites (Bernard and his wife, Ruth) have four daughters and a son. Ruth is a lawyer, and the children hold an impressive array of Ph.D. degrees in everything from law to toxicology.

White remembers Creighton fondly. “I’ll never forget those times,” he asserts. “Creighton was a good place.

It had a reputation for openness, which was great for me. The education I received there put me in good stead for a successful career.”

He might have one reservation about Creighton, however. Several years ago, the Creighton alumni magazine sadly reported the passing of Bernard White, Class of ’40. As it turns out, a cousin with the same name had died. “The University kindly resurrected me later,” White laughs.

Virginia F., ’75, and C. Benjamin Crisman, Jr., ’75

Virginia and Ben Crisman, born, raised, and married on the east coast, shared a common dream in the early 1970s. They wanted to be lawyers. The problem was how to get it done. They wanted to attend school together, and they were short of cash. Creighton turned out to be the perfect solution. The Law School accepted

both into the ranks of its Class of ’75, and provided the financial aid and employment opportunities they needed to make it work.

“So off to Omaha we went, and it was one of our best decisions ever,” Virginia commented. Law school was an exciting experience for the Crismans. “We met lots of people,” Ben said, “and one thing led to another.”

Upon graduation, the Crismans wanted to stay in their adopted hometown. In fact, Virginia worked at Kutak Rock in Omaha for almost two years while Ben was in Washington working in the Honors Program at the Department of Justice. Later, Virginia joined the staff of then-Senator Roman Hruska, ’29, which enabled her to spend more time with her husband in Washington. When Ben received an offer he couldn’t refuse, to join the Antitrust Division at Justice, they made the tough decision to stay in the nation’s capital permanently.

Their careers in Washington have been exceptional. In 1978, Ben left the Antitrust Division to join the newly formed Washington office of the law firm of Skadden Arps, now one of the largest law firms in the world. A partner at the firm, with an office overlooking the White House, Ben practices primarily in the areas of antitrust, trade regulation, and white collar crime. Over the years he has worked on numerous high profile mergers and acquisitions.

Virginia’s career has taken more turns. After leaving her position in the Senate, Virginia went to Georgetown to secure her LL.M. degree in securities law. That opened the door to the Commodities Futures Trading Commission, and then the Securities and Exchange Commission.

After a stint in the private sector, Virginia decided that she preferred public service, and went back to the CFTC as its Deputy General Counsel.

"That job was the greatest," she said. "I just loved it. We did so many wonderful things there, and broke a lot of new ground." Virginia left that position in 1987, however. "Ben and I have two daughters, Brook, now 16, and Whitney, 14. I just needed to spend more time with them before they grew up and were out the door." Virginia now owns and operates a garden design retail store in a fashionable Washington mall, a pursuit which leaves much more time for family. "I still think about going back to CFTC," she muses. "Maybe some day."

William G. Schiffbauer, '79

Bill Schiffbauer was born and raised in Norfolk, Nebraska, and always assumed he would set up a law practice there after graduation from Creighton in 1979. Things haven't quite worked out that way, though. Bill is now a partner in the law firm of Groom and Nordberg, with offices on Pennsylvania Avenue near the White House and other centers of power in the nation's capital.



William G. Schiffbauer

It didn't take long for Bill to make his way east. During his last semester at Creighton Law, he began working in Omaha for Senator Jim Exon. That part-time position led to an internship with the Democratic Study Group in the House of Representatives immediately after graduation. Bill didn't expect to stay permanently inside the Beltway, but plans to leave evaporated when, to his surprise, Senator Exon made an offer Bill couldn't refuse. The senator asked the young law graduate to become his full-time legislative assistant in Washington in charge of health care, environmental, energy, and water legislation. It was a daunting challenge, and it defined Bill's career for years to come.

Bill worked with Senator Exon until 1985, and in the process became an expert on all these areas of law, and on the inner workings of the Congress and the Executive branch as well. Armed with that impressive array of information and accomplishment, Bill moved to private practice, joining his present law firm in 1985. During his first couple of years there, he also attended evening classes at the National Law Center at George Washington University on his way to earning an LL.M. degree in Environmental Law in 1987. Bill became a partner at Groom and Nordberg in 1991.

Bill's current practice is in some ways an extension of his work for Senator Exon. Last year, Bill spent about 60-70% of his time working on health care legislation. "It was the most furious work period of my life, and maybe the most exciting. A lot of people spent a lot of time before the legislation collapsed at the end of the session."

Even though health care is off the legislative calendar, at least for the

moment, Bill still has plenty to do. He remains involved in the full array of environmental, energy, and other matters. Last year saw no fewer than five major environmental statutes before the Congress for revision. "Life here is a bit different than it was in Norfolk," he reflected.

Bill and his wife, Sarah, whom he met at the University of Nebraska,



Dell E. Perelman

have three children — John William, age 10; Elisabeth, age 6; and (Sweet Baby) James, age 4 months.

Dell E. Perelman, '81

Dell Perelman fell in love with environmental law while at Creighton. "Creighton changed my life. Until I started taking those courses, I really didn't know what I wanted to do." But Dell learned quickly and took every environmental law course in the Law School's curriculum.

Since graduating in 1981, Dell has been neck-deep in the environment. After a short post-graduation stint helping his father with real estate management in Omaha, he struck out for the nation's capital to get his LL.M. degree in Environmental Law

from George Washington University. That led him to employment with the Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Institute, on whose behalf he helped negotiate and write the National Appliance Energy Conservation Act. "It was a real lesson in the legislative process," says Dell. "The bill was passed, then vetoed, then repassed the next year, and finally signed by the President!"

From the Institute, it was on to the halls of the federal Environmental Protection Agency. For two years, Dell handled a demanding caseload of enforcement actions under the Clean Water Act. In 1989, Dell moved from government to the private sector, taking a position with the Chemical Manufacturers' Association in their environmental law division.

Dell now runs CMA's environmental law division, as Senior Assistant General Counsel. With seven lawyers working for him, his life is environmental legislation and litigation. Most recently, he co-wrote much of the new Superfund statute, which at this writing is poised for Congressional action.

"It's been a long way since Omaha," Dell reflects. A lot has happened, not the least of which is marriage to wife, Paula, and the arrival of two children — Justin, age 5; and Rachel, age 10 months. Dell still has family in Omaha, and he remembers the midwest fondly. As for Creighton: "Well," says Dell, "it was — by far — my best educational experience of all."

Mary Jo Donahue, '88

Mary Jo Donahue's ties to Creighton go back even before enrollment in the Law School in 1985. It seems that Pat Green grew up in Mary

Jo's neighborhood. The older J. Patrick, as a youth, was prone to pranks, Mary Jo relates. "He used to hide in the bushes and then jump out and scream. He drove me crazy." Just when it seemed the ordeal was over, Pat appeared as Mary Jo's torts professor. "He knew me, of course, so he called on me first. He drove me crazy again!"

Mary Jo found her way to Washington, D.C., after a clerkship with Judge Floyd Gibson of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. Born and raised in Omaha, how did she manage to get to Washington so quickly? When Mary Jo's first year in law school was nearing its (blessed) end, she was interested in working somewhere out of



Mary Jo Donahue

Nebraska "for the fun of it." Mike Fenner, her erstwhile constitutional law professor, suggested that she contact a friend of his in the Civil Division of the Department of Justice in Washington, D.C. Mary Jo followed the advice, and the rest is history. She worked with Justice that summer, and accepted an offer of employment after her graduation and clerkship.

Since moving to Washington in the fall of 1990, Mary Jo has been hard at work. Her days are fast-paced and by all accounts much too busy. They are filled with last-minute motion preparations, discussions with colleagues about case management and strategy, briefings of supervisors on the status of cases, and consulting with experts in preparation for trial. Recently, for example, Mary Jo was a lead counsel in an important multi-million dollar lawsuit brought by more than two hundred retired workers against the federal government. Plaintiffs in the case complained of injuries allegedly caused by exposures to radiation at government testing sites in the 1950s. The trial took two months in a Las Vegas, Nevada courtroom and concluded with a resounding victory for the government.

Mary Jo loves working in the public sector. "Working for Justice has been a real joy," she commented. "I love the cases and the people. And I really do love Washington."

Mary Jo indicates she may stay on the East Coast. "But I do miss Omaha and Creighton," she volunteers. "And, I miss Zio's Pizza."

Brian L. Ferrell, '88

Brian Ferrell is a product of both Creighton's College of Arts and Sciences and the Law School. Raised primarily in Omaha, Creighton was his logical choice. "I knew I'd get a good education there," he offered.

Brian always loved the outdoors. That avocation probably started with long family vacations to the wilds of America — places like the Grand Canyon, the Olympic National Forest, and the rugged coastlines of the Pacific Northwest. "I just knew that's what I should do," he commented,



Brian L. Ferrell

“something with the environment.”

Creighton Law showed him the way. Brian took all the environmental, natural resources, water, land use, administrative, and other relevant courses he could find. Beyond that, he inaugurated the Environmental Law Society, which thrives at the Law School to the present. Serving as its first president, Brian brought in speakers and arranged field trips.

Still, upon graduation, he was unsure he could find the right position in his chosen field of environmental law. So off to Vermont Law School for an LL.M. in Environmental Law and Policy he went. Securing that degree in 1989, he was poised for a career in the field of his choice.

Brian took a position as an associate at the major law firm of Devorsetz, Stinziano, Gilberti, and Smith, in Syracuse, New York, in part to give him the invaluable litigation experience he needed. Then, three years later, he made the big change to Washington, assuming his current

position as an Assistant Attorney General at the United States Department of Justice. Working in the Natural Resources Division, Brian handles a blizzard of cases involving the National Environmental Policy Act, public lands management, federal water rights, and the Endangered Species Act.

“I do love working for DOJ,” Brian says, “but I’d love to be back in Omaha, too.” Brian’s wife of three years, Vicki, would like that as well. “We have little Jack (15 months young) and Omaha would be a fine place for him to grow up.”

Mauricio Vivero, '93

Mauricio Vivero had a different design in mind as he worked his way through the many hours of study at Creighton Law. He wanted to use his legal skills not in the courtroom but in the promotion of opportunity for the nation’s Hispanic community.

In pursuit of this interest even before graduation, Mauricio joined the National Council of La Raza, the largest constituency-based national Hispanic organization. After graduating in 1993, he was in a position to devote his full time to the Council’s work and goals. He moved to Washington, D.C., to become the Project Director of the organization’s National Leadership Initiative.

As Project Director, Mauricio has taken on overall responsibility for this impressive program — a four-year project designed to promote leadership development and volunteerism in the Hispanic community. In this role, he supervises the grant program

(which has given \$600,000 over the past three years), oversees and evaluates the many projects across the nation undertaken with La Raza assistance, and personally participates in the local leadership and advocacy training. He does all this with a small staff of three assistants and while working toward an LL.M. degree at the Georgetown Law Center in International and Comparative Law.



Mauricio Vivero

“I’ve always had a strong interest in international law,” says Mauricio, who is fluent in Spanish. “Maybe some day that’s another field I’ll get into.”

Mauricio’s wife is Theresa Thomas, also a 1993 graduate of Creighton Law School. Theresa has taken a break from the practice of law to raise their young son, Thomas Jose. They live on Capitol Hill, but miss the midwest.