I. THE BIRTH OF A LAW SCHOOL

Having accepted the deanship of a law school in conception only, the immediate problem was to bring it through gestation to birth within a short six months. The problem was made the more challenging because during three of those short six months, Professor Reuschlein was committed to fulfill his contractual obligations as a member of the Law faculty of the University of Pittsburgh, three hundred miles distant, which obligations included preparation for and the conduct of his classes, formulating and correcting final examinations, shepherding the Law Review, attendance at faculty and committee meetings and participation in commencement festivities. Much needed doing on site at Villanova: arranging quarters for a classroom for entering students, establishing a library and setting up offices for an initial faculty. Of even greater moment was the need to secure a competent full-time faculty and the need to secure students in sufficient number to form an entering class. In short, it was necessary to formulate a sound educational policy which could be made to work in facilities, which, though temporary, would permit efficient and commendable work on the part of students and faculty. There were those who told the dean that it would prove impossible to provide what was needed in such a short time. Yet, on Monday, September 13, 1953, at nine o’clock in the morning, the first class of sixty-eight college graduates was appropriately welcomed and immediately put to work in the Law School’s quarters on the second floor of the original wing of what is now the Falvey Memorial Library.

Obviously, the dean’s spring and summer 1953 had not been restful. Of course it was necessary to announce the opening of the School of Law with the first of what would become the annual Bulletin or Catalogue. Bulletin 1953-1954 has been characterized, perhaps with some justification, as a masterpiece of overstatement. Whether so or not, it was apparently effective. At such time as it was imperative that the Bulletin should appear, only three of the initial faculty of six had signed on. The three so listed were the dean, John George Stephenson III, a former professor at the University of Miami and Sterling Fellow at Yale, and Francis Eugene Holahan, recently graduated from the University of Pittsburgh and Editor of its Law Review. Before classes began in September, Arthur Clement Pulling, recently retired as director of the Harvard Law Library, Thomas J. O’Toole, who had served on the law faculty at Northeastern University and John T. Macartney, an impressive young bank trust officer from the Philadelphia area, were enthusiastically aboard. The University Library building (which had not yet become the much enlarged Falvey Memorial Library) housed the School of Law. The building is pictured in the Bulletin.
The Villanova University School of Law

over the caption “Library-Law School”. Actually, only the top floor of the library building, plus a reading room on the first floor, constituted the complete physical facilities of the School of Law.

Recently, Father McGuire stated that Dean Reuschlein’s “greatest asset was his ability to select the proper people for the proper job.” That talent was probably best manifested by the expeditious acquisition of a competent faculty and librarian. The six have been mentioned above. Each of them justifies a brief characterization because of the significant roles each played.

During World War II, John George Stephenson III had taught at the Judge Advocate General’s School housed at the University of Michigan. The dean, while at Ann Arbor, had been impressed with Stephenson’s teaching skills. As the war was winding down and John Stephenson was about to be separated from military service, the then-Colonel Reuschlein urged him to enter law teaching, whereupon shortly thereafter he joined the law faculty at the University of Miami. At the time Dean Reuschlein was searching for an initial faculty, Professor Stephenson was enjoying a sabbatical year as a Sterling Fellow at Yale. The Dean visited Professor Stephenson in New Haven and persuaded him to join the new educational venture. That the law school would set up shop at Villanova was appealing to Professor and Mrs. Stephenson, for Villanova, located on Philadelphia’s Main Line, was redolent of an atmosphere comparable to the Princeton of Stephenson’s college days.

Not only was Francis Eugene Holahan, in 1953, graduating editor-in-chief of the University of Pittsburgh Law Review, Holahan, the senior law student, had demonstrated a marked scholarly bent. To the dean he seemed ready to be plucked for the new academic venture.

A most significant appointment to the initial faculty was Thomas J. O’Toole, a young member of the faculty at the Law School of Northeastern University. On a visit to Cambridge, Professor Warren A. Seavey of the Harvard Law School warmly recommended Professor O’Toole to Dean Reuschlein. Professor O’Toole proved to be vigorously effective in the classroom, in short, a superb teacher, but this was not his sole contribution to Villanova Law School’s success. Because of O’Toole’s unbending adherence to the highest educational and professional standards, the dean regarded him as a highly desirable complement to his efforts. Many who were close to the operation of the School of Law in its early years regarded Professor O’Toole (later assistant dean and vice-dean) as, in large part, the quality conscience of the School while the dean was the educator statesman with a myriad of influential friends in prominent places in the profession and in legal education. So, Thomas O’Toole came to Villanova with the same vision the dean manifested — that of a high quality Catholic law school — to be numbered among the best. His influence in the achievement of that goal cannot be overstated.

The dean thought it desirable that the original faculty should include a young lawyer from the Philadelphia area. John T. Macartney filled that prescription. He held
degrees from the College and the Law School of the University of Pennsylvania. He had served ably as a judicial clerk and as a trust officer of a major Philadelphia bank specializing in estate planning. Significantly, he had also been a research fellow participating in the drafting of a public health code for the Commonwealth under the tutelage of Dean Reuschlein.

The original faculty, including the dean, had much ivy draped about its shoulders. Among them were holders of degrees from Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, Yale and the University of Pennsylvania. If physical facilities were rather sparse, the faculty was well trained. Remember, it was Horace Mann who said that all that was needed for a great educational experience was a log with a student at one end and a great teacher at the other.

The law librarian, retiring as Director of the Harvard Law Library, held a professorship from the moment of his arrival, and was in a class by himself. We deal with the founding of the Law Library at Villanova infra and there we treat of the career and contribution of Arthur Clement Pulling, whose arrival at Villanova insured the almost instant presence of a more than adequate library from the very inception of the School of Law.

Now that an able faculty and distinguished librarian were in place and poised for action, the awesome problem of securing a student body of educated adults desirous of a legal education presented itself. All that could seriously be offered was a promise, proclaimed with high confidence. It has been said the pleasant dream of law professors is a school without law students. That is somewhat akin to a church congregation without sinners. Students must be had. How then did Villanova happen to open its doors with an entering class of 68 students?

Perhaps, the indefatigable Dean Reuschlein furnished the explanation. He convinced the college president, Father McGuire, that he should make available funds for a dozen or so tuition scholarships and should consider mature law students as ideal proctors for undergraduate residence halls and so permit them to earn their keep in this fashion. Parenthetically, it must be remembered that in 1953 Villanova was an all-male college and that the entering Law School class of 68 members had but 3 women. With that established, Father President offered his counterparts, presidents of potential feeder colleges, the invitation to name a top flight graduate who would receive a full tuition scholarship plus the opportunity to receive board and room free of charge at Villanova’s new School of Law. But more had to be done. The brightest so designated by their presidents had to be convinced that Villanova was the place to go — no mean selling job. Seemingly, the Law School was fortunate in that a number of military veterans were being separated from the service too late to take the Law School Admission Test, a then growing prerequisite for admission to law studies at the more prestigious law schools. So applicants were assured that if they would enroll at Villanova they would be accepted on the basis of their college degree and that they would sit for the Law School Admission Test during the first year of their law studies with little likelihood of being dropped because of a poor test score. The Dean convinced many that if they desired to begin their legal education immediately, his way was the way to go. And come the veterans did. When they subsequently discovered, to their dismay, that federal funds were not available for tuition at the unaccredited Villanova Law School, Father McGuire, the president, was persuaded to pay, out of college funds, the amount the veterans expected to receive in monthly federal grants, until the School of Law was provisionally approved by the American Bar Association early in the second semester of the first year. And so the bodies were there: a seeding of bright scholarship students and a larger group of hungry veterans. Not a bad crew with which to set sail. The dean was pleased with his efforts.