XIV. CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION

Reference has been made to sporadic early attempts at continuing legal education in Chapter XIII, noting the early ventures launched by Professor Ball, such as the “town meetings” dealing with the problem of local government in 1959, and the highly successful Patent Law seminar extending over a period of ten weekly sessions in 1958.

But continuing legal education had its beginnings in a truly meaningful way, with the several week-long American Law Institute-American Bar Association (ALI/ABA) summer programs at the School of Law, organized and directed by Professor Walter Taggart, ’68.

In 1976, Paul Wolkin, Esq., Director of the American Law Institute-American Bar Association (ALI-ABA) Joint Committee on Professional Education, and Professor Walter Taggart collaborated to bring three of the ALI-ABA regular summer programs to the Law School. Villanova served as the host institution as well as a co-sponsor of the courses.

All three of the summer 1976 courses (Bankruptcy Law and Practice, Advanced Business Tax Planning, and Post-graduate Federal Securities Law) were well attended and highly praised. Our hospitality was tested in July of 1976 when the temperatures reached 100 degrees and the air conditioning system in St. Mary’s broke down with 200 people in residence for the courses. Alternate dormitory space was provided and everyone left with a positive impression of the Law School.

Professor Taggart served as the course planner for the 1976 Bankruptcy Law and Practice course and followed up in 1977 by serving as the co-course planner for the Municipal Finance course that was offered that summer. This program was a hot topic in 1977 because of the financial difficulties of New York and the recent changes in the bankruptcy law applicable to municipalities.

From 1978 through 1985, Villanova and ALI-ABA continued their affiliation and presented six one-week summer courses in the eight year period. The courses were part of the regular ALI-ABA summer curriculum. They were as follows: 1978—Federal Rules of Evidence; 1979—Modern Land Transactions; 1980—Civil Practice and Litigation in Federal and State Courts; 1982—The Bankruptcy Code Reexamined and Updated; 1983—Modern Land Transactions and 1985—Advanced Business Tax Planning. Professor Taggart remained active in the Law School’s relationship with ALI-ABA and served as a faculty member on both of the Modern Land Transactions courses as well as the Bankruptcy Code course.

In 1979, the Law School and ALI-ABA jointly sponsored a course titled Trial Practice for the General Practitioner. The course was offered on weekends during the fall of 1979. Professor Leonard Packel served as the planning chairman and the faculty was
composed of distinguished trial practitioners, many of whom were Villanova alumni.

At least for the time being, ALI-ABA has decided to locate its summer courses primarily at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and at university sites on the west coast. This is largely a marketing judgment that course enrollments are higher at these sites. Our relationship with ALI-ABA remains close and it is certainly possible that in the future we will again assume the role of a host and co-sponsor of ALI-ABA summer programs.

In the late 1970’s Dean O’Brien and Professor Arnold B. Cohen explored the desirability of expanding the occasional programs into a full-fledged program in continuing legal education, believing that such a program would significantly benefit the Law School, the University and the community in general.

At a time when there was no continuing legal education outside of Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg and when local county bar associations offered relatively few programs, it was deemed that continuing legal education would prove of value to the general community in two ways: (1) to the extent that a program proved of interest to lay persons, they might attend even though the program would carry a legal emphasis and (2) lawyers residing or practicing in the western suburbs of Philadelphia would likely benefit by having easy access to a site that would enable them to keep abreast of current developments, acquire new ideas and learn new tactics, thus acquiring new skills.

The value of continuing legal education to the University was deemed to be in the favorable publicity which quality programs would generate, not only locally, but also regionally and even nationally to the extent that the School of Law would be able to market its programs beyond its metropolitan radius.

The value to the Law School inhered not only in the publicity shared with the University, but as a means to encourage members of the law faculty to increase their contacts with the practicing bar and to increase their scholarly output. This latter goal was to be accomplished by encouraging faculty members to serve as panelists and to transform the materials prepared for the programs into publishable articles.

Dean O’Brien and Professor Cohen in his capacity as Director of Continuing Legal Education agreed that continuing legal education programs should be held at Garey Hall, thus maximizing the Law School’s exposure. That decision, though a wise one, placed scheduling restraints on the program because of the need to ensure classrooms and parking for students. This meant that programs would have to be scheduled for weekends, in the evening, or at such times when classes were not in session. Accepting this limitation necessarily limited the School’s ability to respond quickly to new legislation and similar exigencies. One of the earliest programs tested these competing interests. The Economic Recovery Tax Act was enacted in the summer of 1981. A one-day program was arranged, to be held on Thursday, September 1st. Since Law School classes were in session, no rooms were available in Garey Hall, so the program was shifted from the West campus to a building in the center of the University campus.

Throughout the next few years, one or two day programs on specific areas of current interest were held, dealing with Tax Planning, Transportation Labor Issues, Involuntary Termination of Employment, Health Care Laws and Zoning. The programs were held, some at the Bellevue Stratford and the Four Seasons in Philadelphia and others at Garey Hall, with a view to determining whether center city
Philadelphia or Villanova would have the greater attendance appeal.

With no desire or expectation to displace Pennsylvania Bar Institute or American Law Institute/American Bar programs, the proponents of the Villanova program sought to identify specialty areas and formats consistent with Villanova’s opportunities and resources. And so Estate Planning Institutes were offered in 1983 and 1984. Bankruptcy Institutes were offered in 1980, 1982, 1983 and 1984. In addition, the School of Law hosted a week-long ALI-ABA summer program in Advanced Tax Planning.

In addition, an annual series of mini-courses was inaugurated, taking the form of one-half day courses on a variety of topics, thus creating a menu approach. Three or four programs were held during morning and afternoon sessions over a two-day period, posited upon the idea that lawyers would find one or more programs to be of interest, and be willing to attend for at least part of one day. This effort was titled the “Legal Development and Skills Program” and was offered in 1982 and 1983. Fourteen or fifteen mini-courses were held during each of these programs.

In continuing his efforts to find a format that would attract a sizeable attendance, Professor Cohen decided to take “our show” on the road. Taking advantage of the new tax and bankruptcy acts enacted in the summer of 1984, two one-half day tax programs and a one-half day bankruptcy program were created. It was arranged to have each of the surrounding suburban counties sponsor the programs which were held at local bar association headquarters. These programs were the first continuing legal education programs dealing with these new laws held in Pennsylvania, thus reflecting the Law School’s ability to respond in timely fashion.

When Dean Murray took command, he felt it would be desirable to shift from traditional continuing legal education. This led the dean and Professor Llewellyn to put together semester-long courses in the international tax area. A second aspect of this new thrust was to create tailor-made programs of interest to corporations. A successful six-week course on Contracts and a two day course on Bankruptcy was presented for UNISYS Corporation in the spring of 1987.

Sooner or later, it is more than likely that mandatory continuing legal education will be enacted in Pennsylvania. When that happens the task of those involved in the program at Villanova should be made easier. Meanwhile, Villanova’s Continuing Legal Education continues to identify areas of opportunity.