

ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

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Meet the Network



Building Buzz

Creating a new home for New York Law School is a complicated task because we are located in the heart of a vibrant and busy urban community. If you've walked by the site of the old Mendik Library building lately, you've probably noticed that the top floors are gone, but the bottom of the building is still there. Rather than imploding the building, the construction team has removed the structure one floor at a time from the top down.

In the old parking lot where the Law School's new facility is being constructed, some other very urban building techniques can be observed. To maximize space, the construction team has created a vertical construction site with trailers propped up in the air so they don't interfere with sidewalk space or the site itself.

Finally, because the site is so close to the local subway and a Con Edison substation, the team is using a mining technique to excavate, digging the four underground levels from the top down, rather than from the bottom up.

Did you know?

- TriBeCa was originally mostly farmland.
- Until the middle of the 19th century, the neighborhood was almost completely residential.
- During the 1840s and 1850s, commercial buildings began to be constructed. More than a century later, TriBeCa once again became a desirable residential community.



Dean Cycon '80 (left) with Tasew Gebru, head of the Yirgacheffe Coop in Ethiopia.



Mr. Cycon plays a drunken pirate in the current PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN movie.

Dean Cycon '80

When Dean Cycon '80 entered New York Law School 30 years ago, his three main interests were the environment, international law, and indigenous people.

"All three of those equal coffee," he said, and that is how Mr. Cycon came to found Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company 14 years ago.

"I wanted to create a for-profit business that would be a vehicle for social change," Mr. Cycon said. Today, Dean's Beans has ten full-time employees and works with farmers in 14 countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

"I was always interested in ethics and human rights," Mr. Cycon commented. "That was why I went to law school."

Mr. Cycon said his life was "profoundly impacted" by the classes he took with Professor Myres S. McDougal. "I was also very fortunate to be a research assistant for Dean James Simon," Mr. Cycon recalled.

After graduation, Mr. Cycon began his legal career at LeBouef Lamb. He returned to school, following Professor McDougal to Yale, where he earned an LL.M. He then served as a fellow at the Wood's Hole Oceanographic Institute. Later, he practiced and taught law in Rhode Island.

Dean's Beans is committed to both organic coffee and fair trade.

"Fair trade is an acknowledgement that the market system is insufficient to provide a living wage to coffee growers, who are largely indigenous peoples," Mr. Cycon explained. He said his company had taken the European model for fair trade and raised the bar by designing and funding people-centered development projects and supporting farming communities through advocacy and activism.

To learn more about Dean's Beans and fair trade, visit the company Web site at www.deansbeans.com.

New York Law School Heritage

James S. Watson, Class of 1913



New York Law School was located at 172–74 Fulton Street when James S. Watson attended from 1910–1913.

The Honorable James S. Watson (1882–1952) was a pioneer many times during his lifetime. In 1930, he campaigned successfully for municipal court judge and became one of the first two African Americans elected to judicial office in New York City. Judge Watson also was the first justice of African descent to sit in judgment on white litigants, and in 1943, he became the first

African American attorney nominated to the American Bar Association since 1912.

Born in 1882 in Jamaica, West Indies, Judge Watson emigrated to the United States in 1905. From 1905 to 1910, he attended evening high school. He then enrolled in evening sessions at The City College of New York while also studying at New York Law School. He received his LL.B. in 1913.

Judge Watson worked in the law offices of House, Grossman & Vorhaus from 1908 to 1920, when he opened his own law practice, specializing in corporate, contract, and tax law. While in private practice, he represented Marcus Garvey. From 1922 to 1930, he served as Special Assistant Corporation Counsel for the City of New York in the Special Franchise Tax Division.

In 1940, Judge Watson was denied the Democratic nomination for re-election in spite of the unanimous endorsement of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York and the New York County Lawyers Association. A non-partisan citizens' committee was formed in support of his election. Eventually, under pressure, Tammany Hall backed him and he was nominated. Judge Watson won re-election, running ahead of the rest of the Democratic ticket by a margin of nine to one.

In 1950, Judge Watson resigned from the bench to accept the presidency of the Municipal Civil Service Commission.

Throughout his career, Judge Watson was renowned for both his learned ability and his sense of fairness. He was active in professional associations and civic and community affairs. He

and his wife, Violet Lopez Watson, a founding member of the National Council of Negro Women with Dr. Mary McCloud Bethune, were the heads of a highly accomplished family. Their son, James L., was a New York State Senator and a Senior Federal Judge at the Court of International Trade. Their daughter, Barbara, who graduated from New York Law School in 1962, was U.S. Ambassador to Malaysia and the first female Assistant Secretary of State. Another son, Douglas, was the first African American aeronautical engineer in the U.S. Their only surviving child, Grace, lives in Washington, D.C. Judge Watson's nephew, J. Bruce Llewellyn, a 1960 graduate of New York Law School, is CEO of the Philadelphia Coca Cola Bottling Company; Colin Powell, former Secretary of State, is another nephew.

When Judge Watson died in 1952, more than 3,000 people attended the funeral. The honorary pallbearers included Mayor Vincent R. Impellitteri and virtually every high-ranking city official and civic leader.

Alumni Corner

This month's Alumni Corner Trivia Quiz asks questions about New York Law School faculty. See how much you know about the professors.

1. Professor Seth Harris came to New York Law School after serving as counselor to which secretary of labor under which president?
2. Professor Harry H. Wellington is a former dean of New York Law School. At what other law school did he also serve as dean?
3. Professor Ross Sandler served as commissioner of what New York City department under what mayor?
4. Which New York Law School professor is the author of *DINNER WITH DAD* (Random House, May 2007), a celebration of family and the discovery of the things that really matter in life?
5. Professor Annette Gordon-Reed's first book, published in 1997, focused on the way that previous biographers had written about a very controversial issue in the life of one of our early presidents. Who was the president and what was the issue?

To take this quiz and see the answers, please visit the Alumni & Friends page on the New York Law School Web site, www.nyls.edu.

Alumni in Brief

Blanche Lark Christerson '86



The career of private wealth management expert Blanche Lark Christerson '86 has taken a number of turns.

When she went to Sarah Lawrence College, Ms. Christerson wanted to be a literary critic. After graduation, she worked as a secretary in the art department at Doubleday. Eventually she became a junior editor, but after five and a half years, found herself “at a crossroads.” She considered going to business school, but decided to pursue a law degree at New York Law School.

“The language of business is numbers,” she explained. “The language of law is words, and words and I are a good fit.”

“I thought New York Law School was a fabulous school,” Ms. Christerson said. The most colorful professor she remembered was Milton Silverman, who taught equity, suretyship, mortgages, and insurance law.

“He was a very rumpled guy with a big walrus mustache and he’d carry around a law book held together with a rubber band and stuffed with *LAW JOURNAL* cases,” Ms. Christerson said. “Before I knew who he was, I used to think it was so nice of the Law School to let this guy come and hang out.”

Professor Silverman was a master teacher, she recalled, because “he could tell a story and then slip in the entire message. It was a great lesson.”

Ms. Christerson began her legal career as an associate at Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP. When the economy took a downturn in 1987, she was laid off. She was fortunate to get a spot in U.S. Trust’s estate planning department. It was, she said, “the luckiest thing that ever happened to me” because she eventually had primary editorial responsibility for *PRACTICAL DRAFTING (PD)*, U.S. Trust’s estate planning publication. The job provided her with “a great opportunity to get to know the law and learn at the feet of the master: estate planning attorney Richard Covey, who wrote *PD*.” It also allowed her the chance to finish up her master’s degree in tax.

In 1997, Ms. Christerson joined Bankers Trust Company, which became Deutsche Bank. Currently, she is Managing Director at Deutsche Bank Private Wealth Management. She also is the author of *TAX TOPICS*, a commentary on current legislation and other tax issues.

Her career in private wealth management is “certainly not what I had in mind when I first started out,” Ms. Christerson commented, “but it allows me to do so many things I enjoy doing.”

Ms. Christerson also serves as President and Treasurer of the Bagby Foundation for the Musical Arts. The Bagby Foundation helps professionals in the musical world who’ve fallen on hard times and sponsors talented young musicians. Ms. Christerson’s grandfather drafted the documents that set up the foundation. He also was Mark Twain’s last attorney and literary executor.

“The grants we make are not enormous, but they make an enormous difference in people’s lives,” she noted.

Ms. Christerson’s husband Jim is an architect. She has two children—Claire, 14, and Will, 11. Recently, Ms. Christerson, who is a founding member of the Law School’s Planned Giving Committee, spoke at a Law School Spotlight on Women. The advice she gave the students who attended is the same advice she gives her children:

“Follow your interests. Follow your talent. Know what you’re good at, and remember, it’s not about you. It’s about the people you work with and the company you work for. Show up. Be on time. Be nice to others.”

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**ALUMNI CONNECTIONS will not be published in July and August.
Have a great summer and we'll see you in September.**

Free for Alumni

SAVE THESE DATES

– **Friday, October 5 and Saturday, October 6**

Reunion Weekend for All Classes Ending in "2" and "7"

– **Thursday, December 13**

New York Law School hosts a Gala honoring Kathleen Grimm '80, Steven E. Pegalis '65, and Charles E. Phillips Jr. '93

More information will be posted on the Alumni & Friends page on the New York Law School Web site in the coming months.

**NEW YORK
LAW SCHOOL**

Alumni Connections

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