Advice for 1st year law students

by JAMES GILL

Rule #1 DO NOT BE MODEST. Law students have a reputation for being snobbish, elitist, over-achieving back stabbers. You cannot fight this. The world at large is going to hate you, no matter what you do, so get used to it. People may grovel at your feet, but they still resent your privilege. We, of course, know the truth. Law students are really just snobbish, elitist, over-achieving back stabbers, but we call it "aggressive advocacy." You will fail to be hired by even the most proletarian firm if you cannot convicne them that you are the best thing the law has ever seen since Hammurabi.

Rule #2 TRUST NO ONE. You may as well get the practice in now before you really need it in the real world.

Rule # 3 NEVER DATE ANYONE IN YOUR CLASS. After studying the Rule against Perpetuities, and the Rule against Remoteness of Vesting all day, who wants a recap at night. Besides, guys, undergraduate girls will respect you for your brains. No one who heard your answer in Torts about Res Ipsa Loquitor would ever be that foolish. This is sort of redundant, though, because the thought of dating, much less sex, will throw you into a deep guilt and have you running for your Contracts casebook.

Rule #4 MEMORIZE EVERY PIECE OF 'SUGGESTED' MATERIAL. You can bet dollars to doughnuts that on the exam there will be a verbatim extract form a dissenting judgement in the most obscure case that your professor thinks "you might find interesting" in the first week. You may safely ignore the casebook, as there will be nothing on the exam which will even remotely resemble anything that you have actually discussed in class.

Rule #5 ALWAYS ANSWER "NOT PREPARED" DURING INTERROGATION. If you answer then the professor is just going to dig up some more obscure hypothetical, and eventually you are going to wind up humiliated. If you respond as suggested, you should be safe for a week or two. Your professor may claim to give marks on the basis of class performance, but he will be to busy planning for his next victim to remember your cop out.

Rule #6 TAKE THE LIBRARY TOUR. It is the only way to find the best hiding places for those essential case reports that you cannot borrow, to keep your equally ambitious classmates from finding them.

Rule #7 MAKE GOOD USE OF THE WEEKENDS. They are the only time that there are no classed to interrupt your study time.

Rule #8 TAKE A BREAK FROM STUDYING EVERY FEW HOURS. Sixteen hours in the same position can induce gangrene and the cost of making this building wheelchair accessible would be tremendous.

Rule #9 IGNORE THE EGO DEATH. Your ego, your morals, and your modesty should be checked at the door, but you will only retrieve your ego at the end. Over the next three years you are going to become amoral, cold, unfeeling, materialistic, and lose your idealism (though not your virginity, if you still have it). RESISTANCE IS USELESS. You will go 'over the wall' by Thanksgiving if you do not. (You will feel better about yourself, but you won't be a lawyer, will you? This is also known as 'Creeping Lawyer Think.'

Rule #10 IGNORE YOUR BODY'S SIGNALS. They are not going to say anything helpful. They are likely to tell you that you are ill and cannot possibly be reading 230 pages a night and working 22 hours a day, and if you listen, they will be right. If you get Mononucleosis, then join the club. The days of your 20/20's are numbered. You will have corrective eyewear by the time you are in third year. Get glasses, they will make you look intellectual.

Rule #11 BUY A NEW WARDROBE. It is going to be your biggest expense this year, but it is essential. Who cares if you have got the greatest legal mind in exzistance if you do not have a hand made Italian suit. If you ignore this advice, then you will wind up as an Assistant Crown Prosecutor in charge of traffic tickets, or even worse, a professor.

Rule #12 JOIN A POLITICAL PARTY NOW! You will never get to be a judge without one. It does not matter which one, they are both the same (If you were seriously thinking about the NDP then you should be at Wasgoode Hall, or UBC) and they will both be in power in the appropriate jurisdictions at some point in your shining career. As I say, a thorough judicial clean out is just what we need in Nova Scotia, ten years after I am called to the bar.

Rule #13 DON'T BE AFRAID. We are all in the same club now, and if it takes a few of us a little longer to knot our ties, well that's O.K.
You may detect a grain of humour in this. You may even chuckle. Just come back in a month and read it. You won't be smiling then!

Some of the witticisms in the preceding have been flagrantly and inexcusably lifted from "29 Reasons Not to Go to Law School", R. Warner & T. Ihara, Berkeley: Nolo Press, 1982. By way of reparations I shall advise you all to go and buy a copy. You will wish you had read it beforehand.

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