FACULTY NEWS

Five New Professors Join Faculty Of Michigan Law School

In this issue, the Law Quadrangle Notes interviews Professors Layman Allen, John Jackson, and Terrance Sandalow, who have joined the faculty this fall. (see below). Other new additions are: Joseph Sax, LL.B. 1959, U. Chicago; from the University of Colorado, and Stanley Siegel, LL.B. 1963, Harvard, from the Office of General Counsel, Department of the Air Force. Interviews with Professors Sax and Siegel will follow in the next issue.

Prof. Layman Allen:
It’s How One Plays That Counts

Layman Allen plays games, and it’s all quite logical. He is the creator of the nationally known Wff’N Proof games, designed to entertain players while they learn symbolic logic, mathematical logic, or modern logic.

Professor Allen joins the law faculty this year after teaching at the Yale Law School since 1958. He received his A.B. from Princeton in 1951, an M.P.A. from Harvard in 1952, and his LL.B. from Yale in 1956. This semester he is conducting a seminar in “Symbolic Logic and Legal Communication” and also is on the staff of the University’s Mental Health Research Institute as a research scientist.

Though he does not use the Wff’N Proof games in the law seminar, Professor Allen’s tests in New Haven area elementary schools pointed out definite advantages of the games as a teaching device.

“Players have an immediate use to which they can put a new idea,” he says. “Furthermore, the students themselves have control over the level of the complexity of the problems they generate for each other in playing the game. Working on problems that require some thinking, but most of which the players can solve, leads to a sense of self as competent and a sense of accomplishment. “

Mathematical or modern logic,” Professor Allen points out, “can be regarded as a series of carefully and systematically constructed artificial language systems.” The games themselves are based upon three main principles: 1. a mathematical goal set by the players, 2. constraints on the resources each player can use, and 3. the use of mathematical symbols and techniques to reach the stated goal. In effect, the players begin with the conclusion of an argument and then must not only construct a set of premises from which that conclusion follows with a particular logic system, but also must construct the appropriate logic system as well.

Although there are a variety of ways in which the techniques of modern logic can be of assistance to a practicing attorney, says Professor Allen, these are probably not the most significant justifications for a lawyer’s becoming acquainted with modern logic. Rather, it is the increased sensitivity to the tricky nature of English prose and the perspective that is developed in approaching and inventing strategies for solving problems in general that are probably the most important benefits that a law student derives from studying modern logic.

“A person who has been exposed to mathematical logic,” he says, “is likely to be more sensitive in detecting syntactic ambiguities in ordinary natural language; and ambiguities of syntax are frequently brought before the appellate courts. Consider the following California statute: ‘Any male person who knowing a female person is a prostitute . . . solicits or receives compensation for soliciting her, is guilty of pimping, a felony. . . .’

“Is Mr. Smith, who knew that his female friend was a prostitute and solicited for her guilty of pimping? Well the answer depends upon how the syntax of the statute is interpreted.

“There are at least two alternate interpretations of the statute:

Alternative 1 solicits for her or receives compensation for soliciting for her

Alternative 2 solicits compensation for soliciting for her or receives compensation for soliciting for her

“Under the first alternative, Smith is guilty. Under the second, he is not. If the second seems fanciful, see People v. Smith 256 P2d 33, (1955).”

Professor Allen is currently working on a judicial decision-making game. “I’ve been working on it for five years,” he says, “but it’s still not quite off the ground. One of the features of such a game that makes it particularly interesting is the fact that the process being represented in the game is so complex that the game cannot hope to capture the full richness of the total social process itself. Certain aspects must be abstracted out to achieve a manageable game. However, to the extent that the game is to be representative and sufficiently realistic, one must locate in context the role of policy in its relation to other aspects of the judicial decision-making process. This is the element which is difficult to embody realistically in the game.”