

Florida's First Law School

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*History of Stetson University
College of Law*

Michael I. Swygert

and

W. Gary Vause

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*This book is dedicated to Jeffrey, Gregory, Megan, and Paige Swygert,
and to Celia Vause, widow of W. Gary Vause.*

Contents

Foreword · Florida’s Oldest Law School	xix
Acknowledgments	xxi
Prologue · Teddy Roosevelt, Rocking on the Verandah	3
Chapter One · Stetson University in Historical Perspective	9
1.1 12,000-Year History in a Nutshell	9
1.2 Florida’s Early Colleges and Universities	18
1.3 Founding of John B. Stetson University	20
a. The Vanishing of Persimmon Hollow	20
b. Henry Addison DeLand	23
c. Emergence of Town and College	25
d. Florida Baptist Convention	26
e. One of the “Most Learned Men Who Ever Served Stetson”	28
f. The Boss of the Plains	30
g. University-Baptist Relations: Part Two	32
Chapter Two · Founding of College of Law	35
2.1 Silk Hats Versus Wool Hats	35
2.2 Foundations of American Legal Education	39
2.3 Founding of Stetson University College of Law	46
a. Florida and DeLand at the Turn of the Century	46
b. Forbes, Harper, Flagler, and the University of Chicago	48
c. Encouragement of the State’s Attorneys and Florida Supreme Court to Start a Law School	54
d. Albert J. Farrah, the College of Law’s First Dean	56
e. Marketing a New Law School	60
f. Law Books and Law Teachers	61

Chapter Three · A Strong Beginning — Dean Farrah	63
3.1 The College of Law’s Opening Year	63
a. Prospective Announcement	63
b. Minimal Admission Standards	64
c. Course of Study and Instructional Methods	65
d. Required Curriculum	66
e. Stetson’s Unique Requirement in Trial Court Practice	68
f. Emphasis on Equity Jurisprudence	69
g. So, What’s the Cost?	70
h. The First Class	71
i. Early Members of the Law Faculty	72
3.2 The First Few Years	74
a. Dean Farrah Faces Challenges	74
b. The First Graduation at Stetson University College of Law	77
c. Honeymoon’s End: The Forbes-Mathes-Stetson Scandal	78
d. President Forbes — Midwife of the College — Resigns	80
e. Kent Club Forms: Students Debate World, National, Legal, and Racial Issues	82
f. African-Americans Need Not Apply	85
g. Women Enter the Legal Profession (and Stetson’s Law School)	86
h. Mary Stewart — First Woman Law School Graduate Admitted to Practice in Florida	89
i. The College of Law’s Initial Locations: Elizabeth and Flagler Halls	91
j. People Say the Strangest Things (Part One)	92
k. Lincoln Hulley Becomes President and Preserves University’s Independence	94
l. Dean Farrah Leaves Stetson and Starts New Law School	98
 Chapter Four · Confronting New Competition — President Hulley; Dean Rasco	 101
4.1 Growing Pains	101
a. Dean Farrah Promotes the State’s Second Law School	101
b. A New Challenge	103
4.2 Hulley’s Years As Acting Dean	107
a. “Precipitous Decline” in Admissions and Academic Standards	107
b. Helen Hunt	111
c. Baptist Relations During the Hulley Era	114
4.3 New Faculty Members; A New Dean	116

a. Faculty Hires: Richmond Rasco—The Next Dean	116
b. A Different Personality, A Different Style	119
4.4 Rasco’s Deanship Ends Abruptly	121
Chapter Five · Attaining ABA Approval, AALS Accreditation— Dean Tribble	125
5.1 ABA and AALS Indirectly Regulate American Law Schools	125
5.2 Lewis Herndon Tribble Takes Charge	128
5.3 ABA Approval and AALS Membership Achieved	131
5.4 Requirements for Admission to The Florida Bar	134
5.5 Stetson Law Students during the 1920s and 1930s	138
a. Great Depression and Falling Enrollments	138
b. Student Activities	140
(1) Law Fraternities Flourish	140
(2) Trial Court—Murder in Downtown DeLand	142
(3) Legal Aid; Essay Contests; SBA; Politics	143
(4) People Say the Strangest Things (Part Two)	145
c. Minority and Women Students	147
5.6 Faculty and Alumni During the Tribble Era	150
a. Faculty	150
b. Prominent Law Alumni	154
5.7 Change in Administrations: Allen and Raymond Take Over	158
a. William Sims Allen Becomes President	158
b. Faculty Dismissals: A Bitter Battle with AAUP and AALS	160
c. Paul E. Raymond Succeeds Lewis Tribble as Dean	164
Chapter Six · The Long Winter: Depression and WWII— Deans Raymond, Lambert, and Howes	169
6.1 The Long Winter	169
6.2 Dean Paul Everett Raymond, 1938–1941	171
a. Strong Qualifications	171
b. Raymond Raises Academic Standards	173
c. Raymond Begins Annual Law Days	176
d. Student Activities: 1938–1942	179
e. Relocation to Jacksonville?	181
f. Clouds of War: Faculty Turnover	185
g. Raymond’s Importance to Law School	192
6.3 World War II; Deans Lambert and Howes	195
a. Impact of the Coming War	195
b. Roy F. Howes—A Dean without Portfolio (1943–1946)	199

Chapter Seven · Survival at Naval Air Base Is Problematic — Dean Haslup and President Edmunds Tangle	203
7.1 L.A. Haslup’s Deanship—The Naval Air Station (1946–1953)	203
a. Colonel Lemuel Allen Haslup	203
b. The College Reopens	206
c. Move to the Naval Air Base	207
d. Haslup’s Faculty	211
e. Professor Roy Howes	213
f. Students—Active and Inventive	216
(1) Student Entrepreneurs	217
(2) Student Honor Court	218
(3) The Faculty Considers a Student Law Review	220
(4) Student Concerns and Activities	220
(5) Admission Standards; Grading; Teacher Evaluations	223
(6) Alumnus John Wood: Prisoner of War	224
(7) Other Alumni from the Lambert and Haslup Years	228
g. President J. Ollie Edmunds and Dean L.A. Haslup	230
(1) The Judge from Jacksonville	230
(2) Tensions Rise between Edmunds and Haslup	231
h. A Critical 1951 ABA and AALS Inspection	234
i. 1952 Reinspection: Is Relocation the Answer?	238
Chapter Eight · Relocation to Gulfport — Dean Hilkey	241
8.1 A Law School in Crisis	241
8.2 The Decision to Relocate the College of Law	243
a. A Difficult and Contentious Process	243
b. Florida Cities Compete for the Law School	247
c. St. Petersburg (and Gulfport) Come to the Table	251
d. St. Petersburg/Gulfport Is the Winner	253
e. The Decision Is Made	255
f. Reaction	257
8.3 A Change in Deanship: Hilkey Succeeds Haslup	258
Chapter Nine · The New Home—Former Rolyat Hotel, Florida Military Academy	261
9.1 Disston City, Bonafacio, Veteran City, and Gulfport	261
9.2 “Handsome” Jack Taylor Develops Pasadena-on-the-Gulf	262
9.3 The Rolyat Hotel Is Designed as a Medieval City	266
9.4 The Rolyat Called an “Architectural Gem”	267

9.5	The Rich and the Famous Come (But Not for Long)	270
9.6	The “Babe” Makes History at the Rolyat	272
9.7	Rolyat Hotel Closes; Florida Military Academy Opens	276
Chapter Ten · Rebuilding the Law School and Its Reputation —		
	Dean Sebring	283
10.1	New Home in St. Petersburg	283
	a. Law Center to Be Patterned after English Inns of Court	283
	b. Makeshift Facilities Allow School to Open	285
	c. Disgruntlement Continues in DeLand	287
10.2	Arrival of Harold J. “Tom” Sebring	288
	a. Multifaceted Achiever	288
	b. Justice at Nuremberg	292
	(1) Background	292
	(2) The Doctors’ Trial and Judge Sebring	293
	(3) The “Nuremberg Code”	294
	c. Sebring Resigns from the Court; Accepts Stetson’s Offer	295
10.3	Sebring’s First Year	296
	a. Faculty; Administrative Assistant, Mrs. Kay Eddy	296
	b. Two Students	299
	(1) Harvey Firestone III	299
	(2) Joe Ann Taylor (Van Gelder)	302
10.4	The Board of Overseers	304
	a. Background	304
	b. Walter Mann Persuades the President	305
	c. The Board of Overseers	306
10.5	Stetson Law Center Foundation	310
10.6	ABA Once Again Threatens Stetson’s Accreditation	312
	a. Walter Mann and Arthur Morris Confront Edmunds	312
	b. 1957, 1959, and 1961 ABA Inspections	315
10.7	College of Law Benefactors:	
	Charles A. Dana, Roy E. Crummer et al.	319
	a. The Sebring Library	319
	b. Eleanor Naylor Dana Administration and H. Jackson Crummer Classroom Buildings	322
	c. Other Significant Benefactors During the Sebring Era	328
	d. The Highbaugh Gift of a Charles Wilson Peale Painting Masterpiece	330
10.8	Faculty: The Greening of the Faculty: Kuenzel, et al.	335

a. Sebring's Plan: "A Well-Rounded Faculty"	335
b. The Mix: The Young, the Experienced, and the Demanding	338
(1) Joseph A. McClain, Jr.	338
(2) Richard T. Dillon	339
(3) Calvin Arnold Kuenzel	340
(4) Justice James Tenney Brand: "Judgment at Nuremberg"	346
(5) Judge Stanley Milledge	347
(6) Paul Barnard	348
(7) Edward L. Platt	349
(8) Frank E. Booker	351
(9) Everett E. Cushman	351
(10) David L. Dickson	352
(11) Judge Victor O. Wehle	353
(12) Charles M. Waygood	353
(13) Harold I. Lindsey	354
(14) Henry H. "Harry" Haden	356
(15) Henry A. Fisher, Jr.	356
(16) Other Faculty Appointments	357
(17) Ten Librarians in Thirteen Years	357
(18) Faculty Meetings	358
(19) Faculty Tensions between DeLand and Gulfport	358
10.9 Barnard and Jagger Establish Legal Clinic	359
10.10 The Best and the Worst	362
(1) General Roy Stanley Geiger, USMC	363
(2) Joseph Alexander Peel, Jr. (Raiford State Penitentiary, Florida)	365
10.11 Integration Postponed	367
10.12 Student Activities	369
10.13 Academic Standards	374
10.14 National Trial Seminars and Continuing Legal Education	376
(1) Stetson National Trial Seminars	376
(2) Stetson Space Law Seminar	378
(3) Labor Forums and other CLE Programs	378
10.15 The Goal of Dean Sebring Is Realized	379

Chapter Eleven · Raising Academic Standards, Money—	
Dean Dillon	381
11.1 The New Dean	381
a. Young and Qualified	381
b. New Dean Faces Challenges	383
11.2 Dillon Brings in Major Capital Funds	386
a. Dana Gifts Top One-and-One-Half Million Dollars	386
b. Harvey S. Firestone, Jr.	390
c. The Estate of John T. Rosa: A Multi-Million Dollar Bequest	391
d. Mann Lounge; Sebring Courtroom	398
11.3 Faculty	399
a. Faculty Governance	399
b. Emphasis on Scholarship	401
(1) Library Books Increase Ninefold	402
(2) Sabbaticals; Faculty Support; Scholarship	403
c. Relations with Students	404
(1) “Life Grants Nothing Without Hard Work”	404
(2) Student-Faculty Relations	406
11.4 Raising Academic Standards	408
a. Tightening Admissions	408
b. Results	409
c. Adjusting the Curriculum: Remedial Writing and New Clinics	412
11.5 The Stetson Law Review Begins	414
11.6 Student Activities and Concerns	423
a. The Prelude	423
b. Student Skit Nights	425
c. Student Evaluations of Faculty	426
d. Stetson Law School’s Standard of Appearance and Attire (“Dress Code”)	428
11.7 African-Americans Come to the College of Law	430
11.8 Dillon Builds the Faculty	433
11.9 An Assessment of the Dillon Administration	470
Chapter Twelve · Concern for Students; Campus Renovation; Greater Alumni Support; Increased Diversity—	
Dean Jacob	473
12.1 A Different Dean	473
a. Bushrod	473
b. Hopes and Expectations	476

c. Goals—Change Attitudes and Make School Friendlier	477
12.2 Upgrading Student Morale	479
a. Open-Door Policy	479
b. Student Evaluations of Faculty	480
12.3 A More Diversified Student Body	482
a. Legal Education Turns Back on African-Americans	482
b. Florida: The Twenty-Eight-Year Struggle of Virgil Hawkins	483
c. Stetson: Increasing Percentage of Minority Students	486
d. Faculty Diversity	489
12.4 Major Renovations and Campus Additions	490
a. The Walls Came (Nearly) Tumbling down	490
b. Renovations	493
c. James and Ruth Nemec Office Complex	494
d. Carey & Florin Courtroom; New Faculty Offices	494
12.5 Alumni Morale and Fund Raising	496
a. Raising Alumni Morale	496
b. Networking Alumni	498
c. Professor Kuenzel’s Trial	500
d. Fund Raising Efforts Succeed	502
12.6 New Academic Programs and Clinics: Elder Law; Judicial Interns	506
a. Elder Law Clinic and Stetson College of Law Center for Law and Aging	506
b. Federal Judicial Internship Program	508
c. Expansion of Clinics	510
12.7 Student Activities	512
a. New Groups and Organizations Flourish	512
b. Student Competitions: Client Counseling; Negotiations; Moot Court	515
c. A Death on Campus	517
12.8 Strategic Planning and Application for Coif	517
a. Strategic Planning	517
b. Seeking Order of the Coif	519
12.9 Faculty Concerns	521
a. Cash Surplus and Tuition	521
b. A Divided Faculty: Renewal of Manuel Ramos	523
c. A Divided Faculty	527
12.10 Hiring a Diverse Faculty: New Staff	528
a. An Overview	528

b. New Faculty Members Contribute to the College	529
12.11 Continuing Legal Education: 1975–Present	563
a. Jacob Establishes CLE Office; Appoints Director	563
b. Judge Paskay’s Annual Bankruptcy Seminars	566
c. Professor Bickel’s Law and Higher Education Conferences	568
(1) An Innovative Commingling of Lawyers and Clients	568
(2) The First Law and Higher Education Conference: 1980	569
(3) 1981 Conference on Federal Tax Policy and Higher Education	571
(4) Growth in Numbers and Importance	571
(5) 25th Conference Anniversary: 50th Anniversary of Brown v. Board of Education	572
12.12 Dean Jacob’s Administration: An Assessment	573
Chapter Thirteen · The Nation’s Top-Rated Advocacy Program	577
13.1 Trial Advocacy in Gulfport	579
13.2 The NITA Program	581
13.3 Stetson Adopts NITA Teaching Pedagogy	582
13.4 Stetson’s Trial Advocacy Competitions: 1980–1999	585
13.5 Stetson Trial Team Results through 1999	587
13.6 Record of Stetson Mock Trial Victories, 2000–2005	591
13.7 Stetson College of Law Center for Excellence in Advocacy	592
13.8 A Look Ahead	595
Chapter Fourteen · Deans Moody, Vause, and Dickerson	599
14.1 Lizabeth A. Moody, First Woman Law Dean in Stetson History	599
a. Winner of the “ABA Glass Cutter Award”	599
b. Faculty Split Widens	603
c. Moody Preserves ABA Accreditation; New Law Library Is Built	606
d. An Interfaith Chapel and Meditation Room	609
e. Faculty and Staff	611
f. Professor Calvin Kuenzel Dies	620
g. Stetson Expands Globally	621
h. Moody Plans for Part-Time Program; Becomes Distinguished University Professor	624
14.2 Dean W. Gary Vause: Stetson Enters the New Millennium	625
a. The Cuban Missile Crisis and Mandarin Chinese	625

b. Newspapers, College, and Law School	627
c. After a Serendipitous Visit, Vause Comes to Stetson	628
d. SBA, Law Review	630
e. BLSA: Stetson's Black Law Student Association	630
f. HBA: Stetson's Hispanic Bar Association	633
g. Asian American Law Association	634
h. A \$12 Million "Cornerstone Campaign"	634
i. Expansion of Physical Facilities; New Student Recreation Center	637
j. In Search of a Campus: "An Unparalleled Synergy"	637
14.3 Approaching Death; Setting Up the Transition	644
a. Faculty Divisions Narrow	644
b. Silent Preparations for a Successor	645
c. Death and Accolades	646
14.4 Dean Darby Dickerson Readies Stetson for a New Era	649
a. Coming to Stetson	649
b. Rebuilding Legal Research & Writing Program; Work with ALWD	652
c. Competitions	655
d. World Championship	655
e. New Programs: Center for Excellence in Elder Law, et al.	658
f. New Faculty, 2000–2004	661
g. Dr. Madison Mosley; Judge Robert Davis	664
h. Hall of Fame	666
i. Hall of Fame—2005 Inductees	668
j. Alumni	670
14.5 Conclusion: A Look Ahead	673
Final Thoughts	675
Addendum One · Stetson University Presidents	679
Addendum Two · Deans of Stetson University College of Law	681
Bibliography	683
Books	683
Periodicals	687
Academic Journals	691
Law Reviews	692
Miscellaneous Publications	694

Stetson Publications	695
<i>Stetson Collegiate</i>	695
<i>Stetson Yearbook—Oshzhzyi</i>	696
<i>Stetson Reporter</i>	696
<i>Stetson Law News</i>	700
<i>Stetson Lawyer Report</i>	700
<i>Stetson Lawyer</i>	700
<i>Stetson Prelude</i>	709
<i>The Brief</i>	710
Miscellaneous College Publications, Speeches, and Releases	710
Annual Announcements and Catalogues	714
Formal Reports	715
Faculty and Board Minutes	717
Unpublished Manuscripts and Scholarly Memoranda	717
Oral History Interviews	718
Telephone Interviews	720
Conversations	720
Letters	721
Attachments to Letters	725
Handwritten Notes and Comments	725
E-mails	725
Telegrams	726
Memoranda	726
Judicial Cases	727
United States Supreme Court	727
Florida Supreme Court	727
Statutes and Regulations	728
Miscellaneous Legal Documents	728
Online Resources	728
Index	733

FOREWORD

Florida's Oldest Law School

Dean Darby Dickerson

The story of a law school is a story about people—students, faculty, alumni, staff, donors, and friends whose dreams, hopes, hard work, and ongoing support make the school a reality. In the pages that follow, you will read about the remarkable people who have graced the halls, courtyards, and piazzas of Stetson University College of Law.

The College of Law opened in DeLand, Florida on October 2, 1900, with five male students from Florida. In many ways, our first graduates would not recognize their alma mater today. The school's main campus is now located in Gulfport, a small community adjacent to St. Petersburg; we also have a satellite campus near downtown Tampa. The student body exceeds 950, and many students are women and minorities. In other ways, the original graduates would be very comfortable at today's Stetson law school: from the very beginning, we emphasized the importance of skills training, professionalism, and service—tenets to which we still adhere.

Stetson's story is fascinating, and I thank the co-authors for their vision and perseverance. My predecessor, Dean Gary Vause, wrote about Stetson's early history in a 1987 law-review article. In the late 1990s, he started preparing to write a book for the College of Law's centennial in 2000. In 1999, he became dean, which slowed his progress; although he continued to research and work on the book, he succumbed to cancer in 2003. We were fortunate that Michael Swygert, a long-time Stetson law professor who had just completed a book about his law school alma mater, enthusiastically agreed to continue the project. Mike has spent the better part of three years researching, writing, and editing. His ability to organize vast amounts of raw information, his love of history, his determination to be as complete and true as possible, and his fascination with the subjects of this work were truly an inspiration. Due to Mike's and Gary's talent and hard work, the story of Stetson's history is ready to share.

From establishing formal legal training in Florida, to producing outstanding judges and attorneys, to helping to build fields such as advocacy, elder law, and higher-education law and policy, Stetson's impact has been long-lasting and significant—and continues to grow. The path has not always been smooth, but the challenges have made us a stronger institution. As you read this history, always remember the people, because they have been the key to every success we have been fortunate enough to experience.

Acknowledgments

May 11, 2006

The genesis of this history of Stetson University College of Law began with the late Dean W. Gary Vause. In 1998, as the 100th anniversary of the founding of the College approached, Dean Vause began to research the Stetson law school in preparation for writing a comprehensive history. Unfortunately, his illness and death intervened. Subsequently, Dean Darby Dickerson asked me to take over the project, a happy task that has taken all my time for over two years. The work has benefitted from the guidance of Dean Emeritus Bruce R. Jacob (who took oral histories of a dozen prominent law school alumni) and from the research and assistance of Dean Emeritus Richard T. Dillon.

Others who assisted Dean Vause included Dorothy Bishop, former administrative assistant to five Stetson deans; Roxane Latoza, assistant to Dean Darby Dickerson; and Velaine Paryzek of the Office of Graduate and International Programs. Dean Vause also utilized the services of student research assistants Barbara Cowherd and Kristina Gles.

After taking over in January 2004, I worked with Sharon Gisclair, a paralegal in the Office of Faculty Support Services, until she left for a job with a judge in Washington, D.C. Ms. Gisclair's many excellent contributions are greatly appreciated. Silvia Manzanero, also a paralegal, then took over. She is a recipient of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Fellowship. Ms. Manzanero consistently provided outstanding research and editorial support. A third person whose assistance was invaluable was my research assistant, Lisa Smith, a former Stetson law student and now a member of The Florida Bar. Besides research, Ms. Smith (at one time a magazine editor) provided needed editorial corrections and suggestions. Ms. Connie Evans, Director of Faculty Support Services, coordinated the services of all these people and, in doing so, did a yeoman's job. I also acknowledge and thank Ms. Evans'

entire Faculty Support Staff, in particular, Shannon Mullins, for their combined efforts in producing this volume.

Two others who provided critical assistance were Dean Emeritus Lizabeth Moody and Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Law William Eleazer. Each spent considerable effort in reviewing the manuscripts. Several members of the law faculty also read segments of the work-in-process and offered suggestions. Meanwhile, Pamela Burdett and Sally Waters, professional librarians, found obscure sources, and worked with librarians in DeLand in obtaining records from the University. Additional support came from Frank Klim, Director of Communications, and his assistants Davina Gould and Lizz Angello; Dotti Bressi, Director of College Relations; Michael Sepe, paralegal; and Brooke Bowman, Instructor of Legal Research and Writing, and Special Assistant to the Dean. Professor Bowman canvassed and scrutinized all 4,500 plus footnotes, which *Stetson Law Review* associates James Kushner and Frances Shefter had written.

Finally, I wish to recognize those who read the manuscript prior to its going to the publisher: James Beasley, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Stetson University; Deborah Brown, Associate Vice President for Human Resources and Legal Affairs, Stetson College of Law; Dean Darby Dickerson; Frank Klim, Executive Director of Communications; and my always helpful wife, Dianne. I thank each of the people listed above as well as all the others who offered assistance. Finally, I thank Dean Darby Dickerson for granting me a year's leave to work exclusively on this project and for her continuing encouragement and support over the past two-and-one-half years (the last year of which I have been allegedly in retirement).

Michael I. Swygert,
Professor Emeritus of Law
St. Petersburg, May 11, 2006