

third dimension

Small-town practice is second career for graduate

By Marian Lucas

"Ten years ago if you told me I was going to be a lawyer, I'd say it wasn't possible," said 35-year-old Gary Gartner.

Today Gartner, a 1974 NU College of Law graduate, is the sole lawyer in Palmyra, Nebr. He established his practice five miles from where he was raised, making it easier for him to become the town's only lawyer.

A skilled laborer before he entered the College of Law, Gartner worked six years as a carpenter. After three years in the navy, he said he decided to go to college despite what he called inadequate high school grades.

When Gartner was a law school freshman, he said he looked at law as an opportunity to be independent.

"I stuck with it"

"After my freshman year, I began to think that law

might not have been what I wanted. But I stuck with it because I had been selected," he said.

Pressure from friends and faculty prompted him to stay in law school, Gartner said, because they considered the field prestigious.

Gartner said he was interviewed for various job opportunities but decided to follow his original plans of establishing a single practice. After he was graduated from NU, however, he said he was disillusioned.

"I was tired of studying law and couldn't bring myself to set up a practice because it would be like law school again," said Gartner.

No question in his mind

"Most law students are afraid to start out," said Gartner, "and many go into fields that are unrelated to law."

There was no question in his mind about which law school to attend, he said.

"I went to NU as a convenience," Gartner said, "but it is a good law school."

NU College of Law graduates are able to compete with other state university law graduates, Gartner said, but they can't compete with graduates from Harvard and Yale, he added.

Didn't like it

The NU law school doesn't adequately prepare a prospective lawyer for general practice, Gartner said.

Gartner has been in practice for 8 months and said he initially didn't like it.

"But now I think I am becoming more competent," Gartner said.

Gartner also said students contemplating law school should gain an awareness of job possibilities by talking to lawyers.

NU Law enrollment increases; 'we can place people anywhere'

Don Shaneyfelt, assistant dean of NU's law college, said its reputation is "very fine" nationally.

Shaneyfelt, who is responsible for placing graduates, said, out of last May's 77 graduates, only 4 aren't placed.

This year, 471 students are enrolled in the school compared to 439 in 1974. Even though 900 people applied, Shaneyfelt said the number of applicants was down because of a \$25 application fee. Two years ago when application was free, there were 1,200, he said. Annually, the law school takes 175 new students.

"In Nebraska we have no problem placing our graduates though it is more difficult than four or five years ago," said Shaneyfelt.

Nationally, 53 per cent of all law school graduates actually practice law, he said,

while the remainder usually enter related fields such as government or social service. In Nebraska, however, Shaneyfelt said 80-85 per cent practice law.

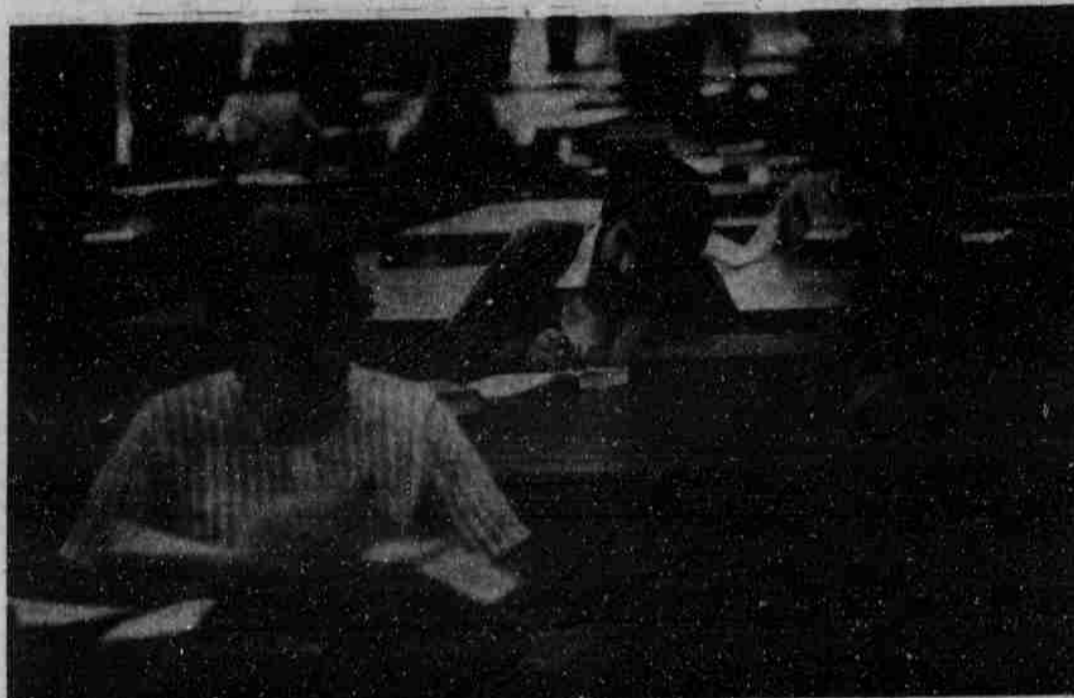
"Our graduates have proved we can place people anywhere in the United States," said Shaneyfelt.

Henry Grether, law school Dean, said NU alumni earn starting salaries between \$8,000 to \$12,000 each year.

Grether said it usually takes a year or two before a lawyer gains the experience he really needs.

"I don't think the overall job opportunities are really that poor, although those at the bottom of the class will have more trouble," said Grether.

He added that the problem exists on both coasts where the job situation is tough.



The size of the new law school, including study areas, accommodated the increase in student enrollment.

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