

From the Oral History of
J. A. C. GRANT

J. A. C. “CLIFF” GRANT (1902–1995), professor of Political Science at UCLA from 1930 to 1969, chaired the committee to select the first law school dean and also created the law library. He served as chairman of the Department of Political Science, dean of the Division of Social Sciences, and head of the UCLA Academic Senate.¹

★ ★ ★

STEVEN J. NOVAK (UCLA ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWER): The genesis of your [oral history] interviews, you might say, was the remark that you’d played a big role in the starting of the UCLA law school and the search for its first dean. So if you’re ready, let’s talk about that.



J. A. C. GRANT

¹ For further information, see the Editor-in-Chief’s introduction on page 1 of this volume: 11 CAL. LEGAL HIST. 1 (2016).

GRANT: Okay.

NOVAK: I guess in 1947 you were made the chairman of a committee that was made up of Berkeley people and UCLA people, and you just sat down and started talking about what should a law school be. How did that come about? What did you decide?

GRANT: Well, as the University of California started, as the UCLA branch of it started growing, we said, "It's got to get out into some of the specialty colleges." And the administration decided, well, one of the most valuable to have and also one of the cheapest to have was the law school. Some specialty schools run into millions just to get some equipment for them, but a law school's a rather inexpensive enterprise. That's one of the misfortunes of it. That's why we have so many of these jerkwater private law schools around the country trying to make money on the deal, and it's messed up the whole legal profession and the whole educational scheme in law schools.

I know one of them in Los Angeles — I had given away most of my valuable law books. Because, see, when I went to UCLA, they didn't have a law library, and it was too far downtown, the L.A. County [Law] Library, to go all the time, so I gradually over the years built up quite a law library of my own. I had several hundred volumes. A few hundred of them I still have, as a matter of fact. But I gave the ones that were of most value to the new law schools that were developing, including UCLA, and some to the county law library. And then I ended up with a lot of stuff that they didn't need, but it was good basic material, and I offered it to one of the local private law schools. And you know the reply? "We can't afford a library." They were teaching law, and they were accredited to the extent that after four years of study instead of three, you could take the bar exam and if you passed it you could get to be a lawyer, but they couldn't even afford a law library. Well, that's sad.

So we said, "We're going to have a law school on this campus. It's just as important as having an engineering school." So having been chewing the fat on that for years, knowing it was inevitable, finally the Legislature passed a statute that made a grant of I think it was \$1 million — I got it later increased to \$1.5 million — for a building to start a law school. And a funny thing happened at that time. Hastings College of the Law, the so-called law department of the University of California in San Francisco — which

had been founded on the basis of a will by the first chief justice, [Serranus C.] Hastings, in which he gave \$100,000 to the state — said, “If you accept it, you’ve got to guarantee 6 percent interest per year on it forever, and that will be to support the Hastings College of the Law, which shall be the law department of the University of California.” And so for years, all Hastings got was \$6,000. It stayed over in San Francisco. Berkeley decided they wanted a law school. They said, “We can’t have one by that name because of the law department of the university over there across the bay, so we will start a school of jurisprudence.” So the Berkeley school was called the School of Jurisprudence, but everybody knew it was a straight law school, handled in the normal way. The other one [Hastings] worked with this \$6,000, and then it fell into the habit of hiring a lot of retiring professors from law schools, famous men who still wanted to teach, and so they brought them in at a fixed salary. They could give them a pretty good salary because they had no research funds, no travel funds, no pension system, none of the fringes that accompany normal university tenure positions that add up the price, just as the price of labor is not the hourly wage but its — you add on all the fringes, and they double that. So the Legislature, at the time they gave us money for a law building, gave Hastings money for a law building. Now, that’s the first time that Hastings started getting on the gravy train. Later, when I was on the University of California president’s staff and working with all the developing graduate programs and so forth, they came in and wanted some money for an assistant professor, and we gave them one. That’s the first time they started getting in on the gravy train of hiring university faculty and becoming really a part of the university. They had their own self-governing board of trustees. On occasion they preempt somebody off our regular university Board of Regents [laughter] and put them on the Hastings board, so that we started growing a little closer. And by the time we started giving them money, they were really regarded as a part of us. It was also becoming a very good law school.

Now, we established this committee. The committee had the task of planning. We had to plan for a building, we had to buy a library. My principal task was to buy the library. I had an idea that a library for this kind of a law school should be a research library, and they gave me \$60,000 to buy the basic books for it. We set up a committee, and it was — the consultant was the law librarian at Berkeley. I forget his name. Tom [Thomas S.]

Dabagh had resigned, was now with the Los Angeles County Law Library. I believe his name was [Eldred R.] Smith. Very nice chap. He was our adviser, but he never bothered giving any advice. He said, "Go ahead and run it, Cliff," so [laughter] I ran it. I had such good luck with that \$60,000. I couldn't do it now; you can see what's happened to law book prices. One book, Thayer's *Preliminary Treatise on Evidence [and the Common Law (1898)]*, which I think I bought for about a couple of dollars, now costs you sixty, seventy-five bucks. Very different world. But I had such good luck, having spent that \$60,000 — .

By the way, before I finished spending it all, we had picked the new dean and he was here, but he still didn't give me a damn instant's help in doing that work. I had to continue buying the law library. In fact, I took a leave of absence to get out from under it, but I stayed in town doing some writing, and I might just as well have not taken a leave, because the library kept calling me up all the time. One day the girl doing the actual ordering called up and said, "I want some help. I've got a lot of new offers here, and I want you to look them over and see if we should buy any of them." I said, "Well, look, we've got a dean. Have him do it. I'm out of this business." And the reply was, "The total help that Dean [L. Dale] Coffman has given to us in the library was to write us a note and say would we please buy him a Martindale-Hubbell. You may recall that I called you up and asked, 'What in heaven is a Martindale-Hubbell?' You told me it's a law directory. And so we bought him a Martindale-Hubbell." That's all the help we had gotten out of him. So she said, "Please come over and help me." So I did.

Well, I had such good luck with the \$60,000 that I went back to the administration and said, "I wish you would give me another \$50,000." Or was it \$40,000? "Because I have found so many good buys, and the market is just ripe for the pickings." And I added that I didn't want to fool anyone. "I've already got a better law library than they've got at most of" — what we call now the Pac-10. I forgot what we called it then, Pacific Coast Conference or something or other — "a better library than Oregon, Washington, and so forth. Right now we can open, no problem. But there are so many good books out there at such a good price that this is the year to buy them." I said, "If you'll give me \$50,000, I'll cut my request for next year by \$40,000." They gave me the \$50,000 and didn't cut my \$40,000. [laughter] I don't know why, whether it was a mistake or what. So we got going with a