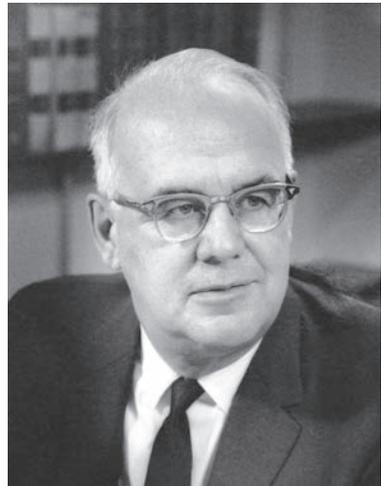


From the Oral History of
HAROLD E. VERRALL

Harold E. Verrall (1902–1995) was brought to the UCLA School of Law from Vanderbilt University Law School by Dean L. Dale Coffman in 1949. As assistant dean, he was one of the two faculty members who supported Dean Coffman against dissident faculty members. He remained at UCLA as professor of law until his retirement in 1970 and continued as professor at UC Hastings College of the Law until 1979.¹



HAROLD E. VERRALL

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BERNARD GALM (UCLA ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWER): [Before Dean Coffman came to UCLA in 1949], what were his major accomplishments [as dean of the law school at Vanderbilt]? Expansion of the library, expansion of the faculty — ?

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

VERRALL: And he had to supervise the construction of classrooms, which were far different from those of the university because the classes would be larger. So we had to have the classrooms with built-up benches and seating so that all the students could see the instructor at the podium.

GALM: Later on, when we talk about the building at UCLA and so forth, I'll ask you, or you can volunteer, for comparisons between Vanderbilt, ideas which he may have already begun at Vanderbilt, or introduced at Vanderbilt, that he later reintroduced at UCLA.

VERRALL: Well, I would say that probably his policies were very much the same, except on a magnified scale. In other words, the building we got built here was probably three times the capacity of the Vanderbilt building that we had left. Oh, maybe even more than three times, four times. But they figured the school here would be a school of 1,000 to 1,500 students, so we'd need that space.

GALM: Did you teach, more or less, the same courses that you taught before the war — Property courses?

VERRALL: That was the dean's policy. He wanted somebody who had had years of experience in teaching in the Property field, years of teaching in the Criminal Law field, years of teaching in the Procedural Law field, years of teaching in the Torts field, not quite as much, but that was the field he was going to take over himself.

GALM: I know that in the early years at UCLA he had weekly luncheon meetings with the faculty. Was that also a feature at Vanderbilt?

VERRALL: At Vanderbilt we had, oh, I would say, more daily luncheon meetings, with a faculty meeting about every two or three or four weeks. At luncheon we'd have our faculty meetings. At UCLA we also had the daily luncheons for years and years. For the first ten years of the school a group of the faculty, and indeed practically all of the faculty, would go out to lunch. No, it was about the same.

GALM: Was there any interaction with other departments or schools at Vanderbilt?

VERRALL: Really, the answer should be no. We knew many of the other department heads and the faculty, and we maintained social contacts. But

from the point of view of university functioning, no, Vanderbilt was run in a little different way, I would say each department almost separate from the other.

GALM: Did Dean Coffman have an assistant dean at Vanderbilt?

VERRALL: Well, a member of the faculty would assist on admissions. I was the goat most of the time. The school wasn't big enough to require a full-time assistant dean.

GALM: Do you recall what your first impressions were of Dean Coffman?

VERRALL: Well, I noticed the first thing he did was to fill up his pipe, and light it without saying very much, and then smoke. So I assumed he was doing that for the purpose of attracting attention to himself. He was a person who wanted to be front and center all the time, ever since I knew him.

GALM: Had you known him before he came to Vanderbilt?

VERRALL: No, I only knew him over the telephone before he came to Vanderbilt. And that was during the six months before I returned, before I left the government service and came back into teaching.

GALM: Did you socialize much with him at Vanderbilt? I mean, separate from the entire law faculty.

VERRALL: Yes. [Rollin M.] Perkins and Coffman and myself, we got together, oh, probably once a week.

GALM: Dean Coffman then was appointed here at UCLA in 1949.

VERRALL: Yes.

GALM: Before he left had he discussed with you the possibility of your coming?

VERRALL: Oh yes.

GALM: Had he discussed it at all before he accepted the deanship?

VERRALL: Yes. He had talked to both Rollin Perkins and myself. Well, I don't know just when it was, at one of our social meetings. We always talked a little bit of business as we socialized.

GALM: When did you say yes?

VERRALL: I told him that I'd like to come to California the very first time he broached the subject. So he knew it was yes all the way from my point of view. The only question would be what the university would say. They have certain procedures and they have certain likes and dislikes, like all people do. So I didn't say yes to UCLA until I got a formal invitation.

GALM: Had you ever been to the West Coast by that time?

VERRALL: Oh yes. In the middle thirties, during the Depression, I had driven out to Washington and then down from Washington to Los Angeles, all down the coast. So I'd been familiar with the California weather, California people.

GALM: Was that a family trip that you made?

VERRALL: No, just myself and my wife. We wanted to see what the West was like. We both liked it.

GALM: What did you see as being the advantages for you in the move? You were a full professor at Vanderbilt.

VERRALL: Well, the advantages would be great because the University of California never did things in a little way. So we figured from the very beginning they were going to build a good-sized law school that would have a national reputation. And, you see, Boalt Hall [University of California, Berkeley] was known throughout the whole of the United States as one of the leading law schools of the nation. And we figured that UCLA would be the same, become one of the leaders. No, we were very happy, both Perkins and myself.

GALM: When you arrived, what was the state of affairs as far as the law school was concerned?

VERRALL: They had an old military barracks that they had put some partitions in for [counts] one, two, three, four about six rooms in it. Perkins took one; I took the one next to it. Dean [Roscoe] Pound across the hall from Perkins, and Brainerd Currie across the hall from where I was. The other two little rooms were the dean's office, the office of the dean, and the secretarial office.

We were in that barracks, and then they had another barracks they were building into a law school library. The librarian, Tom [Thomas S.]