



Boyd Briefs: September 26, 2013

## From Dean Dan

Next week at Boyd we are honored to welcome a judicial delegation from Kazakhstan as part of the Open World Rule of Law program created by Congress in 1999. Open World is directed here in Las Vegas by Nevada's Senior U.S. District Judge, Lloyd D. George, in partnership with the Las Vegas Rotary Club. Open World supports exchanges with Eurasia and other countries, and operates programs in Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Egypt, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. Judge George has hosted 12 delegations in Las Vegas since 2001, and was recognized for this extraordinary work in April in Washington at the U.S. Capitol by Senator Harry Reid, and the Librarian of Congress James Billington, chair of the Open World Board of Trustees. Next week the Kazakhstan delegation will be in Las Vegas from September 28 to October 5, and will be coming to the law school on October 2. We are proud to partner with Judge George and the Rotary Club to help bring perspectives from around the world to our students and faculty in a legal profession that is becoming more and more international.

Dan

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## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT: Jeff Stempel

Jeff Stempel is an esteemed scholar whose national reputation in three distinct fields brings attention and prominence to the law school. It is not hyperbole to say that his numerous books, articles, and treatises in the field of insurance law frame how law students learn the subject, how practitioners practice it, and how scholars study it. Yet there is more. Professor Stempel is also a national authority in the field of lawyering and professional responsibility. And his impressive work in the field of civil procedure is renowned for being as careful and supported as it is courageous and provocative.

Among Professor Stempel's recent scholarship is *Stoney Road Out of Eden: The Struggle to Recover Insurance for Armenian Genocide Deaths and Its Implications for the Future of State Authority, Contracts Rights, and Human Rights*. This is a book-length article that Stempel co-authored with Sarig Armenian and David McClure. David McClure is an Assistant Professor and Head of Research and Curriculum Services at the William S. Boyd School of Law.

The article is about contemporary insurance litigation that arose out of the Armenian Genocide. Around the turn of the 20th century, Armenians

sought the financial security of life insurance to provide for their families under the precarious and treacherous conditions they faced in the Ottoman Empire. Tragically validating their worst fears, an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were slaughtered and another million sought refuge elsewhere or were deported.

The life insurance companies that issued the policies to the Armenians were not Turkish, but rather were American, British, German, and from other nations that officially opposed the Genocide. Yet for a number of reasons, the insurance benefits were not immediately paid, and for many decades the whole matter was largely forgotten. The issue regarding the unpaid insurance benefits resurfaced late in the 20th century, spurring legislative efforts and litigation to vindicate the rights of the victims. The article chronicles how some of the descendants of the victims eventually achieved some belated compensation. Yet the article also explains how one insurer stubbornly (and successfully, even if dubiously) refused to pay. The episodes documented in the article fuel a larger narrative about the powerful corrective force that litigation can bring to bear. Yet these episodes also reveal the degree to which overly brittle legal concepts and undue judicial deference to outside political forces can needlessly impede the pursuit of justice.



## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Nicole Scott

"Life's a dance you learn as you go." John Michael Montgomery sang these words, but Boyd third-year student Nicole Scott has lived them, though with a twist: it is teaching dance that has long made Nicole's life go.

Throughout her four years as an undergraduate at the University of Nevada, Reno, Nicole was a member of the UNR dance team. She later earned her MBA from Hawaii Pacific University, holding down a spot on its competitive dance team during her studies there. But being a dancer herself was just the beginning of Nicole's calling.

You see, it is channeling her passion to others that drives her ongoing efforts as a dance instructor and a coach. Following her MBA studies, Nicole returned home to Reno to become the coach for the University of Nevada, Reno Dance Team. During her tenure, the UNR dance team achieved a ranking of third in the nation. Her coaching has had range, from the cheerleading team at North Valleys High School in Reno to the dance team for the Reno Bighorns of the NBA Development League.

At Boyd, Nicole has found a zeal – and acumen – for the law that rivals her vocation as a teacher of dance. This year, she serves as the Editor-in-Chief of the Nevada Law Journal. With her membership on the law school's moot court board, the Society of Advocates, and her involvement in various other law school activities, her schedule is packed tight.

Though she lives in Las Vegas during the week, she still teaches and choreographs dance at Western Nevada Performing Arts Center in Carson City on weekends (her senior dance team won nationals this summer with one of her routines). Law school notwithstanding, life... and thus teaching dance... goes on for Nicole.

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## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: James Finlayson '08

Lieutenant Colonel James Finlayson '08 serves as an Action Officer on the Joint Staff at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. James works policy issues at the nexus between Titles 10, 22, and 50, Defense, State, and Intelligence Community. He advises the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the full spectrum of classified military information and national intelligence sharing to support the warfighting Combatant Commands. His expertise is at the crossroads of intelligence planning, military operations, and how legal policy influences decision making; consequently, the National Security staff frequently incorporates his recommendations.

The critical thinking and legal writing skills gained while a student at Boyd exponentially augmented James' operational experience from five deployments "to the sandbox." James leverages his law degree daily to analyze, draft and advocate various intelligence policies. The education acquired by law students to identify issues, cite relevant facts, and communicate succinctly makes them valuable additions to any military or government staff.

James credits the unwavering support of Associate Dean Frank Durand and Professor Rob Correales for his success as a part-time evening student at Boyd, and in passing the Nevada Bar, all while continuing to serve as an active duty Air Force officer. Prior to arriving at the Pentagon, he worked various analytical and leadership duties that focused on the Middle East, Latin America, and the Pacific. James continues with martial arts training, and he and his wife Kristen will celebrate their second wedding anniversary in October. James wishes the Class of 2008 a wonderful reunion on October 4 and 5; and, although unable to attend, sends his best wishes.