

# "What Is The Barrister's Bookshoppe?"

By Mary Ann Reifenstein

The Law Wives Students' Bookstore, d/b/a Barristers Bookshoppe, has a history worth sharing with the law community at Vermont Law School. Many people are unaware of the tenacious dedication which its founders persevered during its early stages of infancy.

The idea of a student-run, non-profit bookstore originated in the minds of certain members of the Class of '76 and interested spouses. In August of 1974, a group of about fifteen enterprising people met to discuss setting up a bookstore run by law wives with any profits made to be channeled back to the students in whatever form was deemed feasible at the appropriate time. This idea was received positively since the only other option in town was the Royalton Co-op run by Dr. Doria (the former Dean). Obviously, any profits were not being received by the students. This co-op had also proven to be unreliable in that books did not always arrive on time and hours for purchasing texts were scarce and not mutual with students' schedules.

Since easy access to students was a key factor with regard to location of our bookstore, we were limited to choice of sites. Two options were open: the old train depot next to the Randolph Bank (our first choice) and the upstairs of St. Matthew's Church across from VLS. The first option fell through and we elected to rent the church premises.

Funding was the next hurdle. The Class of '77 was approached and asked if they would "donate" from \$1 to \$5 each with the offer to either deduct the donation on income tax returns or to use this amount as credit toward purchase of books in a subsequent quarter. Most people chose the latter. Incorporation took place. A Board of Directors and Officers were chosen. A Registered Agent was hired and by-laws were drawn up.

Credit had to be established with publishing companies. Initially we encountered some difficulty since the companies were affiliating Royalton College with Vermont Law School, but after the companies received the approval and guarantee of financial support (should the need arise) from VLS itself, and particularly the new Dean, credit was finally established.

Our immediate goal in 1974-75 was to supply students with textbooks, hornbooks, review books, and paper supplies; to this end we were successful. At its grand opening in September 1974 the store was manned by law wife/law student volunteers. Flexible weekend hours, as well as daily hours, were also established in an attempt to accommodate students' needs. Customers seemed generally satisfied and most students empathized with our infancy and endured minor inconveniences.

However, there were several problems. In October of 1974, following a pessimistic financial report, it was decided to change the hours of operation, limiting them from 10:00 until 2:00 (instead of 8:30 til 4:30), but still to remain open every day. This could then assure us of breaking even at the end of the school year. No one involved wanted to abandon this endeavor and the move was in the best interest of the organization. Heat became another concern. The furnace for the Church was not working and space heaters provided the only warmth during November-January. Consequently, the store re-located in February of 1975 in the SBA room of the school. In mid-March, 1975, we moved back when weather conditions permitted.

Now to sidetrack a moment and still maintain chronology. Another top gripe of law students and

friends at this time was the lack of social life. In an attempt to alleviate this problem, the law wives sponsored several events, including a Vermont State Bar Dinner in October, 1974 (prior to accreditation), a Halloween Beer Party (first social get-together and well attended), and several bake sales (also received positively by hungry students) to raise money. A second group of law wives formed the Activities Association to manage these affairs, separate and apart from the Bookstore.

Gradual expansion of services and supplies has ensued. One particular service instituted in April of 1975 was a dry cleaning service. Malnati Cleaners of Barre, Vermont, picks up and delivers on Mondays and Thursdays at the store. The Bookstore pre-pays for items and the customer reimburses when he or she picks up clothes. Other services and supplies are anticipated, pending finances. Some items in planning are T-shirts, mugs, decals & sporting goods. Consignment items such as pottery, jewelry, and other artwork are always welcome. If anyone is interested, contact the Registered Agent in our store, Janice Dorval, or leave suggestions in the mailbox of Patrick Browne (Class of '78). This now brings us to our move to permanent headquarters. After receiving approval to move into the store attached to the Student Activities Center, members went to work cleaning and renovating the interior this past summer. Advantages of a ground-floor location next to the law school in an authentic store promised a most positive situation, and members were of the general opinion that the law student clientele would appreciate the new store likewise. In July 1975 we received our official non-profit status and decided on a new name: Barristers Bookshoppe. The Fall of 1975 brought with it recruitment of new members from the Class of 1978. It was stressed that if law students wished to maintain a non-profit, student-run bookstore we needed support and continuity of membership from incoming classes.

Now to bring you up to date on the latest happenings in the bookstore.

The Bookstore has been forced to vacate its permanent location due to heating problems again; consequently, we have adopted a temporary headquarters. We are now in the Student Activities Center in Barbara McKeon's old office. We also now carry magazines and will be getting mugs in. When funds permit, other items will be stocked. If you have any suggestions to offer regarding items you would like to see us carry, feel free to share your ideas. They are quite welcome.

That concludes our brief chronicle. All we can do now is express our thanks for your past indulgence and patronage and ask for your continued support in the future. □

## SUPPORT YOUR STUDENT-RUN BOOKSTORE!

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