

ALUMNUS CARY JONES GIVES BACK AFTER SUCCESSFUL CAREER IN REAL ESTATE LAW

BY HEATHER MAY

Alumni Spotlight

CARY JONES

CLASS OF 1976

Cary Jones wants to be prompted every year to give to the S.J. Quinney College of Law.

In 1995, he created a scholarship to honor his late wife, Susan Cooper Jones, who died of cancer in the early 1990s. But instead of donating once for an endowed scholarship, he gives \$2,500 each year to a student in need.

“I wanted it to be something where we thought about Susan every year,” he

to change his plans. (Canada wouldn’t extradite draft dodgers to the United States so then California-governor Ronald Reagan rescinded scholarship and tuition waivers for Canadians, and Canada followed suit.)

It was suggested that Jones go to law school and he enrolled, just weeks before classes were to start. He graduated in 1976 and has since built a successful career as a real estate transactional lawyer, working for most of his career at Snell & Wilmer, where



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said of his and Susan’s two daughters, who were preschool age at the time, and Susan’s parents, Floyd and Mary Anne Cooper. The daughters, Megan and Molly, are now in their 30s, and they receive a copy of the check he sends every year. “I’ve really tried to instill in my kids the need to give.”

Jones donates to the U in Susan’s name because the law school has had a profound effect on his life. “I love the law school. I had the best time. I was one of those people who sort of rued the day when I finally graduated,” he says. “The rigor of it was great. The faculty was terrific. There was a real camaraderie among people in my class.”

It’s a fluke that Jones even became a lawyer. He was supposed to go to the University of Toronto for a master’s in history on a scholarship, but political fallout from the Vietnam War forced him

he has been the lead counsel on projects including the development of national health care facilities, ski resorts, millions of square feet of manufacturing and office space, and a 175-mile commuter rail line. As a partner at Snell & Wilmer, he moved to California to open the firm’s Los Angeles office in 2009.

He still looks back fondly on his time at law school, especially working on Law Review. He tells the story of the time he and his friends cleared the center of a room of carrels, created a ball out of tape and played baseball with a whiffle ball bat. Professor E. Wayne Thode caught them—and then asked to play. Jones remains close with the family of late professor John Flynn. Another professor that stands out is Ed Firmage, who taught constitutional law during the Watergate hearings. “He was really a great teacher. He had all sorts of interesting ways

to approach Watergate.” Jones became an adjunct professor in 2000, teaching how to draft real estate documents. He was voted the law school’s Alumnus of the Year in 2015.

When it came time to build the new law school, Jones and his wife, Kris Hopfenbeck, were lead donors, recognizing the need for an updated space to attract top students. He had urged then-Dean Hiram E. Chodosh to “up our game. To the credit of the succeeding dean [Robert Adler] they did a terrific job. The building is just wonderful.”

But if they’re like Jones, today’s students will look back on what happens inside the beautiful new building. “It taught you to think critically. It gave you the capability to analyze problems in a unique way. You understand the need for hard work,” Jones says of law school.

And that’s why he urges others to give, too: “It takes more than just a small village. It takes effort from everybody. The Legislature is not going to support higher education in ways they used to. The only way the law school can thrive is if people give money.”

Heather May is a Salt Lake City-based freelance writer.