

# ON TOP OF THE WORLD

*Boston College Law School's 1986  
Philip C. Jessup International Moot  
Court team became the best of all*



ALTER KELLY, MICHAEL KENNEY, AND MARTIN MICHAELSON  
WON the National Moot Court Competition in 1968.

Lloyd Osborn, Joan Lukey Stevenson, and Michael  
Matthchen did the same in 1974. But until 1986, no Boston College  
Law School advocacy team had won the Jessup International Moot  
Court Competition.

To reach that point, the 1986 team  
outlasted more than 1,000 students rep-  
resenting 125 other American law schools.  
The team then bested the University of  
Singapore in the finals to gain the Jessup  
Cup.

"Because we had worked so hard on  
our brief and our presentation, I knew  
that we were doing the best work we  
could do. But I didn't know that we were  
the best in the competition," recalls  
Katherine Ashdown '86, one of four  
members of the winning international  
moot court team. Ashdown also was  
named Best Oralist in the final round of  
the competition.

Ashdown's teammates were Florence  
Herard, Elisa Liang, and Scott Lopez, all  
third-year law students at the time. They  
came together as near strangers and since  
have gone their separate ways, but for the  
duration of the competition, they were a  
unified team.

Herard, Liang, and Lopez had been  
assigned to the same first-year section  
when they began law school in 1983 but  
were not well acquainted. Ashdown had  
transferred to Boston College Law School  
as a second-year student and was unfamil-  
iar to any of the others. They were brought  
together by the prior year's Jessup team  
based on interviews and their second-year  
performance in the Law School's internal

Grimes Moot Court Competition. And  
for several months, they devoted a good  
portion of their lives to mastering the law  
involved in an art treasures case pitting the  
mythical Republic of Misra, a poor but  
culturally rich nation with a history of  
subordination, against the wealthy King-  
dom of Avon, a former colonial power.

## INDIVIDUAL AGENDAS

**Ashdown:** "I entered the competition  
for the challenge. I liked the advocacy part  
of law; that drew me to law school. I  
hadn't thought about international law  
before."

**Herard:** "I was interested in interna-  
tional law; I did a joint degree program  
with Boston College Law School and the  
Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.  
The Jessup competition was a way to  
become more involved with international  
law."

**Liang:** "I was interested in becoming a  
litigator, and the competitions provide  
tremendous training for practice. There's  
no substitute for doing; that's how you  
learn to think on your feet. I was more  
interested in the advocacy aspects of the  
competition than in the substantive law. I

had a general interest in international law — I had grown up overseas — but I didn't become involved because I planned to work in international law."

Lopez: "My kindergarten teacher probably would swear to the fact that I wanted to be a lawyer. I also wanted to be a trial lawyer; one of the reasons I went to Boston College Law School was its excellent

worked well with each other. It was easier [not knowing each other well] because you can be more objective. You don't have a two-year-old friendship and worry about hurting someone's feelings. We were tough on each other — not in a mean way, but we drilled each other. We were very direct with each other."

Lopez: "As a team, we really melded

foundation of the entire process, and I think the reason Boston College Law School does so well in the external competitions is the emphasis on the brief."

Herard: "We had a sense that we were all right because we had several practice moot courts, and people said we were doing well. But I don't believe we thought we were going to win anything until the final round."

Ashdown: "Our region was tough; it had a lot of very fine law schools, and we did extremely well in the region. I was always impressed by my teammates' performances; they were great. But sometimes I found myself regretting participating because it went on for seven months — we kept winning! By the third year of law school you're supposed to be coasting, but we were working so hard!"



*The international champions as they appeared in 1986: Florence Herard, Elisa Liang (both front row); Katherine Ashdown (back row, center), Scott Lopez (back row, second from right). They were joined by former Dean Daniel R. Coquillette (back row, left); Jessup team faculty advisor Professor Emeritus Francis J. Nicholson, S.J.; and Professor Peter A. Donovan (back row, right)*

reputation for turning out litigators. The moot court competition was one way of getting some 'real life' experience. Everything that goes into being a lawyer goes into moot court. At the time, my experience in international law was nonexistent. But this was an opportunity to represent the school, and I enjoyed the international law course I took during my third year."

#### BECOMING A TEAM

Herard: "I got to know three other people fairly well. They were all very interesting people in their own ways, and I enjoyed knowing them. We were able to share our strengths, and we needed each other. It was all one effort."

Ashdown: "We liked each other and

together. We were like a family — we nagged each other, we had our arguments."

#### WORKING TOWARD A WIN

Liang: "We had to keep our noses to the grindstone to the bitter end. We just took it step by step and didn't look too far ahead."

Lopez: "It was a lot of work because international law is so elastic that you can probably find a case to support every argument. We went back and forth, writing responses to each other's arguments. Through that process, we successfully identified every issue that the case presented. The most important aspect of the moot court competition is having a very good brief. The Grimes competition in the second year of law school is really the

#### THE REWARDS OF SUCCESS

Herard: "For me, it was the marriage of two things that interested me — international law and law school. Competing against international teams was interesting because they approached the case in entirely different ways. I enjoyed meeting all of these people and kept in contact with some of them afterward. The confidence you gain in winning the competition also remains; it really was a big achievement."

Liang: "If you get as far in the competition as we did, it's a wonderful experience; we met teams from all over the world. The writing aspect of the competition also is helpful in terms of practical experience."

Ashdown: "Anytime you win something, especially after putting in a lot of work, there's a fantastic feeling. That and the comradeship were best. Winning something like that also is very positive in terms of your self-esteem."

Lopez: "It gave me a tremendous amount of confidence that I had the skills to make a persuasive argument. When I left law school, I went to work for Ron Pina (then District Attorney for Bristol County, Massachusetts), and I was in

court immediately. Not that I wasn't nervous, but there was a certain confidence underlying what I was doing, and I attribute much of that to the Grimes and Jessup competitions. They were like a jump start on real life."

#### POSTSCRIPT: THE TEAM MEMBERS TODAY

Today, only Ashdown and Herard remain in touch with each other, though all of the team members express interest in the others' whereabouts. And more than seven years after winning the international moot court competition, Ashdown still has a notebook attesting to the team's extensive preparation. She also says she is using the skills of negotiation, presentation, and persuasion she developed through the competition in her work as a corporate finance attorney with U.S. Leasing International, the Transportation and Facilities Finance Division of Ford Financial Services. Based in San Francisco, California, Ashdown is involved with leveraged leasing of cogeneration facilities and waste energy projects.

"The work is fascinating and involves a lot of engineering and environmental issues," she says.

Herard is the only member of the 1986 team with a career in international law. After several years in the New York offices of Burlingham, Underwood & Lord and of her current employer, Watson, Farley & Williams, she also works internationally now. Herard is in London, where she is engaged in asset financing, primarily of ships.

Liang directly contrasts her current work with the moot court competition by noting, "I've gone from theoretical arguments about art law to prosecuting someone who chopped up his victims with a hacksaw." An Assistant United States Attorney in Brooklyn, New York, for the past three years, she says, "I'm in court constantly and consider the oral advocacy competitions to have been very good training."

Liang began life after law school at a law firm before becoming a prosecutor; Lopez took precisely the opposite route. Lopez spent two years as an Assistant District Attorney; another three with Glaser, Titlebaum & Connors, P.C., a

small, suburban law firm in Massachusetts; and the last two as an associate with the Boston law firm of Segal and Feinberg. There his work includes civil and criminal trials pertaining to product liability cases, wrongful death suits, and white collar crime. Lopez also has resumed involvement with the oral advocacy competi-

tions, judging students currently participating in the moot court and mock trial programs.

"I want to give something back to the school," Lopez says. "The competition was a highlight of my law school career; I was happy we won for Boston College Law School." ■



*Scott Lopez, now an associate with the Boston law firm of Segal & Feinberg*



*Elisa Liang, today an Assistant United States Attorney in Brooklyn, New York*



*Katherine Ashdown in her San Francisco, California, office at U.S. Leasing International*