

An interview with Mr. Peter A. Allard, QC
January 18, 2015

1. Please tell me your name and connection to UBC (faculty, degree and grad year)?

Answer: I graduated with a BA in English (literature) and History (medieval and international) in 1968, followed with an LLB in 1971.

2. Tell me what you remember about your time at UBC?

Answer: Well, like at most universities, the experience was a little overwhelming - extremely busy attending classes, meeting new students and professors, and studying; stressful in preparing for and writing exams with a “sink or swim” reality. At the same time it was exciting and exhilarating to be learning, with all kinds of diverse courses and studies, from some dynamic and some not so dynamic professors. Marks were not as easy to come by then as I remember squeaking by with a medieval history course at 50 per cent. The highest mark I ever got was from Dean George Curtis at 83 per cent. Few students got marks in the 80’s and I assumed the mark was one of pity, or recognition that I might be a hidden genius.

3. How did your experience as a student at UBC Law shape your life?

Answer: I think it gave me the base for learning to think analytically and critically, and a greater awareness of where to go and how to solve problems by using common sense and logic. It was really a steady process that was evolutionary as the years passed.

4. Tell me about what you learned about values and ethics as a member of the legal profession?

Answer: You can’t separate that question out without viewing your formative years.

I had a mother who came from Scottish/English homesteaders in Alberta, whose families were built around hard work, self reliance, the community of the Church, collaboration, and kindness to those who had less. They would share their table with many from the Depression who would show up hungry and alone.

My father was second generation Alberta French Canadian and, partially as a result of an early bankruptcy in his family and a very supportive mother, he was motivated and driven to excel at absolutely everything he did. He had an amazing bedside manner as Chief of Surgery at The Edmonton General. He would only operate if he had to, and would meet with his patients each morning and explain and draw diagrams of what he was going to do, and would get in and out quickly sometimes doing 3-4 operations a day. In business he was legendary, but that is covered in a book excerpt that is on the Allard Hall webpage on the faculty website. He would often lecture us that a job does not have a rigid

definition. In a business you had to give full service no matter what the task, and to pitch in to complete it.

My twin brother and I were in Cubs and Scouts for 10 years and slowly worked our way to the top. For those who know anything about Scout Law, a scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful and Thrifty.

So between the strengths of my father and mother and organizations like The Boy Scouts and YMCA, the foundation of honesty, integrity and ethics was already set. When I was called to the BC Bar and took the inspirational oath in September 1972, it covered the code of conduct and values that already were instilled in me.

These values and ethics carried into all my dealings with my clients, colleagues, opposing counsel and others, including clients who sometimes wanted me to do things I could not carry out. In the practice of law, one's values, ethics and sense of fairness are constantly tested, and there's no doubt that my membership in the legal profession reinforced the values and ethics that I entered with.

The vast majority of B.C. lawyers I dealt with were supportive, fair minded and collaborative, with a high ethical standard.

5. You have devoted a significant amount of time to philanthropy through the Highbury Foundation and other charitable causes that you have championed. Why do you feel that giving back to the community is so important?

Answer: I touched on that in the previous answer, but as time evolved my mother in her later years would spend many hours of her time doing volunteer work in the community, for the Aquarium, museum and public libraries. My father founded The Allard Foundation, which has slowly and steadily grown and advanced its involvement in giving to worthy charities which are fully accountable in the fields of education, medicine, self-help, and a whole host of other deserving causes to improve our society and make a better life. Giving does not involve a lot of my time but rather relies on competent professionals to investigate, discuss and pay out the money, and this is part and parcel of my family tradition over the past fifty years.

Education is a cornerstone to democracy. My father founded a private school in Edmonton (Tempo) in the 1960's, which is still going strong, my twin brother was active in supporting Brentwood College on Vancouver Island in building a house for 57 girls away from home, my younger brother was pivotal in tying up the land and founding Mulgrave School in West Vancouver, which presently has 800 students and is one of the top schools in BC, and my nephew Rob King was active in the development of St. John's School's new building and has also been assisting West Point Grey Academy in Vancouver.

Ironically, my twin and I went to public school and this donation is for a public university, but the goals of excellence in education and striving for democratic principles applies equally to the public system, and maybe more so with lessening government funding.

6. You are a great friend to UBC and UBC Law. As a result of your generosity and leadership with your gift of \$11.86 million in 2011, the faculty was able to build this outstanding Allard Hall, launch the UBC Law history project and the Allard Prize for International Integrity. Why did you decide to make such a significant investment in UBC Law?

Answer: I think it was a result of being in the right place at the right time---kind of serendipitous. Bob Lee, who was the visionary behind the UBC Properties Trust, and is a former Chancellor of UBC, and a long term friend of my family, advised me that UBC was completing a new law building and needed \$10 million dollars to help pay for it. The legal profession has more impact on our society than any other, and I wanted to help support the education of, and help inspire, students and others whose responsibility it will be to ensure that the lifeblood of ethics and justice for all are carried forward, and the past not forgotten.

7. Your new \$30 million commitment to UBC Law is a milestone for the Faculty and the university – it is a transformational gift. What drew you to this new level of commitment in securing the law school's future?

Answer: I wanted to make it clear with my initial donation that just giving money for bricks and mortar was not my preference, and that a university with an idea, vision and direction was much more interesting to me as a driving force or soul for the University. The Dean allowed me the opportunity to fund the Allard Prize for International Integrity as part of my donation so that students could learn about and be inspired by those from around the world who have selflessly faced many obstacles and dangers to bring the Rule of Law to, and improve lives in, their respective countries.

To my absolute delight, the Dean, the faculty and the students transformed the vision into a reality way past my imagination, so I saw that the Law School had very much dedicated its belief and energies in the vision, so I then began to dig deeper into my piggy bank for the higher commitment.

8. How do you hope your gift will benefit UBC Law and the broader community in BC, nationally and globally?

Answer: My hope is that the Law School continues to steadily build on its efforts to date to engage the world globally and become an ever increasing beacon for hope and a catalyst for change. The potential is huge for working globally with other law schools, journalists, artists and other groups to build a community focused on effecting positive change.

9. How do you hope your gift will benefit students, now and in the future?

Answer: I hope my gift will help ensure that the most promising students are able to access legal education at one of the best law schools in the world. But, equally importantly, I hope that all students will be inspired to adopt the values my gift aims to support: courage, leadership, transparency, accountability and the Rule of Law, in fighting corruption and promoting human rights. There is a multitude of challenges that face us and can be dealt with steadily on all levels locally, provincially, federally and globally, from improving and actively being part of freedom of speech, improving processes to get access to justice, exposing inequities and corruption at every level, bringing focus on self-policing groups, being fully transparent, responsive and engaged, and demanding full accountability and value for the citizens for everything we have and need to do.

10. Through your vision and leadership, UBC Law established the Allard Prize for International Integrity. What inspired you to focus on supporting human rights and combating corruption through promoting transparency, accountability and the rule of law?

Answer: We all witness on a daily basis horrendous abuses of power, discrimination and corruption, all over the world including in Canada. Many of these acts are committed or permitted by those who can pay the most for influence and legal gamesmanship.

One person can only take on so many battles and, for me, it's critical that I try to help rebalance the system by bringing attention to corruption and human rights abuses, and encouraging bright, young, vital women and men to take on responsibility for the challenges and opportunities that face us.

11. With your new gift, UBC Law is launching a campaign to raise an additional \$10 million to support its mission. Why do you hope that others will join you in supporting UBC Law?

Answer: UBC Law is on a path to being an important leader and beacon of hope in maintaining and improving basic human rights and long term stability in Canada and around the world. I hope that UBC Law alumni, who are coming through the legal profession and are stabilizing their financial position, and others in the broader legal and UBC communities and beyond, will recognize that giving to the law faculty and helping it to highlight and address some of the key corruption and human rights issues of the day is a powerful way to sustain the legacy and benefits we all have obtained from our education, and contribute to the overall betterment and well-being of those who follow us.

12. What do you hope the Peter A. Allard School of Law will be known for in 10 or 20 years?

Answer: Being a landmark for honesty, ethics and integrity in restoring and championing all of the six criteria of the Allard Prize: courage, leadership, anti-corruption, transparency, accountability and the Rule of Law.

13. When students read your name on the building, what is the single thing you would like them to know about you?

Answer: I want them to know that my dreams are supported by three generations of hard work in slowly and steadily creating wealth, and by hundreds if not thousands of working men and women and professionals who have assisted along the way, and that UBC Law is being entrusted with these endowments to steward in a prudent manner so they will steadily grow and, in perpetuity, encourage values that permit us to move forward positively, regardless of the clutter and drama that daily face us.

14. How does it feel to walk through this building and know it wouldn't be here without you?

Answer: I feel proud and honoured to have played a part in the development of the building, but I have lived long enough to know that this law school is here because of a belief in a better life by thousands of people who have proceeded me or worked alongside me, including the University and law faculty leadership, faculty members, students, alumni and others. And, at the end of the day, it's just a building. What will really matter is what current and future generations of faculty and students who work and learn in this building and its replacements over time do to improve their communities and the world at large.

15. What does it mean to you that UBC Law will now forever bear your name?

Answer: It is quite surreal for me at this moment in time but, on reflection, it is an honour and a privilege to leave something physically but, more importantly, spiritually.