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*LWI Lives* is a regular electronic publication of the “Faces of LWI” Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multi-dimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

### *The Perfect Duet: Singing and Writing*



By Karin Mika

Kristin Gerdy, Director of the Rex E. Lee Advocacy Program at Brigham Young University Law, considers herself blessed to not only have a career at her alma mater, but to have the opportunity to follow one of her passions: singing with the world famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

For more on Kristin, see page 2.

### *Service: Giving it all, all the Time*



By Sha-Shana Crichton

I was not in the least surprised when Michael Murray described teaching as “his calling.” He discovered his calling while studying Chinese and teaching English at Fudan University in Shanghai. His dedication, patience, kindness, and knowledge make him one of the most gifted teachers I have met. I am sure his colleagues and students wholeheartedly agree.

For more on Michael, see page 4.

### *Worthwhile Sacrifices*



By Danielle Weatherby

As the daughter of a Thai immigrant who sacrificed so much to provide better opportunities for his family, Nantiya Ruan has strived her entire life to make her father's sacrifices worthwhile. Nantiya's parents' journey in large part shaped her own. “Immigrant parents sacrifice so much for their kids that it becomes engrained in them to grasp every opportunity.”

For more on Nantiya, see page 6.

## Kristin Gerdy, continued

For those who do not know, being a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is an ultra-competitive process that is, in some ways, more stringent than the tenure process. Becoming a member requires a ten-month commitment that includes an audition, classes, tests, and a sixteen-week school prior to induction. To be a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir is truly an honor, and the people who are in the choir embody an extreme amount of talent, discipline, and commitment to the choir, which is composed of volunteers.

Kristin is originally from Boulder, Colorado and has been one of Legal Writing's quiet scholars and leaders for many years. She began her career wanting to be a political reporter and had the opportunity to cover the United States visit of Pope John Paul II, but after having the opportunity to teach Religion as an adjunct at BYU, Kristin knew she wanted to be in academia. She began working as a law librarian at BYU shortly after graduation from law school in 1995. During her second year (while teaching legal research), she was asked to develop a Legal Writing program for the school.

Kristin is not only a prolific scholar and presenter, but she has also spent a career being active in the leadership of our profession, and has especially been involved in endeavors that promote scholarship. She worked tirelessly as an editor for the ALWD Journal (now the Journal of Legal Communication and Rhetoric) for over a decade, and helped create and administer the first website for ALWD. Kristin is also devoted to both student service and community service, serving as adviser to numerous student organizations over the years, as well as organizations in her community. She was voted First Year Professor of the Year for the 2014-2015 School Year.



Kristin and her boyfriend Michael at Kolob Canyon in Zion National Park.

When Kristin has free time, she loves to read, spend time with the Pomeranians, watch movies, cook and bake, spend time outdoors, spend time with her family and her boyfriend, Michael, and his son.

Her "babies" are her Pomeranians. Her first baby, Cruise, (with the sable parti coat) passed away last year. She has two Poms now, Corvette and Porsche. Corvette is a tri-color with an amazing coat, and Porsche is black and tan.



On the left, Cruise and Corvette (in the foreground) and Porsche (on the right).

## Kristin Gerdy, conclusion

I asked Kristin a few questions about her career and her life as a member of the Mormon Tabernacle choir:

### **Tell me about your experience with the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and last year's tour.**

This is my seventh year singing in the Choir. We rehearse every Thursday night from 7-9:30 and every Sunday morning we arrive at 7 for the live broadcast at 9:30 and usually have a rehearsal until 11:30 or 12. We perform an average of 75 times each year. This past year we toured the Atlantic coast, including stops in D.C., New York (including two performances at Carnegie Hall! and singing the anthem at a Yankees game on July 3), Bethel Woods, NY (the home of Woodstock), and a 4th of July concert with the West Point Band at West Point, and Boston. This summer we are going on a three-week European tour to Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, France, and the Netherlands. We perform in both the historic tabernacle and the new Conference Center in Salt Lake City.

We sing about 400 pieces of music each year. At this point I probably have about 70% of it memorized. Right now our big challenge is putting together Mahler's 8th Symphony for a performance with the Utah Symphony on February 18 and 19. Then we will be doing some performances of Handel's complete Messiah in March in advance of our newest recording, which will be released in April.

### **In browsing through pictures on Facebook, I've noticed that sometimes your position on the risers changes. How often do you move spots and is there a type of hierarchy?**

We stand in the same place for about four months at a time. When we are in the Tabernacle, I am usually in the back row on the side (because I am one of the tallest second altos). When we are in the conference center I am in the back center right next to the men, so I am in prime camera position there, which makes up for being in a terrible camera spot the rest of the time :-). Our placement is determined completely by voice part and height and does rotate a bit within those that are of similar height as the seating chart is adjusted every few months.



The Choir performing at Carnegie Hall this summer. Kristin is in the back row next to the men's section.

### **How did you get started teaching Legal Writing?**

I started teaching in the law school as a law librarian and legal research teacher, but during my second year at the law school I was asked to help develop a legal writing program. Immediately I was hooked. I'd found "my tribe" and "my calling" in the academy. I taught for another year as a librarian teaching both the research and the writing portions of the curriculum. Then I took a two-year professional development leave from BYU to teach at Temple Law School and then returned to BYU as the director of the writing program.

### **Any advice you have for those who are just starting their careers teaching Legal Writing?**

I guess all I would say is don't be afraid to get involved. I remember the first time I volunteered--or more accurately was volunteered--for a committee. I didn't think I had been teaching long enough or had anything to contribute, but it turned out to be a great experience and allowed me to meet so many people and become involved in important issues. Those people have become my mentors, and more importantly, they have become lifelong friends that now nearly twenty years later are some of the most valuable personal and professional associations in my life.

Kristin Gerdy: [gerdyk@lawgate.byu.edu](mailto:gerdyk@lawgate.byu.edu)



## Michael Murray, continued

I remember the first time I spoke with Michael Murray. I was a new LRRW teacher seeking advice on an Appellate Advocacy problem. I had not met Michael, but I had read one of his many legal writing textbooks co-authored with Christy DeSanctis. I decided to give Michael a call but had no expectation that he would return the call. Later that day I was surprised when Michael not only returned my call but that he also spent close to an hour patiently answering my many questions. He sent more information by email and reminded me to call if I had additional questions. Of course I had many more questions and Michael answered each question with kind endurance and thorough explanation.

Michael is an experienced legal writing and doctrinal professor who has taught in several legal writing programs. He is a visiting professor in the Legal Practice Program at University of Michigan Law School, where he was one of three awardees of the university-wide Telluride Faculty Fellowship. Michael loves teaching at Michigan. The students are brilliant and eager to learn; his colleagues like teaching and are happy to be at the university; and he is learning a lot from the leadership of the interim director of the Legal Practice Program, Professor Ted Becker. Prior to teaching at University of Michigan School of Law, Michael was an associate professor at Valparaiso and Director of the 2010 London-Cambridge Program. He has also taught at the University of Illinois, at Saint Louis University, and in the summer program of University of San Diego in Florence, Italy.

Michael makes legal writing accessible, entertaining, and structured for his students. This is very different from his experience as a student at Columbia University School of Law. Topics such as common law and legislative process were taught in a doctrinal course called Legal Methods, but Columbia had very little formal legal writing instruction. The students were taught basic research and citation by associates in law who aspired to teach doctrinal courses and generally had no interest in a career teaching legal writing. Students learned advocacy by joining a moot court team and having their drafts reviewed by a second-year student who served as team instructor. According to Michael, "you could learn writing if you were really aggressive and really wanted to study." He definitely wanted to learn so he sought opportunities to practice. He joined the Jessup International Moot Court Team and later was selected to serve as program coordinator and advisor.

### The Murray family being themselves and having fun!



Always cognizant of the importance of legal writing to a lawyer's career, Michael wants his students to have a structured and intentional legal writing experience. Therefore he takes an organic approach to teaching legal writing. First, he outlined a book on the legal writing topics and strategies he wished he had learned in law school. This became the basis for the many books he would co-author with Christy DeSanctis.

Over the years, Michael has made it his mission to test and implement new legal reasoning and writing methods, to stay abreast of current trends, and to incorporate best practices from his work as judicial clerk to Judge John F. Nangle of the Eastern District of Missouri and associate at Bryan Cave LLP. He evaluates his students' writing style, rhetoric, analysis, gives prompt and constructive feedback, and uses innovative techniques such as narrative to teach advocacy. He is a pioneer on creating "practice ready" students. He incorporates real world events into his teaching.



## Michael Murray, conclusion



Michael and his wife, Denise, showing their team spirit at a basketball game.

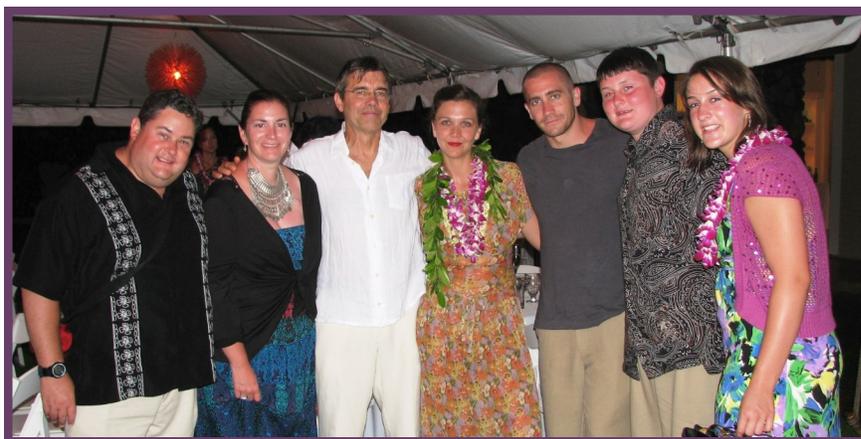
For example, his students worked on a right-of-publicity issue involving Kate Moss and Richard Prince for the fall 2015 open memorandum assignment. In December 2015, a photographer sued Richard Prince for copyright infringement, and Michael is making this lawsuit the subject of his spring 2016 writing projects.

Before interviewing Michael for this profile, I downloaded his CV. I counted 20 articles, 21 books (including revised editions), and stopped counting at 30 conference presentations and interviews. Still, Michael makes time for family and community service. He is a proud and involved husband and father of two teenagers. His wife is an attorney who served as his co-clerk at the Eastern District of Missouri, his daughter is a senior captain of her school's Varsity basketball team, and his son follows in Michael's footsteps with his

love for theater and drama. Michael and his family sing in the Chancel Choir and participate together in church activities. Michael also serves as an Elder and in several leadership positions at his church. In the rare moments when Michael is not teaching, writing, mentoring, volunteering for community service, or spending quality time with his family, he paints. His work as a painter inspired his interest in Art Law, another area where he has co-authored books and law review articles.

Michael thinks of LWI as a forward-thinking organization taking important steps in the struggle for equal status, pay, job security, and respect for legal writing professors. He hopes that the academy takes a cue from the practitioners, judges, and employers who think of legal writing as one of the most important subjects taught in law schools. Michael is optimistic that soon, law schools that fail to accord equal status to their legal writing professors will be in the minority. He is pleased that legal writing professors are taking leadership roles in their various institutions, and mentions his friend and Columbia alumna Suzanne Rowe, and the many others who have achieved decanal positions. He points out that it is no coincidence that schools with friendly legal writing policies also have strong and progressive leadership.

Michael encourages legal writing professors to dedicate time to scholarship, and welcomes the proliferation of legal writing conferences devoted not just to teaching but to the substantive and doctrinal topics of our discipline.



Michael and his family with the Gyllenhaal cousins in Hawaii. In the middle, Stephen, Maggie and Jake.

Michael Murray (visiting): [mdmurr@umich.edu](mailto:mdmurr@umich.edu)

## Nantiya Ruan, continued

No doubt Nantiya has both grasped and excelled at every opportunity that has come her way, constantly demanding more from herself and modeling excellence for her students and her own two children.

Nantiya's father's story is the epitome of the American dream. Nantiya's grandparents emigrated from China to Thailand with two children. Settling into their new country, they welcomed nine more children, including Nantiya's father, and started a family business selling cloth to tailors.

Believing education was the key to success, Nantiya's paternal grandparents worked hard so her father and his siblings would have educational opportunities. Many of their children attended private schools on scholarship, including Nantiya's father, who went on to graduate from medical school on a full scholarship.

At the age of 27, Nantiya's father came to the United States for his residency. That's when he met Nantiya's mother, a young nurse's assistant. They fell in love, married, and soon had Nantiya and her two brothers. Nantiya described her mother's childhood as difficult. Although she was not an immigrant, she grew up very poor, giving her a special appreciation for the importance of education.

Nantiya's earliest memories inspired her to become the first American college graduate in her family. Two of those memories were particularly formative. When Nantiya was just five or six, her Uncle Van came to visit from Thailand. He was a young aspiring chef. Nantiya grew fond of him immediately, as Uncle Van was her first introduction to anyone from her father's side of the family. One day during her uncle's visit, Nantiya noticed that he was missing. She remembers being shaken up by his absence and wondering where he was. Nantiya later learned that he had been arrested and brutalized by the police.

Around the same time, Nantiya's brother, Dan, got into a fight with some boys at his school. The fight occurred when the boys teased Dan about his Asian heritage, referring to him as the well-known Filipino character Tatoon from the television series Fantasy Island.

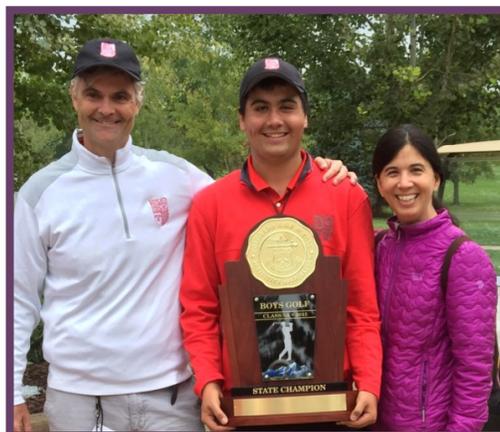
Both of these incidents occurred during the Post-Vietnam era, when discrimination against Asian men was at its peak. The repercussions of this time caused her Uncle to suffer a psychotic break and ultimately to return to Thailand. Uncle Van's story helped Nantiya understand, firsthand, the potential consequences of discrimination. "Both Dan and Uncle Van were targeted because of their pan-Asian appearance. These incidents taught me firsthand about the consequences of discrimination."

Those experiences led Nantiya to a career advocating for the "little guy." Her legal practice focused on employee-side litigation, fighting for low-wage workers. She described her mission as follows: "I want to protect minority rights because the tyranny of the majority is real."



**(Above) Nantiya and her daughter in Thailand.**

**(Below) Nantiya and her husband celebrating a golf "State Champion" trophy victory with their son.**



## Nantiya Ruan, conclusion

Nantiya graduated from Villanova University with a major in political science, a minor in philosophy, and a concentration in peace and justice studies. She continued her public interest work in a variety of contexts, from counseling homeless and pregnant teens to helping cocaine-addicted pregnant mothers. She soon realized that she would need better tools to redress the injustices she observed, so she decided to attend law school. Nantiya earned her joint M.S.W. and J.D. from the University of Denver, where she was awarded the prestigious Chancellor's Scholarship. She then clerked for the Southern District of New York and did plaintiff-side litigation at Outten & Golden LLP in New York City.

After 9-11, Nantiya, her husband, and their two children left New York City, relocating to the Bay Area where Nantiya joined Goldstein, Demchak, Baller, Borgen & Dardarian's civil rights practice. Long litigation hours eventually convinced Nantiya to seek a change, so she and her family moved back to Denver in 2004. Nantiya joined the faculty at the University of Denver to teach Lawyering Process. She thought, "I'll just try it for a year and see how it goes." Now she says, "Wow, here I am, 11 years later!"

Nantiya admits that it was difficult leaving full-time practice behind, but she found a perfect blend of her desire to teach and to stay relevant. First, she incorporated real client public interest work into her LR&W curriculum. In the spring semester, she develops a lawyer-client relationship between her class and a



Nantiya and her family at a wedding in Hong Kong.

public interest organization in Denver. Her students research a policy issue, brief the organization in writing, and argue the issue. (Nantiya, Sara Rankin, and other legal writers have authored a powerful book, *The New 1L – First-Year Lawyering with Clients*, that describes this approach.) Second, as Of Counsel at Outten & Golden LLP, Nantiya writes briefs and assists with litigation projects, so her practical skills stay fresh.

Nantiya's social work background makes her especially sensitive to her students' real-life problems. "What we see of our students is the tip of the iceberg – we see them only a few hours a week, but we don't see everything below the surface – the sacrifices they make to come to law school and their own personal stresses from their families." Nantiya's empathy for her students is palpable. She strikes the difficult balance between maintaining high standards while truly understanding their struggles.

In her spare time, Nantiya practices yoga and meditation to keep herself centered. She is an avid reader and enjoys knitting. Nantiya's 17-year old son just applied to 11 colleges, and her 13-year old daughter isn't far behind.

Three things most people don't know about Nantiya:

- She fakes being a good cook and pretends to like cooking when she actually dislikes it quite a bit.
- She has a really hard time lying, even small white lies. Her blushing face, sweating palms, and constitution don't allow for it.
- She and her husband met while he was studying to be a priest. Only the two of them know whether she was the actual cause of his leaving the seminary, but her mother-in-law is pretty sure it was Nantiya.

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## UPCOMING LEGAL WRITING EVENTS

**March 11-12, 2016**  
Sixth Annual Capital Area  
Legal Writing Conference  
University of Maryland  
Carey School of Law

**March 18-19, 2016**  
16th Annual Rocky  
Mountain Legal Writing  
Conference  
University of Arizona  
James E. Rogers College of Law

**July 10-13, 2016**  
2016 LWI Biennial  
Conference  
Portland Hilton and  
Executive Tower

## OTHER EVENTS OF INTEREST

**April 30-May 3, 2016**  
AALS Conference on  
Clinical Legal Education  
Baltimore, MD

Check out these websites for more  
information on what's happening!

<http://www.aals.org/aals-events/>  
<http://www.lwionline.org/>  
<http://www.alwd.org/>



Next month in *LWI Lives*, read about:



**Daniel Barnett**  
(Hawaii)



**Gabrielle Goodwin**  
(Indiana U.)



**David Ziff**  
(U. Washington)

**Selection and Presentation Process:** We believe it is important for the members of LWI to know our process for creating the newsletter. The Committee is organized into three teams, and each is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles for a particular issue of the newsletter. To ensure a diverse newsletter, the teams propose the names of the selected individuals to the Co-Chairs to ensure that there is a breadth of coverage for each issue. Additionally, the Co-Chairs are keeping a master list of all the profiles, so that we can ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

The Faces of the LWI Committee exists to allow us to learn about the interesting lives of our colleagues. For that to happen, we want and need a diverse selection of legal writing professors to profile. If you have someone in mind that we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to contact any of our members at the email addresses below. If you could include a note on why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting, it will help us in developing priorities.

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