Episode 51: The Characters You'll Meet in Law School

Alison Monahan: Welcome to the Law School Toolbox podcast. Today we're discussing some characters that you might meet in law school. Your Law School Toolbox hosts are Alison Monahan, that's me, and Lee Burgess. We're here to demystify the law school and early legal career experience so you'll be the best law student and lawyer you can be.

We're the co creators of the Law School Toolbox, the Bar Exam Toolbox, and the Catapult Career Conference. I also run the Girl's Guide to Law School. If you enjoy the show, please leave a review on iTunes, and if you have any questions, don't hesitate to reach out to us. You can always reach us via the contact form on LawSchoolToolbox.Com, and we'd love to hear from you. With that, let's get started.

Lee Burgess: Welcome back. Today, we've got an entertaining topic, the people you will meet in law school, along with some tips on law school etiquette. If you don't want to find yourself on this list in the future. Now, you might be wondering what we're talking about. Isn't law school just a bunch of students studying the law?

Ha! As if, right, Alison?

Alison Monahan: Right, well, for whatever reason, law school tends to attract, shall we say, a rather eccentric cast of characters, some of whom you're likely to run into, for better or worse. So, let's jump in. Who is the most notorious law school character out there?

Lee Burgess: Oh, it's gotta be the gunner.

Alison Monahan: Of course.

So what is a gunner? People talk a lot about the law school gunner. What are they talking about?

Lee Burgess: They're talking about the person or people, sometimes there's just a couple more than one, in your class who always answer questions or ask questions and talk. Non stop in class, like they always have something to say or add or they really love to sound like they're incredibly brilliant and so on point with everything.

Basically, they just talk, talk, talk, talk, talk.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, we had a guy, I remember my torts class that we, after like the second day, just started referring to as the hand. Because literally like every single time the

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professor asked for any input or multiple, many times when he didn't ask for anything, this guy's hands shot up. It was kind of like kind of Hitler esque in a way. So it was just like, woo, woo, woo, you know, and at first the professor's like, oh, great, like, you know, this person's engaged. Like I'll call on them. And then by like day three, they're just like. Okay, anyone else? Is there anyone else who would like to say something?

Does anyone else have a thought on this? Does anyone else have any?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I've heard another story about a crim law class where a gunner was constantly, you know, talking in class and the professor was using an example, they were discussing homicide, and he just happened to like, point to the student.

'Cause oftentimes Gunner sit in the front of the class if they have a choice of where they're gonna sit and said, you know, so what would happen if yada, yada, yada, and I. I killed so and so? And someone from the back of the room said it would be justifiable homicide.

Alison Monahan: Wow.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Brutal.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. The great thing about this guy too was that not only would he like be, you know, up in everyone, like up there all the time, like with his hand, but he would also like, he was really argumentative with a professor in a way that was just like, this guy is like a respected legal academic.

I think at the time he was actually dean of the law school. And this guy is like, 1L with like a week of law school experience is like, well, I mean, in my opinion, I'm just not sure that blah, blah, blah. And you're like, it's black letter law, dude. This is not like, what do you know about anything to shut up?

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And oftentimes with these, what the gunners will do is they will raise hypotheticals. This is one of my pet peeves in law school, is they will take something the professor said and then change it and say, well, what if this other crazy thing would happen? And then the professors oftentimes will roll their eyes and be like, we're not talking about that now.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Or like, you know, some of them will humor them for a while, but then it's like, well, what if this, what, what if then like there was nuclear fission instead of

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fusion? And at some point it just gets to the point where you're like, yeah, that's not gonna happen. Can we move on to something that's actually relevant here?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and students who are sitting in the class who are not the gunner oftentimes are confused about what they're supposed to write down when the professor gets in these dialogues with the gunner, and the reality is, don't write anything down, because what is happening in that dialogue has nothing to do with what will happen in your exam.

Alison Monahan: Right. I mean, you know, maybe your professor sums it up at the end. It's like, well, you know, there was one good point here. And then it basically tells you about the last 20 minutes of pointless conversation where actually like, you know, you might extract as useful. But yeah, I mean, it can be an incredibly frustrating thing to have to sit through because it's like everyone in the room is paying a lot to be there, and we get this person who just wants to like dominate the discussion in these totally pointless ways. It can be really frustrating. So, I mean, I guess my question is, is it a bad thing to be a gunner? Like, isn't it your right to keep talking? You're paying to be there.

Lee Burgess: Oh, it might be your right, but I don't know that that's really the point of being there.

I mean, of course, you should ask questions if you have them, but if you really find yourself monopilating class discussion, you may want to take a step back and ask yourself if some of these questions might be best answered in, say, office hours.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or in your study group.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, or in a study group where you can, you know, go to the professor and have the dialogue that you're craving without monopolizing class and kind of becoming a notorious figure.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, we're not saying that you should not talk in class, that's not the point of this. And, you know, if you're someone who raises your hand, you know, a couple of times a week and gets called on occasionally and offers something of value, or has a question and offer, you know, ask the question occasionally, that's great.

That's what you should be doing.

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Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: But if you're that person. Who is, you know, up there, like, raising your hand 95% of the class compared to the other rest of the class, you know, if you are combined asking more questions and, you know, making more statements on the record than everyone else in the class, I think it's fair to say you're a gunner.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think it probably is fair to say. And your law school classmates are not going to enjoy that, and it's not a really great way to kick off your reputation.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, particularly as a 1L, I mean, I think, you know, the reality, you're a first semester law student, just accept that you don't really know that much about what's going on.

Lee Burgess: Right, right.

Alison Monahan: And this is a time to be sort of absorbing the material, not trying to prove how smart you are to everyone. I mean, because part of the thing to keep in mind is most exams are graded anonymously in law school. So you might think that you're doing yourself this great service by like letting the professor remember you.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: But they're not going to necessarily remember you fondly.

Lee Burgess: No.

Alison Monahan: If they have a plan for how they would like to conduct class and you know for the information that they're trying to convey in this limited period of time and you're consistently disrupting that flow, I think that's a problem.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I think, you know, it's interesting because some people think, well, the gunner must really know what's going on and therefore is going to do amazing in the class, and it's often not the case. The gunner is not necessarily at the top of the class just because they talk a lot.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, you see this, you know, particularly when the results of the law review competition come out, suddenly, like, all those people that everybody was like, wow, they must really be on this.

They're like, oh, they're not a law review. Who are these other people?

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Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I mean, some people, you know, some of the people do well, but I mean, you know, in fairness, like, maybe they're just really excited about the material or whatever, but I think that self awareness really needs to happen in a lot of cases.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think, I think it is wise to at least be slightly aware. And remember you can, if you have a passion for this topic, you're probably going to get more out of having a discussion with the professor in private and office hours, or in a small group than you are by monopilating class discussions.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Monopolizing the discussion is really not helpful to anyone.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And the professor's probably gonna like you more because you're not-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and frankly, like, you know, it's, it is easier for the professor in office hours to be like, you know what, I think it's time for somebody else to come in,

Lee Burgess: Mm-Hmm.

Alison Monahan: And just send you on your way than it is for them to do this in front of, you know, 50, 70, a hundred of your classmates, because I mean, most people, you know, most law professors do not wanna embarrass you. They don't, you know, it's hard. It's a, they're walking a fine line because they wanna encourage people to speak up and ask questions, but at the same time, you know, they're trying to get through a certain amount of material and at some point just kind of have to be like, I'm not calling on you anymore.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And it's interesting, you know, the socratic method of running a class may feel like a professor doesn't have a plan sometimes, but they usually do. And it is actually kind of hard to manage the socratic method if you're going to do it well.

Alison Monahan: It's very hard.

Lee Burgess: It's very hard and so, you know, they're asking questions to continue on the journey to an intellectual journey with the class.

And so you want to somewhat play along and let them lead that class.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, if you're like, if you're going off on your own journey, just remember, like, you're actually not the teacher here.

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Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly.

Alison Monahan: And frankly, at some point, no one cares what you have to say.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: So enough about gunners. I mean, the reality is if you are the biggest gunner in the class, you're probably not going to know it.

So this was probably lost on you, but you know, if the professor stops calling on you, I think you might need to do a little bit of self evaluation about why that's going on.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. I think it's a good point. All right, so Alison, who else are we going to see in law school?

Alison Monahan: Oh gosh, so many fun characters.

One of my favorites is like that guy who worked on the Hill, I mean, probably for like a summer at most, you know, interning after college for a year for some local senator or whatever, and just will not shut up about it, you know, and it's like, you get to the point where it's like, you know, you're playing in class bingo and it's like, "well, when I was on the Hill" and you don't even have to turn around to know who's saying it.

It's just like, I don't know. I mean, all of these things are just like, really? I mean, everybody knows you worked on the Hill after like the third time that you said this, you really have to bring it up once a week, twice a week, like, I don't know, you just want to be like, people, some self awareness, please.

Lee Burgess: I think that's what a lot of people forget is that law school, though, it seems like it's strange bubble is really the beginning of your legal career. And you're going to run into these people. But probably the rest of your legal career, you know.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah, I mean, like, I can tell you in my class who fits this, like, who the, who the characters are.

Like, people don't forget this.

Lee Burgess: No, and depending on where you go to law school and what community you practice in it can be kind of a small town feel, you know, it's not very removed. In fact, you know, we both, you know, being based out of San Francisco, like I can meet lawyers through other avenues and it's like one degree of separation,

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maybe, because they're gonna work with somebody that I know we are going to have a person we maybe don't think the high that highly of, you know, or they think highly of somebody that I don't think highly of or like reputations, like precede you, you know? And so you kind of gotta, it's not to like walk around in eggshells, but you do have to realize that you, these people are going to be part of your professional community for the rest of your professional existence.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, you know, people still talk about like, oh, well, when I was in law school with Barack Obama, or with Bill Clinton, or with Hillary Clinton, you know, people remember what they were like in law school for better or worse.

Lee Burgess: Oh, yeah, I had a professor who was on the law review with Barack Obama when he was running for president for the first time, and she put their law review photo with his head circled on her door, so we would all know that she, you know, had been on the editorial board with Barack Obama, so I mean, you know, and that was many moons ago, so.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, but I mean, that's another character you might see is like, you know, the future president of the US in his or her mind at least.

You know, these people who are running like this bare knuckle campaign to be section leader or to be like the law school student body representative. You know, I mean, you know, if student government's something you're into, great. But, you know, again, think about your reputation. Think about what the future holds.

Think about if you are, you know, find yourself running for president, what are your law students or your law school classmates going to say about you?

Lee Burgess: Yeah. It's true. I mean, it's interesting. The person who kind of fit that bill in my class was kind of a jerk. And, and was a jerk to a lot of people, you know, and it's interesting because he definitely saw himself as a politician, and I think he was very open that that's where he thought his career path was going to be. But I wouldn't probably not vote for him. He was a jerk to me.

Alison Monahan: Odds are if he called you up and asked for a donation to his campaign, you would politely decline.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Yeah. So you know, something to think about.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, better to have allies than enemies.

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Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's very true. And then kind of on the opposite end of the spectrum, there's always someone who's just like, smoking weed and not talking to anybody.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And some of these people amazingly, like they're like the pothead savant. I actually, a good friend of mine at law school was that guy.

And I remember in our first class, like he said something, like he got called on and said something like so extraordinarily stupid that I was literally, this is before I knew the guy, I was having this dialogue in my head. Like, I wonder if maybe he had like a lobotomy over the summer or like, maybe he was like in a horrible car crash and like they felt bad about like, you know, they'd already admitted him so they let him come. And later we later we became friends and I was like, dude, what was up with that answer you know, like six months ago. When he got called on in whatever classes was, he's like, oh, no, no, that's my act. Cause I never want to be cold called. And so if they ever cold call me, I make sure that I'm just so incredibly stupid and unhelpful that they never, they put a mark by me and basically never call on this guy again.

You know, like, total stoner, like, party guy. But, like, a lot of those people actually do pretty well. There was a story circulating a few years ago about the highest, I guess at Harvard, they give out an award for the highest GPA, and I think it was a girl who won it, and, like, she was just notorious for being a complete stoner, and no one could understand it.

But these people exist.

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah, I mean, in my law school class this person existed my 1L year, and then she transferred to Yale. Like, and I remember everybody just kind of being like, What happened to so and so? You know, we all came back and they're like, Oh, she went to Yale. And we're like, really? And then we find out she like high scored all of our 1L classes.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, you never know.

Lee Burgess: No, so you just never ever knows. Don't discredit everybody. You don't know who really has it going on.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I mean, on that spectrum too, you'll also meet a lot of like high functioning alcoholics.

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Lee Burgess: Oh, that is so true. Alcoholism begins early and runs deep in the law school community.

Alison Monahan: Absolutely. You know, starting on like Thursday bar review nights and that kind of thing. And these people, some of them tend to be like sleeper guys, you know, it's mostly guys, let's face it. You know, they seem like pretty cool, you know, pretty okay, just like normal guys. And then they start drinking. And then suddenly they're starting street brawls with people who are like three times their size.

They're destroying their own computers. You probably don't want to be a roommate with this guy. So like, kind of figure out, like, who you're going to be living with and, like, maybe ask some questions, like, do you, you know, enjoy drinking heavily, frequently?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's true.

Alison Monahan: Because you might not want to live with this person.

Lee Burgess: And it's interesting, depending on when you go back to law school, because both Alison and I took breaks, you know, we didn't go straight through, and there was a big difference in my law school class between those of us who had kind of come back to school than those who went straight through. Because the partying that was done by the people who went straight through was unbelievable.

Alison Monahan: Well, I went to school in New York and the partying was unbelievable with everyone.

Lee Burgess: I can see that. Yeah.

Alison Monahan: I mean, I've never, I've never seen as much alcohol consumed or never consumed as much alcohol like in my life as in law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. So it, it is really important to be thoughtful about that. And, and to also just, I mean, it's not a bad thing if, if that's like what you like to do and hey, it's a lot of fun, I mean, we've all been there, but You know, it is, it is again, kind of like your persona if you're somebody who makes really bad decisions when you're drunk, just think about doing that in front of people that may be a judge someday.

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Alison Monahan: Yeah, exactly. I mean, and also, you know, the reality is there are a lot of substance abuse problems in the legal profession and a lot of these start in law school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's very true. It's very true because it's a lot of it is just dealing with stress and, you know, using alcohol as a coping mechanism.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and you know, there's a lot of pressure to drink. It's just like a normal social thing. But just something to be aware of if you're starting to go down that path where you're like, maybe this is not feeling that comfortable. Like, maybe I should, you know, consider tapering off on this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: Totally fine.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Or maybe you're starting to get a little bit older and you realize I just can't hold my alcohol like I used to. Yeah. I'm completely fine. Yeah. And I'm completely incapacitated the day after I do this sort of party and can't get any of my work done. That could also be a sign that maybe you to slow things down.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. Maybe you wanna turn into the, like one beer that you nurse and then you switch to soda water with lime.

Lee Burgess: Right.

Alison Monahan: Because no one knows the difference.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Exactly. All right. So what about the people who just, you know, came to law school 'cause they live to argue and will argue about anything.

Alison Monahan: Oh God, yeah. I mean, a very common type obviously are in law school. Yeah, at some point. I mean, I have very limited patience for that sort of thing, to be honest, but it's very, very, very common where it's like, oh, you know. I mean, particularly, I've had it plays out a lot with you're like on a, say you're organizing like a group event or you're on a board with people or whatever.

I mean, I was, I was like a joiner my first year. I joined like all kinds of boards and whatever, just cause I was bored and thought it might be interesting. And you didn't find yourself like planning some event with these people. And you've had like a 30 minute argument over which type of beer to buy.

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And it's just like, no one cares. Like, just stop. And it just makes it impossible, you know, to get like anything done basically.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's, it's just not, not worth it. And again, it's not that you can't be yourself, you know, or, you know, be yourself. But just again, remember, if you find yourself always being argumentative, that's not necessarily even how you want to be as a lawyer.

I mean, law school can be a bit of a chance to reinvent yourself. You know, you're in a new group of people, you're kind of starting-

Alison Monahan: You're developing your personal persona, your professional, you know, identity is forming.

Lee Burgess: And you want to be authentic, but-

Alison Monahan: But do you, do you really want to be that person who replied all like 14 times, arguing with everybody else about something completely trivial?

Probably not.

Lee Burgess: Probably not, yeah. And is that the best use of your time when there's a lot of other stuff going on that you should be doing?

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean if you really love to argue, like, go coach a moot court in high school or something. Like, that's your opportunity, but you know, channel these things in productive directions.

Lee Burgess: And what about the folks that are well meaning, but they are really, they're kind of, they're clueless, they're hippies. This is all about saving the world and if you are not saving the world, then you are not doing good enough work.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, no, I think it's great. I mean, obviously law school attracts a lot of people who wanna do good for the world, and that's great.

I think this can quite easily cross a line for a lot of people,

Lee Burgess: Mm-Hmm.

Alison Monahan: Into everyone else's terrible and bad, you know, pick your poison. Like, because you're eating meat, because you're not saving the refugees, because you think that you want to, you know, be paid to work, things like this. And usually these people are like, it's always great when these people get in the argument with

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like, you know, the sort of law and econ people in the class and that also rapidly just goes downhill to, you know, the first couple of times you hear this conversation, you're like, oh, wow, this is great.

You know, really, really digging into the issues. I'm learning something. By like the 18th time, the same three people have had the same argument about the same policy things. You're just like, okay, just drop it. This is not even related to anything else. So, you know, you've got the well meaning but slightly clueless hippie that, you know, oftentimes daddy is paying for law school, which is good for them.

But you know, at least, you know, a lot of these sort of fancy schools, this person in a year is going to be looking for a big law job with the rest of you. So don't be too confused about it.

Lee Burgess: Okay, now there's the silent gunner.

Alison Monahan: Yes, as we alluded to earlier, the silent gunner. So a silent gunner is a perfectly fine thing to be, actually, because the silent gunner is basically that person who, when the law review results come out, you know, the summer of your first year, You kind of look at them and you're like, who is this?

Who are these people? Have I ever seen this person before in my life? And you kind of check back in your classes and you're like, Huh, they were in my like first semester contracts class. Who were they? And you get out the, you know, you go on Facebook and you find them and you're like, that was that guy who sat in the back of the room and never said anything unless he was called on.

What's going on here? What's going on is this person was actually paying attention and getting something out of class instead of talking all the time.

Lee Burgess: Yeah.

Alison Monahan: You know, this person was sitting there absorbing the information, doing the reading, paying attention, focusing, but really focusing on the right thing.

So the silent gunner, you know, there's always, there are those couple of people where nobody knows anything about them, they make basically no impression on anyone. Turns out that they callied every class.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's definitely true. Sometimes those are great people to be in study groups with.

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Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely.

Like I would say, yeah, if you're looking for like a good study group partner, do not go for the guy who's always raising his hand. You're much better off with that girl who just kind of sits quietly, comes to class, takes her notes, leaves, seems pleasant enough, you know, seems like a nice person. That's the person you might want to talk to about being in a study group, because that's probably the person who's going to end up doing pretty well on their test.

Oh, another one of my favorites. So as Lee mentioned, you know, I went back to law school after doing a different graduate degree and working for a little while. So I was actually, because I was a joiner, ended up being in charge of the Owls Club, the older, wiser law school association. But there's, you know, and most people, and they were great and they're very helpful and whatever, but there are a few of these people who are like, Mr. and Mrs. Older and Wiser, and, you know, they've done whatever they've done and been quite successful, I'm sure, and done their thing and learned a lot and you know, stuff about the world, but somehow they think they have these like special powers or insight that no one else could possibly possess. And this kind of, you know, the guy on the hill might be a subset of this one, because it's like, you know what, other people know something about, like, the way politics work too, other people, like, just because you're like, well, when I was on the hill, but, you know, Mr. Older Wiser was like, well, you know, in my 12 years of experience working for blah, blah, blah, and again, fine to say that one time, if you say that every week, stop, just stop.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it's interesting. You know, I think it's, this is one of those stereotypes that can really be taken to an extreme, but sometimes it can be great to befriend someone who's older and wiser if they're going to take a more reasonable approach to law school.

Alison Monahan: I have no problem with people who come back to school and have things to add.

Lee Burgess: Oh, no, no.

Alison Monahan: I mean, this is just like-

Lee Burgess: Oh, yeah. The people-

Alison Monahan: No one else has anything to say because-

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Lee Burgess: Oh yeah. But you know, if you're looking at your. Law school friend landscape and you're trying to pick people to kind of befriend, you know, it can be kind of interesting 'cause sometimes the older and wiser students treat law school a bit more like a job and that can be a very good thing.

Alison Monahan: And a lot of 'em actually do very well because they have a little more maturity. They have a little bit more in the way of like, you know, personal manage, time management, that kind of thing. They're perfectly great friends, people to be friends with.

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah.

Alison Monahan: As long as they're not one of those people that are just like, I know everything, you know nothing, like little sprout, get out of my way and listen to me.

It's like, these people don't know any more than you do about law school, so don't be dissuaded into thinking that they do.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, it was funny. One of the ways I, I guess I picked one of my friends in law school was we were in, sitting in our first legal writing section, which was pretty small. A subset of a larger 1L section, and I'm looking around the room, and the only person I recognized there was somebody I'd been at a scholarship lunch with.

Alison Monahan: Nice.

Lee Burgess: And I was like, I'm going to go sit by her.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. This person is probably like, kind of on my level.

Lee Burgess: This person and I couldn't, you know, probably she's not like completely off the wall. She does well in school, you know, and and, and it was right. We stayed good friends throughout law school. So it's it is interesting to kind of, you know, think about when you're thoughtfully deciding who you're going to hang out with, you know, what everyone's story is and who you want to align yourself with.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. I think it can be, you know, it can be a tricky sort of social landscape. I mean, one of my other types is sort of like these uber clicky people, you know, so like these clicks will form like even before orientation or like, you know, within minutes of orientation where suddenly you've got this group of

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people who kind of like all look the same, all act the same, they only talk to each other, they only hang out with each other.

And maybe, you know, maybe for whatever reason, like you were shunned in middle school or something, you decide that you want to be friends with these people and you spend all of your time like trying to break into the clique. News flash, not gonna happen. Better to pick somebody who's actually like willing and open to a friendship with you and might not be such a jerk.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I think so. I mean, law school constantly reminds you of like high school. It's really bizarre. It's really bizarre. I even had a locker like I did in high school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I refuse to have a locker.

Lee Burgess: I had to learn-

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I lived, I lived close enough that I could actually go back between classes and drop my books, cause I was just like, I'm not having a locker. Like I just can't do this.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I used to pack my lunch. I had a locker, I had a backpack. I mean, it was really. shockingly similar to high school.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, see, I like rebelled against this. I don't know, maybe I was a rebel in high school. But I refused to carry a backpack, which meant I carried this messenger bag that was like massively overloaded and always had pain in my neck.

I refused to have a locker. So I'd carry massive amounts of crap around with me all the time so I didn't have to put it in my locker. That might be taking it to the other extreme. Maybe just maybe just accept that you're basically going back to high school.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, I started with the messenger bag. And then I realized I just couldn't do it.

I just couldn't do it, so.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, the other there's another type. They have people sometimes like scoff it. It was just the people with the rolly bags.

Lee Burgess: Oh yeah.

Alison Monahan: But honestly, they're probably making the right choice.

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Lee Burgess: I think so, especially if you're carrying a bunch of stuff or you commute to school. So you need to like basically pack in all of your stuff all day for classes and books and food and everything.

I mean, if. It's not a time to be cool, it's a time to be rational.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think, you know, if you feel like you need a rolly bag, just basically just own it.

Lee Burgess: Exactly. Just own the reality.

Alison Monahan: Yep, I have a rolly bag. I'm cool with it.

Lee Burgess: I'm cool with it. Yeah. Yeah. You know, and, and people sometimes ask us like how to dress in law school too, you know, and like, does it matter what bag you carry or, you know, do you dress up for law school?

And, you know, like most things, I think it's just. Just, like, just own your existence, but just remember that, you know, 10, 20 years down the road, you're still going to be talking to these people in your professional world, so.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think everybody has to sort of, you know, find their own comfort level, and, you know, do what you need to do.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. Alright, Alison, what's our last kind of cliche person that you're likely to see in law school?

Alison Monahan: You know, I gotta say it, some people just aren't very nice. This is, you know, a family friendly podcast, so we're not going to say the A word. But some people are not very nice people. Some lawyers are not very nice lawyers.

Those people are all in law school. There, you will see some bad behavior, you might be the subject of some bad behavior. And honestly, I would say just stay away from these people as far as possible. And make notes in your head because it might be the case that later on in your legal career, you have a chance to screw them over.

You know, it happens. It's very satisfying when it happens. I mean, I'm not going to say I'm speaking from personal experience, but I'm speaking from personal experience.

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Lee Burgess: Yeah, but don't be that, that, that guy or that woman. It just don't do it. Just don't do it. Like, You know, like, now kind of transitioning into, like, law school etiquette, like, the type of law student you should be.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, like, what to do. So we brought over who you don't want to be. What should you do?

Lee Burgess: Yeah, well, I mean, like, this first one is just don't, don't, yeah, don't be that person. Be nice, you know, don't be a pushover. Of course, you know, you need to You know, you're welcome to express your opinions. You're welcome to be in whatever clubs you want to be.

Alison Monahan: You're welcome to set boundaries about what you will or won't do to help people.

Lee Burgess: Yes.

Alison Monahan: But I guess I'm going to kill you if you build a reputation over these three years as someone who's basically nice and helpful.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. And you know, just by not being memorable by being rude or overly abrasive or putting down other people or doing shady things in the library or whatever it might be, just be respectful, you know, and you know, you can definitely demand respect for yourself, but just generally be respectful.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I mean, these are your future colleagues, and you might need a favor from them someday. You might end up working with them someday, or I mean, you might just need somebody to go hang out with and go to the movies for a study break.

You know, if you have that reputation as being a complete jerk, nobody's going to want to hang out with you. You're not going to have any friends, unless you find some friends who are equally jerky, and then you can all be like a jerk clique. But you know, that's just kind of like, order of magnitude worse, but, 'cause you don't wanna hang out with these people either.

But it's just not gonna kill you to be basically a reasonable human being for a few years.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You know, so when I was on the law review and I was one of the members of the Board of the Law Review, someone on the Law Review wrote a letter, basically a really scathing letter, about how much of a waste of time it was, how

he was dropping it with the Law Review, he was really disrespectful to the people who were running it it was this really awful letter that I think he might have circulated to the larger Law Review and not just the Board members. And, you know, that is a story that has stayed with me. That has stayed with me. And every time I run into that person around town, because that's how it goes. I think of that story.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. And if anybody ever asks you like, Hey, I got a resume from this person. What do you think about them? You were on the law review with them.

I think you're probably going to mention that story.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. You know, and that is-

Alison Monahan: Or at a minimum I'm going to be like, you know, I would probably have some concerns about hiring him.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. And you know, He might be incredibly successful and go him, but that's still what I remember. I remember a few other things as well, but they're all along the same lines.

I mean, it's just, that's, that's not necessarily-

Alison Monahan: People don't forget when you screw them over.

Lee Burgess: You don't, you know, they might remember kindness, but they're really going to remember kind of extreme things that you do. You know, people are going to remember other funny things too. I think some people are concerned about speaking up with their political views in law school, you know, especially if maybe your political views don't align with some of your other classmates.

I don't think, I think that's less of an issue as just being a jerk.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think a lot, I mean, that's how you do it, you know. I mean, in fairness, in this particular political climate, like, there may be things that you're just like, wow, yeah, I don't see how any reasonable person could believe that. But, you know, you're gonna have to make a case for yourself.

I mean, you know, but, it's all about the way that you do it. And again, like, you know, if you're bringing up things that are just factually inaccurate and repeating them over and over, like conspiracy theories and something, people might start to question your judgment. But frankly, that's probably legitimate.

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Lee Burgess: Yeah, there was someone in my constitutional law class who was very conservative and the most of the class was not very conservative. And I just remember my professor calling on her and we all like knew what she was going to say basically about anything, but she still said her piece, but she wasn't rude about it.

You know, we just knew that she had a very specific point of view,

Alison Monahan: Which is fine.

Lee Burgess: And she would say it. And actually it's when I, if I haven't run into her since law school, but if I did run into her on the street, I would not think anything of it. I would just remember like, Oh, she's fairly conservative, not she's a jerk.

It was just that she has a different point of view on the world than say I do.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and then, you know, I think anyone who has strong political views needs to learn to express them anyway, you know, in a reasonable, reasoned manner. So this is a great opportunity to practice. You don't have to, you know, hide your views on things, but you need to do it in a way that's respectful of other people's views and also, you know, based in fact.

Lee Burgess: And this is an election year while we're taking this podcast, and I am sure that the law school environments will be heightened. There's going to be a lot of discussion about a lot of fascinating things, I'm sure. And I, I don't want people to feel like they can't express their beliefs. You just have to think about how you do it and realize that you're in an academic environment where, you know, different beliefs are respected and different professors are going to have different beliefs.

That's just the way it is, you know.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, absolutely. So yeah, I think in general, just, you know, whatever you're doing, and I think this is really the key takeaway, just don't be a jerk about it. What else?

Lee Burgess: What else? Well, since this is like high school, you should probably be careful with who you're hooking up with.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, definitely. Speaking of alcohol.

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Lee Burgess: Yeah, exactly. So, I mean, lots of people get married out of law school. So, you know, dating is definitely on the table. But You can also get other reputations or have messy romantic things spill over into class. I mean, it can definitely be dramatic.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, I think personally, like, I think dating someone in your section should be kind of like dating someone you work with.

Not to say you can't do it, but you want to think really carefully about whether this is the right time for this and whether this is something that you really want to pursue in case it goes wrong.

Lee Burgess: I'm trying to think if I knew that many people who married people in my law school class. I don't think there were that many.

There weren't as many as I expected.

Alison Monahan: I definitely know a decent number. Yeah, I wouldn't say it's like a huge number, but I mean, I think even on the law review, I know of several who like basically hung out on law review and ended up getting married. That's pretty funny.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I know a lot of people who've met their significant others while in law school.

Yeah. I mean, I did, but he had no association with law school, so.

Alison Monahan: Yeah. I think, you know, again, like, you just want to be judicious here. Not to say that you can't, like, randomly hook up with somebody that you just met at Bar Review, but you probably want to be a little careful. Again, just like high school, if you're like, you know, you meet the 3L and you're 1L, and he seems so nice and so into you.

Really think about, like, what's going on here. Do you want to be, like, yeah, you know, another conquest of this, like, slightly predatory 3L who slept with, like, half the 1L class? Like, probably not. I mean, to each his own, but just think about it.

Lee Burgess: Just think about it.

Alison Monahan: And on that note, I mean, I think, You know, being careful with people with the drinking, really it's just going to only improve the situation, you know, for your own good, the good of those around you.

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If for no other reason than the fact that you need to actually pass Character and Fitness to be admitted to the bar, and this is going to be a lot easier if you don't have a law school like DUI or Drunken Disorderly Arrest on your record.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and this is not outside the realm of possibility, I mean people do get DUI's and things like that in law school.

Alison Monahan: Oh easily.

Lee Burgess: And it can really Slow down or stand in the way of you passing your moral character, which is a huge problem, or you end up having to hire lawyers to help defend your moral character, which is an expensive problem.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, or you have to, you know, the bar's like, oh, well, we have some concerns about you.

You're going to have to go to, like, alcohol counseling for X number of months. Like, these are just things that you'd probably rather avoid with, like, you know, a little foresight.

Lee Burgess: Mm hmm. Yeah. So again, just remember to, you know, be a grown up.

Alison Monahan: You're building your reputation and you probably don't want your reputation to be as the guy who was like always, or girl, who was always like stumbling drunk every single night of the week out of like the local bar.

Lee Burgess: Yeah. I guess another thing along like using a judgment, oh my gosh, don't cheat. Don't look like you're cheating.

Alison Monahan: Oh yeah.

Lee Burgess: Don't talk about cheating. Like again, like you don't want to be that person. Like just follow the rules. Someone else that we didn't list up there that is somebody that always annoys me is the person who loves to talk about how many hours they study in the library.

Alison Monahan: Oh God. That person. That's like the subset of the gunner. It's like the library gunner.

Lee Burgess: Yes. And so they just love to talk about how they're in the library till it closes every day and how amazing they are. And you just have to ignore that person too. So also don't be that person. Just don't.

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Alison Monahan: No one cares.

Lee Burgess: No one cares how many hours you study. Like nobody cares. Nobody cares.

Alison Monahan: And if they do care, they don't want to hear about it. It's just gonna make them feel bad. Yeah. So, I mean, on this point, I would say, you know, this isn't really etiquette, but more like life advice. I think the key here is like, you've got to find your people.

So we, we might sound really cynical in this episode where, you know, we're poking fun at lots of different types of people, but you know, even if you meet every single person we just talked about above, that's like 10 people. You probably have hundreds of people in your law school. There are probably some really great people that you could build really strong relationships with.

And I think it's worth finding those people because you're going to need support. Nobody gets through law school alone. It's just going to be a lot more fun if you have someone to occasionally go to the movies with. But you know, I guess there's also the social recluse who like never does anything or talks to anyone.

But I wouldn't be that person either.

Lee Burgess: No, and I think you also, you know, sometimes you can be a 1L and you're in your section, you're like, I haven't really found my people in my section, and that's totally okay. So go join some clubs, you know, that you have an interest in or affinity groups that you have an interest in.

Alison Monahan: Yeah, and look outside of the 1L class, like 2Ls and 3Ls can be great because they're under less pressure, they've got a little bit of insight into the process, they might be willing to go to lunch with you and kind of give you some advice.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, and I made good friends with people in the class above me through doing certain activities.

And then even when I was a 3L and I was on the law review board, I made good friends with people I was on the board with that I barely knew in law school. I mean, we were kind of like acquaintances, but we weren't friends. We weren't in the same sections. We didn't really take the same classes and they became you know, really dear to me, and I learned a lot from them. So always be open to these different experiences in law school. You know, maybe you are doing an

advocacy competition, and then you become very close to the people on your advocacy team.

Alison Monahan: Yeah.

Lee Burgess: You know, don't go to your 1L section and be like, I don't find my people here, so I must not be meant to be in law school.

Alison Monahan: No, I mean, honestly, like once you get out of like the 1L class and you know, some schools, they switch it up at the first semester or second semester. Like, you'll be amazed how little you think about these people that you don't happen to have classes with once you're out of class with them. You know, you might see people that were like, you thought were like your great friend because you were in small section together.

You'll see them nine months later when you're 2L and like wave at them across campus, be like, oh my God, we've got to catch up sometime. That's just the nature of the beast.

Lee Burgess: Yeah, so just make sure that you keep an open mind and to continue to be open to new relationships because you never know when you might meet somebody that could be a good professional or personal connection down the road.

Alison Monahan: Or like one of your best friends, you know, I interviewed with judges who still had the picture of their law school study group and they're like, these are my best friends, you know?

Yeah. All right. Well with that, unfortunately we're out of time. Hopefully you find your people. If you enjoyed this episode of the Law School Toolbox podcast, please take a second to leave a review and rating on iTunes because we would really appreciate it. And you can subscribe so you don't miss anything.

And we usually have new episodes every Monday. If you have any questions or comments. Don't hesitate to reach out to me or Lee at Lee@LawSchoolToolbox.com or Alison@LawSchoolToolbox.com or you can always contact us via our website contact form at LawSchoolToolbox.com. Thanks for listening. We'll talk soon and good luck in law school.