

STUDENT PROFILE

# Ben Jackson

*J.D. candidate 2013*

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## FELLOWSHIP: THE COMMON THREAD THAT UNITES

At first glance, the only similarity between Wyoming and Washburn is the uppercase “W,” but law student Ben Jackson says the atmosphere he encountered on his first visit to Washburn Law reminded him of home. “I was instantly drawn to the atmosphere of involvement and encouragement. Washburn Law offered the small community feel, the amenities and resources of a large city, and the Center for Excellence in Advocacy.”

Jackson said his biggest challenge as a first-year law student was initially finding common ground with other students. He recalled a timely remark by former Washburn Law Professor Ron Griffin that changed his perspective.

“During Contracts my first week, Professor Griffin said to the class, ‘Remember, we are more alike than we are different.’ This simple phrase changed my outlook.” Jackson said the more people he approached, the more things he found they had in common. “I discovered we were all students starting the same new chapter in our lives. Even though we had different backgrounds and personal stories, there is a common thread amongst us.”

It was the common thread of fellowship that united the ranchers of the Wyoming community in which Jackson grew up and cultivated in him the desire to give back and help others. “The local ranchers were able to accomplish more for everyone by working together than what any one person could accomplish on his or her own,” Jackson explained.

It was during Jackson’s undergraduate studies that he began looking for ways to give back to his local and national communities. This led him to the Bureau of



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Land Management and a career as a crew member on a fire helicopter where he worked six months a year for the Bureau and spent the other six months taking classes toward his undergraduate degree.

“The arrangement allowed me to serve communities threatened by devastating fires during the summers and receive an education during the winter,” Jackson explained. Not content to focus on studies alone, he served as an emergency dispatcher for police, fire, and EMS at the University of Wyoming Police Department during the months he was attending college.

“The dispatcher position allowed me to assist my fellow citizens while providing me with problem-solving skills that I now use in law school,” Jackson said. “Talking to someone on a 911 call is equivalent to being in the courtroom. It’s a high-stakes environment and saying the right thing at the right time could resolve many issues.”

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## CAROL LONGENECKER SCHMIDT RECEIVES KANSAS ASSOCIATION FOR JUSTICE RAYMOND SPRING AWARD

**C**arol Longenecker Schmidt, '11, received the 2011 Kansas Association for Justice Raymond Spring Award for demonstrating the highest commitment to providing legal services to clients in need as an intern at the Washburn Law Clinic. Longenecker Schmidt is the first Clinic intern to receive a nomination from two professors. She was nominated by John Francis, professor, and Randall Hodgkinson, visiting assistant professor.



*Carol Longenecker  
Schmidt, '11*

In his nomination, Professor Francis noted the difficult challenges Longenecker Schmidt faced in her clinic work. "One particular case of hers presented several challenges. The client had a serious and progressive medical condition. He faced criminal prosecution on a felony matter stemming from an incident which occurred years earlier. The charge carried a significant mandatory jail sentence that threatened his already fragile health. Ms. Longenecker Schmidt demonstrated dedication and innovation while representing this client, gathering medical data, interviewing caretakers, visiting with the client and conducting substantial legal research. This led to filing a unique motion to dismiss the case in the interests of justice. This motion intrigued the court, and while it did not carry the day, it did lay the foundation for an effective case strategy which was later implemented. Carol's work on this and other

cases demonstrates that she is committed to providing legal services to clients in need."

Professor Hodgkinson described Longenecker Schmidt's "zealous commitment" to her clients in the Appellate Clinic. "Ms. Longenecker Schmidt was a great intern in Criminal Appeal Advocacy, where she assisted in writing appellate briefs for two clients of the Kansas Appellate Defender Office. The first case involved an appeal from a drug conviction and the

second from a criminal threat conviction. In each case, Ms. Longenecker Schmidt showed zealous commitment to each client and concern for the professional quality of her writing. And she has gone on to work in that area as a staff attorney at the Kansas Appellate Defender Office."

The award is named in honor of **Raymond Spring, '59**, who worked in private practice after graduating from Washburn Law and later became a law professor and eventually dean of the law school in 1970. Spring drafted the grant proposal and conducted negotiations with the Council on Legal Education for Professional Responsibility, which awarded Washburn University a \$35,000 grant in 1969 to establish the law school's legal clinic program.

Jackson believes that attending law school is an obvious choice for someone searching for a career serving others. "I was instilled with the value of community service growing up in a small ranching town in Wyoming. I saw thousands come together to battle raging wildfires in states across the nation. I provided a reassuring voice to those who called for help and waited for assistance. So, helping people access justice through the law was a natural progression."

Jackson is a member of Washburn Law's ABA Trial Team, an instinctive choice for him. "I was always a part of a team growing up, whether sports or working as a crew member on the helicopter. The Trial Team was a natural fit and encouraged me to work hard to develop my advocacy and cooperation skills." A conversation

with Professor Michael Kaye cemented Jackson's desire to commit to the Trial Team. "He said that there is a lot of mediocre lawyering in society today because anyone can learn the law, but not everyone learns how to be an advocate."

An avid bow hunter, Jackson has discovered another common thread connecting his life in Wyoming to the one he's experiencing in Kansas. "I discovered that elk hunting in Wyoming is not much different from deer hunting in Kansas. Catching a trout in a high mountain pond is equivalent to catching a catfish in the Kansas River. Although all of us come from different backgrounds, we truly are more alike than we are different."