

■ RECRUITING ■

# Young Lawyers Put in Hours to Pay Dues

By PAT KRAMER

Contributing Reporter

When Taylor Browning went to work last fall as an associate in the downtown office of O'Melveny & Myers, the 26-year-old realized that much of the work would be routine — and that the days would be long. But regrets? No way — not at an annual salary of \$83,000 (plus bonuses), along with a chance to be exposed to many different types of legal work.

"Everyone expects, when you join a big firm, that you're going to be working quite a bit and that it might have an impact on your social life," he said. "But I've actually found that it's completely doable."

Browning is just one of O'Melveny's workhorses — far removed from the luxurious surroundings of the firm's top rainmakers, but an integral part of the overall operations. They easily put in 12-hour days and more than occasional weekends. They often end up doing grunt work, while also facing the pressures inherent in being at the low end of a world-renowned firm. Still, it's hard to detect too many complaints.

Take Brad Duea, who became an associate last fall in the Century City office and concentrates on corporate, entertainment and international law.

"I grew up in my dad's business and always loved business," said the 29-year-old Duea, "but I noticed that when the big transactions came along, my dad always needed to talk to his attorney. I figured I wanted to learn what the attorneys knew with the hopes of getting the broader side of business and how it works."

Duea says his typical work day starts at 8:30 a.m. and ends at 7 p.m., although there are occasions when he burns the midnight oil. Much of that work is mundane — mostly research-based, documenting phone conversations, drafting letters and tracking down

David Watts, who heads O'Melveny's downtown employment committee, calls Duea a prime example of what O'Melveny looks for in a recruit — someone with a joint MBA/Juris Doctorate degree as well as real-world experience in foreign trade regulations, international business law, tax law and politics.

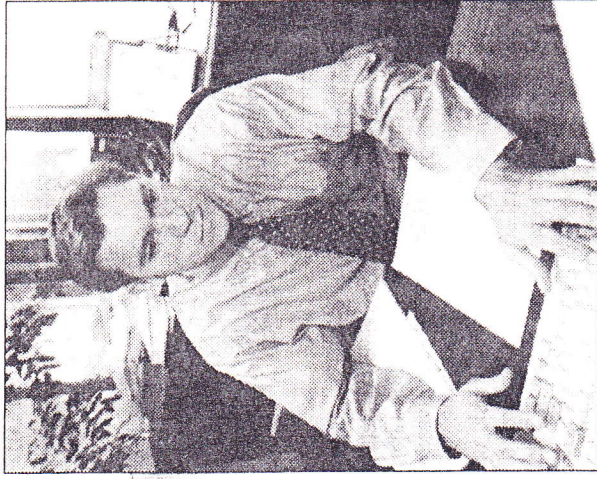
Due to its expanded practice in intellectual property work, patent litigation and high technology, O'Melveny is now recruiting more students with technical backgrounds.

"I think it is a place where our students can receive high-caliber training in exciting areas of practice," said David Burcham, a professor at Loyola Law School, where O'Melveny recruits many of its students.

Many of the associates working full-time at O'Melveny actually start out as "summer associates." At a weekly salary of \$1,300, these lawyers-to-be are often recruited from Loyola, USC and UCLA and get to experience what it's like to work for a large law firm with many different specialties.

Last year, Watts says O'Melveny's downtown office had the highest acceptance rate in the firm's history. Twenty-nine of the 45 summer associates who were offered full-time positions accepted — a success rate of 64.4 percent. In the previous year, the acceptance rate was 45 percent, with 24 recruits returning to work for the firm out of 55 who were offered jobs.

Overall, O'Melveny's summer internship program has had mixed grades. The most recent survey results, published in the October 1995 issue of American Lawyer magazine, rated 14 L.A. summer internship programs at 13 law firms. (O'Melveny's downtown and Century City programs were graded separately.)



TODD FRANKEL / LARU

Associate: Attorney Taylor Browning.

While O'Melveny's Century City office ranked third out of the 14 L.A. programs for overall performance, the firm's downtown office was 12th.

"Stuff," "stiff," "staid," "formal," and "bland," were the terms five interns used to describe the firm.

Since the survey results were published, O'Melveny has tried to involve its summer associates in more corporate transactions and other "real-world" work situations, said Watts. He bristled, however, when asked about the American Lawyer's survey findings, calling them "inconsistent with the firm's own exit survey for summer associates."

"We had a very high acceptance rate that summer: Of 57 interns, we made 55 offers and had 24 acceptances, which is about a 45 percent acceptance rate. My experience is that is as good or better than our normal."

Browning, for one, likes the idea of being exposed to many types of legal work through the firm's training programs, something he might not have gotten at a smaller firm. "Obviously, when I came here, I expected that (the work would be somewhat mundane), but they also give you an opportunity to see what the more experienced attorneys are doing," he said.