INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome to this book of case studies derived from the lives of real people and, of course, their real property. We are excited to guide your introduction to real-world lawyering through our favorite law school subject.

In writing this book, we draw from our experiences in practice and in the classroom, from private to nonprofit settings, from creative podium to small-group teaching, and from doctrinal to clinical approaches. These experiences have taught us that property law can be the perfect launch pad for your legal education. Property law has it all!

Our Goals

Our goals for this book are simple. We want to help you deepen your understanding of property law doctrine, gain early literacy in basic lawyering skills, and develop a passion for real-world practice. To accomplish this lofty set of goals, we have divided our book into eight chapters, each based on a carefully-crafted case study.

Each case study asks you to assume the role of lawyer for a specific client and to explore some of the different ways—including some that may surprise you—in which property law issues take shape. The case studies we have picked will reinforce and enrich your understanding of core concepts in property law, from adverse possession to chain of title, servitudes, co-tenancies, partition, and more.

This book will also provide you with the opportunity to develop and practice a broad range of skills—what we think of as “early lawyering literacy” skills—prior to class, both individually and in peer groups, and through in-class exercises and discussion. You will move quickly from basic communication skills into the nuances of client communication in transactional work. You will learn how to explore online records without fear and become acquainted with some common cost analyses used by lawyers of all stripes. You will work creatively to solve property law problems in individual cases before moving into big-picture thinking and even some of the skills involved in legislative lawyering.

This book is not a heavy skills workout of the sort you will get in your first places of legal employment. But it will help you lay the groundwork for developing many core lawyering skills and prepare you to refine them in the future. Through early exposure to the skills in this book, we hope to help you create “skills files” in your young lawyer brains that you will return to again and again throughout your legal education—in clinics, pro bono work, internships, and paid summer work—for further development and reflection.

Last, but not least: Through these case studies, we want you to discover how fulfilling it can be to connect property law concepts with law
practice. We had a lot of fun designing and teaching these case studies. Our students list the case study activities among their favorite and most formative experiences from their first year of law school. We hope you have similar experiences.

How to Use This Book

Each chapter in this book is designed so that it can be easily “plugged into” an existing first-year property law syllabus. As mentioned above, the book consists of eight different case studies that each incorporate a series of exercises designed to expose you to an array of early lawyering skills and areas of property doctrine. Where possible, the case studies are also supplemented with actual legal documents from the cases such as deeds, restrictive covenants, title commitments, and leases. Statutes and other legal materials are included for your review and analysis.

As you work through the book, you will see that some assignments ask you to try to find documents or perform other specific tasks on your own. If you get stuck, you can rely on one or more hints we provide or refer to the documents in the appendices in each chapter. We include them so that you can always make use of this book. But we want you to try really hard to find the information on your own, without relying on the hints and appendices. Developing the confidence and initiative to perform these tasks on your own efficiently is at the heart of excellent lawyering. (Also, to get you thinking and acting locally, we have included “Your Hometown” text boxes that you can use to apply different state laws.)

Developing a Reflective Practice

Set aside time after you complete each case study to reflect on your skills development. Start by looking at the skills identified at the beginning of each chapter. We encourage you to take notes to help guide your reflection. Here are some questions to ask:

- Which skills in the case study did you enjoy practicing the most and the least?
- Which skills did you find the most challenging?
- What does your experience with the case study suggest about the strengths and weaknesses of your lawyering skills and opportunities for further development?
- Did you gain any insights into your future as a lawyer and what types of law you might enjoy practicing?

Engaging in a reflective practice is integral to your development as an attorney and is a practice we recommend you adopt throughout your professional career. Through reflection, you will be able to identify the lawyering skills you need to improve and take responsibility for your own professional development. Taking this initiative is essential if you want to become a good lawyer fast, and an excellent lawyer with time. The best lawyers we know still take on tasks designed to build specific skills of their choosing.
Perhaps most important, paying attention to which lawyering skills you *enjoy* using will help you figure out where you should try to land as an attorney in the real world. We hope this book helps you discover the kinds of legal puzzles and activities that energize you and bring you happiness in your work.

Enjoy your semester!

**HEATHER WAY, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF LAW**

**LUCY WOOD, THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS SCHOOL OF LAW**

**TANYA MARSH, WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW**