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INTRODUCTION

REFLECTIONS OF WOMEN IN LEGAL EDUCATION: STORIES FROM FOUR DECADES OF SECTION CHAIRS

Linda Jellum* & Nancy Levit**

When we, as Chair-elect and Treasurer of the Association of American Law Schools' Women in Legal Education Section, were assigned the task of compiling the annual newsletters, we decided to shake things up a bit. While traditionally one to two newsletters were compiled highlighting Section members' scholarship achievements and touting the Section's upcoming events, we decided to go bold. We asked all of the thirty-six living former chairs (five of the forty-one are deceased) if they would submit a short reminiscence of their time as chair and of what that service had meant to them over the years. The response was stunning; the number of women who immediately agreed to participate was overwhelming. Then, when the first reminiscence came in, it so exceeded our expectations that we realized that this was more than a small newsletter project that would ultimately fade into obscurity as newsletters do. These were stories that needed to be shared in a way that would preserve this history of the Section for generations to come. The *UMKC Law Review* agreed to publish these reflections as part of the journal's Law Stories series. Hence, what began as a simple newsletter project morphed into this law review symposium.

You will find the stories of these twenty-one former chairs inspiring, enlightening, and perhaps even maddening. You will note recurrent themes in their stories, including surviving in a male-dominated, white world, choosing to be or not to be traditional, fighting among section members, and fighting recurring battles with AALS, challenging administrators, all while making new friends, supporting each other, and serving as mentors. These are their stories. We have kept our editing to a minimum to allow you to hear their words, in their voices.

We are eternally grateful for these women's willingness to participate and once again give something of themselves so freely. These are incredibly accomplished individuals. Among the twenty-one participants, with some overlap, are thirteen Chairs or Named Professors, seven Associate Deans, three Deans (or Deans Emerita), a University Vice Provost and Provost, a judge on the Southwest Intertribal Court of Appeals, and one is (one of only four women in the country ever to serve as) an Associate Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. This list of titles doesn't begin to encompass the work they have done and are continuing to do. They serve as members of the AALS Executive Committee; as

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consultants to the International Criminal Tribunal in Kigali, Rwanda, and to the United Nations Secretary-General's Report on All Forms of Violence Against Women; as directors of centers, such as the Center for Social Justice and Public Service and the Native American Law Center; and as chairs of national organizations, such as Chair of the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the Freedom to Marry organization.

These former Section Chairs are also authors of award-winning books and articles, including some of the most influential contemporary works in legal theory. They teach in areas as diverse as international law and tax, sexuality and the law, securities regulation, mergers and acquisitions, legal history, feminist legal theory, natural resources, and land-use planning. Among them, they share a shelf full of teaching awards, a fellowship in the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the designation as one of the Top 10 Most Influential African-Americans, and multiple Fulbright Scholarships. What can never be fully reflected in their curricula vitae is the untold hours they have spent mentoring, encouraging, and nurturing those coming after them, including the two of us. One indication of their generosity is that four of these prior chairs have won the ABA's Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award, which "recognizes and celebrates the accomplishments of women lawyers who have excelled in their field and have paved the way to success for other women lawyers."¹ In short, this is not just any law review symposium; this is history in the making by the leaders of the past who have become in other ways the leaders of the future. Below is the list of former chairs of the Section on Women in Legal Education, from its inception to its current chair.²

1970—Daniel Collins

1971—Frederica Lombard

1972—Ruth Bader Ginsburg

1973—Shirley Raissi Bysiewicz and Ruth Bader Ginsburg

1974—Shirley Raissi Bysiewicz and Mary Moers Wenig

1975—Mary Moers Wenig

1976—Elizabeth Defeis

1977—Jane Picker

1978—Nancy Erickson

1979—Rhonda Rivera

1980—Marilyn Ireland

1981—Carrie Menkel-Meadow

¹ *Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award*, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, http://www.americanbar.org/groups/women/initiatives_awards/margaret_brent_awards.html (last visited Oct. 10, 2011).

² Credits to Marina Angel for creating a record of the first twenty-eight years of chairs. Marina Angel, *Women in Legal Education: What It's Like to Be Part of a Perpetual First Wave or the Case of the Disappearing Women*, 61 *TEMPLE L. REV.* 799, 839 n.249 (1988).

- 1982—Myrna Raeder
1983—Jean Love
1984—Sally Burnett Sharp
1985—Dolores Donovan
1986—Marina Angel
1987—Patricia Cain
1988—Elizabeth Schneider
1989—Judith Resnik
1990—Kathy Lorio
1991—Mary Becker
1992—Karen Czapanskiy
1993—Angela Harris
1994—Laura Rothstein
1995—Nell Newton
1996—Frances Olsen
1997—Judith Maute
1998—Okianer Christian Dark
1999—Leslie Espinoza (Garvey)
2000—Joyce McConnell
2001—Veryl Miles
2002—Vernellia Randall
2003—Barbara Cox
2004—Melissa Tatum
2005—Stephanie Wildman
2006—Pat Chew
2007—Cynthia DeBose
2008—Beverly McQueary Smith
2009—Elizabeth Nowicki
2010—Lisa Pruitt
2011—Danné Johnson
2012—Nancy Levit

We hope you enjoy these stories.