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Trailblazer for women in the law to be honored at ABA Midyear Meeting

Selma Moidel Smith, an ABF Life Fellow celebrating her 73rd anniversary as an attorney this month, will receive the Life Fellow Achievement Award from The Fellows of the American Bar Foundation (ABF) at a special reception honoring Life Fellows at 5-6 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 7 at the Manchester Grand Hyatt in San Diego, California. Smith was admitted to the bar in January 1943 at the age of 23, and has since led extraordinary careers in both law and musical composition.

Smith has long been a prominent supporter of gender equality, and has held positions of leadership in several organizations dedicated to women's professional advancement. Colleagues describe her as an incredibly generous and creative spirit, always willing to offer her help and time. The Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles honored Smith with its first and only life membership in gratitude of her years of dedication and service, including two terms as president. She has served as chair of the Publications Committee for the California Supreme Court Historical Society and editor of its semiannual newsletter. She is currently editor-in-chief of California Legal History, the Society's annual journal. Smith championed a writing competition in the journal, inviting law students to submit essays concerning California's legal issues and history. She continues to direct it each year, and in 2014, the Society renamed the competition in her honor.

Internationally, Smith has held several posts with the International Federation of Women Lawyers. The 1948 Conference of the International Bar Association adopted by resolution her paper on clinical training in legal education curriculum. Fluent in Spanish, Smith has attended the Washington World Conference on World Peace through Law as the official host for Latin American judges and lawyers, and as representative for several women's bar associations.

Smith received the Lifetime of Service Award from the National Association of Women Lawyers (NAWL) in 2005. NAWL also named their annual student writing competition on women in the law in honor of Smith. In 2012, the ABA Senior Lawyers Division (SLD) dedicated their spring issue of Experience magazine to her in recognition of her outstanding contributions to the SLD, and her service as the first female chair of the magazine's editorial board. Smith is one of 100 women lawyers selected nationwide by the ABA for their Women Trailblazers in the Law Project.

Smith is included in several editions of Who's Who in America, and the first and subsequent editions of Who's Who of American Women (1958) and Who's Who in American Law (1977).

Smith is also a gifted musician and has composed over 100 piano and orchestral pieces. Her music has been performed by the Los Angeles Lawyers Philharmonic at Walt Disney Concert Hall and at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. She is included in the International Encyclopedia of Women Composers.

Other recipients of 2016 Fellows Awards at the San Diego event include Llewelyn G. Pritchard, Outstanding Service Award; Honorable John R. Tunheim and Barbara J. Gislason, Outstanding State Chair Award; and Kimberlé W. Crenshaw, Outstanding