

SELMA MOIDEL SMITH — TRAILBLAZER OF THE BAR AWARD

Los Angeles County Bar Association, Senior Lawyers Section, March 2, 2017



INTRODUCTION	Arthur Gilbert, Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal . . .	1:40
GREETING	Susan Prager, Dean, Southwestern Law School	6:50
MUSIC VIDEO	"Selma's Samba" — with Selma Dancing	7:40
AWARD	Nowland Hong, Chair, LACBA Senior Lawyers Section	10:50
RESPONSE	Selma Moidel Smith	11:50



Arthur Gilbert, Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal (offstage at piano)

Lawrence W. Crispo, Judge, Los Angeles Superior Court, ret.

Susan W. Prager, Dean, Southwestern Law School

Nowland Hong, Chair, Los Angeles County Bar Association, Senior Lawyers Section (behind podium)

Lydia Liberio, President, Italian-American Lawyers Association of Los Angeles

Robert M. Mallano, Presiding Justice, California Court of Appeal, ret.

Selma Moidel Smith, Lawyer and Composer (Honoree)

Gary S. Greene, Founder-Conductor, Gary S. Greene, Esq. and His Big Band of Barristers

ARTHUR GILBERT, PRESIDING JUSTICE,
CALIFORNIA COURT OF APPEAL:

I'm here to say a few words about Selma Moidel Smith. Selma and I met several years ago when she was just a kid — in her eighties. [laughter] She was and still is editor of *California Legal History*.

I had to take a leave of absence from the court. I had to do that because I received Selma's curriculum vitae. It's so extensive that it has a table of contents. Have you ever seen a c.v. with a table of contents? [laughter] It's over forty pages of single-spaced contents that include an array of articles, panels that she's been on, authorships, panel discussions. Got a few hours? — and I'll tell you. As a matter of fact, we were going to print it up, but we ran out of paper.



And I actually downloaded it. It's here, on my iPad, and I lost, actually, a good deal of memory — of RAM — as I went through it. It goes on forever. If you took twenty or thirty Nobel Prize winners and had them combine their accomplishments, I don't think it would even equal what Selma has accomplished in her lifetime.

This award that we're giving her tonight, like many of the many awards she's received, recognizes a lifetime of extraordinary leadership, both in the legal profession and throughout the larger community as well. Now, she was admitted to the bar in 1943 — can I tell them this, Selma? — at the age of twenty-three. You can do the math. The Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles awarded her its first and only honorary life membership in recognition of her years of commitment and service, including two terms as president.



The National Association of Women Lawyers has honored her with its Lifetime of Service Award and with the creation of the annual Selma Moidel Smith Law Student Writing Competition in Women and the Law. In 1953, she was appointed a Charter Member of the National Board of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, serving two years as president. Her reach is wide and far.

Internationally, her paper on legal education which advocated clinical training in law school was presented by invitation at the 1948 conference of the International Bar Association at The Hague and was adopted by resolution. She has held posts in other countries, not just in this country, because when I tell you her reach is far, I'm not joking. She's held many posts with the International Federation of Women Lawyers. She was decorated with La Orden del Mérito Juan Pablo Duarte by the Dominican Republic in 1956.

And she's editor-in-chief of *California Legal History*, the annual scholarly journal of the California Supreme Court Historical Society, where she's a board member. She's initiated a law student competition in legal history, which she's conducted each year, and at her ninety-fifth birthday celebration in 2014, the Society renamed the competition in her honor.



Selma is listed in *Who's Who in America* and in the first and later editions of *Who's Who in American Law* and *Who's Who of American Women*. She has made a significant contribution everywhere.

I have written a few articles for the California Supreme Court Historical Society, for which Selma is editor and publications chair. Selma was my editor-in-chief on more than one occasion. It was not just her sharp eye that caught the most subtle points, but her ear and sense of tone. She refused my offer to make her a senior research attorney at the Court of Appeal. [laughter] But Selma — as you know — her talents are not just limited to the law.

She's also a composer, with more than one hundred piano and instrumental pieces and is listed in the *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*. That's in addition to practicing law and doing everything else. [applause] Her music has been performed at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C., at Walt Disney Concert Hall by the Los Angeles Lawyers Philharmonic, and I, even, have had the distinction — and the terror — of playing one of her works.

Selma and I have become buddies. She has a wicked sense of humor. Subtlety does not elude her. She gets it. Our conversations are punctuated with laughter, preceded by appropriate pregnant pauses. It's not just the law we talk about, but music, the arts, the human condition. How fortunate I am to know this extraordinary individual and to be her friend. Her contributions to the law, to women, to women lawyers, to all lawyers, to the community at large — a community that extends beyond our borders. Selma, I want to thank you.

The gifts you have given us enrich us and our future generations. You're exquisite. We love you. Thank you. [applause].

SUSAN PRAGER, DEAN,
SOUTHWESTERN LAW
SCHOOL, LOS ANGELES:

Selma, before introducing a treat that this organization has for you, I do want to pose the question to the audience, what would it have been like to be a woman going to law school before Pearl Harbor?

This is an extraordinary career,



and, Selma, one of the big take-aways for so many of us is that you are an inspiration for living your life so fully and continually being involved and contributing, so you inspire us all.

With that, I want to announce that Gary S. Greene, Esq. and his Big Band of Barristers will play “Selma’s Samba.”

SAMBA
Opus 19



© Selma Smith 1969
Renewed 1997

by
SELMA SMITH

© Selma Smith 2017

NOWLAND HONG, CHAIR,
LOS ANGELES COUNTY
BAR ASSOCIATION, SENIOR
LAWYERS SECTION:

Selma, will you come
up here and join me,
please? You know, we
have always heard
about the Renaissance
Man. Well, this is the
Renaissance Woman.

Now, I don't think
we'll ever encounter
anyone as talented and
capable as Selma Smith.



Selma, I hope you
have a little space, with
all the other awards
you've received, for the
Trailblazer Award. You
make us very proud of
being legal individuals.
Congratulations.

Please don't leave;
you have to say a few
words.



LACBA

Senior Lawyers Section

With Respect and Admiration Recognizes

Selma Moidel Smith

as a

Trailblazer of the Bar

Presented March 2, 2017
Los Angeles County Bar Association

SELMA MOIDEL SMITH:

Well, I didn't even know I was going to be dancing! [laughter] That happens to be what music does for me, and that's one of my pieces of music, but they are a kaleidoscope, and they include all varieties.

I must say, and I have said this before — well, let me give you the foundation: the foundation is that on January 5, of 1943, I was admitted to the bar. Many years later in 1993, our Los Angeles County Bar Association inducted me into their Fifty Year Club. A month from tomorrow, if the good Lord is willing, I will become ninety-eight. And so, I must say that I take nothing for granted. I am grateful for the gift of time.

And I thank you all for your kindness and generosity this evening.

