
Judge Betty Roberts's Illustrious Career

Selma Moidel Smith

Betty Roberts, the first woman to serve on the Oregon Supreme Court, is a mother of four who entered night law school at the age of 39, on the same day a daughter entered Stanford University.

Forty-four years later, on August 6, 2006, Roberts was recognized for her outstanding accomplishments when she received a Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award from the ABA Commission on Women at the Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Roberts' political career began in 1964 when she was elected as a state representative in the Oregon legislature. Four years later, she was elected the sole woman in the state Senate. In 1974 she narrowly lost the Democratic gubernatorial primary, but her strong showing prompted the winner, Bob Straub, to appoint her in 1977 to the Oregon Court of Appeals, where she became the first woman judge. In 1982 she became the first woman to serve as an associate justice on the state Supreme Court with her appointment by Governor Victor Atiyeh.

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Her life is remarkable for her persistence. She had completed only one year of college at Texas Wesleyan College at Fort Worth in 1941-42 before taking time out to raise a family of two sons and two daughters. She returned to her studies and earned her bachelor's degree in education in 1958 at Portland State University. She continued her studies at the University of Oregon, receiving her master's degree in political science.

"It was mid-August 1962, and I was sitting in the office of the chairman of the political science department at the University of Oregon," she recalls. "I'd come to talk about work on a doctoral program in political science." Despite her near-perfect grades, she was told that, at age 39, she was too old to pursue a doctoral degree. She recounts that they had never had a woman professor or woman doctoral candidate in political science. "There were no gender or age discrimination laws and no appeal process from his decision." Driving home, she says, "I swore a little, but my thoughts turned to the night law school in Portland that I'd heard about." Her prior degrees and grades gained Roberts immediate acceptance at Northwestern School of Law (later part of Lewis & Clark College), where she earned her J.D. in 1966.

Revolving Careers

Her life is also remarkable for her ability to excel in more than

one career role at a time. She continued her first occupation as a high school social studies teacher while earning her master's degree and while attending night law classes, as well as during her tenure in the Oregon House of Representatives. As a practicing lawyer from 1967 to 1977, until her appointment to the bench, she served as a college instructor in political science and business law.

Roberts devoted herself to the cause of education through public service and politics in addition to teaching. She served on the boards of her collegiate alumni associations, the board of a school for troubled youths, as an elected board member of her local school district, and as a member of the Governor's Metropolitan Area Commission on Higher Education. In 1975, she received the Education Citizen of the Year Award from the Oregon Education Association. In later years, she was honored for service and achievement by Portland State University, Oregon State University and the University of Oregon. The culmination of her teaching career came in the years after her Supreme Court service when she served as a visiting professor at Oregon State University, holding the Dubach Endowed Chair in Political Science from 1988 to 1991.

Advancing the role of women in the law has been a chief concern for Roberts. She was a founding board member of Oregon Women Lawyers and served as president of the Oregon Women Lawyers' Foundation. In 1992, she was honored as the first recipient of the Oregon Women Lawyers' Justice Betty Roberts Award. This annual award "recognizes an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to promoting women in the legal profession and in the community," and is given to honor a person "who has influenced women to pursue legal careers, opened doors for women attorneys, or advanced opportunities for women within the profession."

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Roberts has also worked to advance the role of women in politics. She was a founding board member of the Women's Investment Network-PAC, an organization formed to help elect women to the Oregon legislature. For her work on behalf of women in politics, she has been honored by both the Oregon Women's Political Caucus and the Portland Area Women's Political Caucus.

On her retirement from the Supreme Court in 1986, Roberts served as a pro tem settlement conference judge by appointment of the chief justice. Her services were soon

requested by lawyers who asked her to serve as a private mediator, and this led to a new career in alternative dispute resolution. In 1990, she attended a training course in judicial arbitration provided by Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services (JAMS) and later entered into a contract with U.S. Arbitration and Mediation Services of Oregon in Portland. Her cases have included such areas of law as medical malpractice, contracts, employment harassment, homeowners' insurance policies, and gender and age discrimination.

Roberts particularly recommends mediation as a rewarding second career for senior lawyers. Although she has served as both a single arbitrator and as a third arbitrator, she has chosen most recently to serve as a mediator. She says her experience has shown that when the parties participate in the resolution of the dispute, they are far more likely to reach a successful settlement. Her efforts have resulted in a 90 percent settlement rate for her cases.

Time to Reflect

Roberts is currently writing a memoir of her life and career, under the present working title, "With Grit and by Grace." The book is expected to be published in 2008 by the Oregon State University Press.

The ABA Commission on Women in the Profession presents Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Awards to women lawyers and judges on the basis of their accomplishments and their role in opening doors for other women lawyers. Past recipients have included Associate Justices Sandra Day O'Connor and Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

In accepting the Commission's award, Roberts concluded her remarks: "Younger women want to know our stories. Not just the successes and accomplishments, but the tough parts, too. We need to tell them about the rejections, defeats, and losses as well as the rewards, the wins, and the achievements. For it is the first that makes us strong, and determined enough to try again and succeed.

"We are here to recognize each other's own unique backgrounds, and to reaffirm our commitment to do what we can personally, and through our profession, to ensure that every individual has the opportunity to find his or her own amazing path through life." •

Developing the Business (cont. from page 16)

pleasant both at work and in your personal life.

If you are in a firm, do not overlook the value of cross-marketing within your firm. Clients often do not know what other services a firm can offer; the same is also true of other lawyers within the firm. You may have a vague idea of the practice area of the lawyer down the hall; he or she probably has the same limited understanding of your practice and background. A firm can maximize marketing dollars by identifying needs among existing clients and offering firm lawyers who can provide the expertise

necessary to meet that need. Given the increased mobility of lawyers, not everyone you work with may know about your prior experience. Spend time with the lawyers in your firm, particularly if you are new to the group. Make sure that all the people with whom you practice know your abilities and experiences. Conversely, make sure that you are familiar with the practice areas and talents of your colleagues. The next time an existing client needs legal assistance in an area outside your expertise, canvas your practice group to see if there is someone among you who can handle the problem. One-stop shopping is convenient for all us. On the other hand, if your firm cannot provide the necessary expertise, assist the client in finding a lawyer who is competent to handle the problem. You will have made a friend on both sides of the transaction.

Keep track of the people to whom you have made referrals. If you find you are not getting reciprocal referrals, send the next referral to someone else. If another lawyer refers you a case, be sure to say thanks.

Conclusion:

Nothing about business development is fast or easy. It is, however, essential. If you are going to keep your business moving forward, you have to have work and clients. Focus on business development in the same way that you focus on client representation. The time and attention will be worth the work. •

Federal Judge (cont. from page 23)

We are, for the most part, no longer in the realm of egregiously discriminatory laws, which provided the catalyst for the 1970s second-wave feminism. But what the statistics I just cited suggest is that women are not mobilizing extra-legally or institutionally in order to force change; instead, they are accepting the dictated expectations of our workplaces and assuming a "take-it-or-leave-it" approach to their careers. I want to encourage you not to be passive, not to be complacent about your career, your family, or the work-life balance you desire. If you are dissatisfied with what your employer offers you, demand more. If you feel you are being discriminated against or putting up with insidious comments or conduct, be vocal and organize with others who can support you. Institutional mobilization, or "change from within," can be a powerful tool, and as law students and lawyers, you have the resources and privilege to produce this change.

In closing, I thank you for letting me trace how far we've come, using my experience as a case study. The ambiguity of your conference title "Legally Female" has increased throughout the discussions today, and this is good. But one thing is not ambiguous: women lawyers have been and will continue to be, collectively, a huge political force capable of effecting deep change, and in the process finding the meaning and purpose we all search for in our individual lives. Recognizing our differences but embracing what is shared is being "Legally Female," and as Margaret Mead told us: "Nothing is more powerful than the human mind." •