

ABA Senior Lawyers Division Meets in Puerto Rico

by
Selma Moidel Smith

The scene is San Juan, Puerto Rico. The time is November 1999. The occasion is the first visit of the ABA Senior Lawyers Division to this island Commonwealth.

In the accompanying photo, we are attending the elegant "Welcome" dinner given by our host Hector Reichard, Jr., a member of the Division's governing Council and a former attorney general for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

The following days were filled with committee meetings, Council meetings presided over by Division Chair Ed Kallgren, and visits to important sites on the island.

Shipped specially for arrival at the meeting was the latest issue of *Experience*, the Division's magazine. The cover story, "The UnCommon Law of Puerto Rico," by Reichard, was illustrated by a photo of the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico. Happily, this included one woman, the Hon. Miriam Naveira de Rodón, who has served on the Court for the past 15 years.

A companion article presented four other leaders of the legal community which, in answer to my request, also included a woman, Superior Judge Rita Vélez-Borrás.

These women's careers offer us a glimpse into the lives of Puerto Rican women in the law, and the opportunities open to them today.

The Hon. Miriam Naveira de Rodón received a B.A. from Mount St. Vincent College in New York in 1956, J.D. from University of Puerto Rico Law School in 1960, LL.M. from Columbia University in 1969, fol-

lowed by postgraduate studies at Leiden University, Holland, and a LL.D. from Georgetown University School of Law in 1990.

de Rodón served as a law clerk at the Supreme Court of Puerto Rico from 1963 to 1971. In 1966, she assumed the position of assistant attorney general, which she held until 1973, when she became assistant solicitor general. She was also in private practice from 1976 to 1985, and at the same was a professor at the Inter-American University School of Law. In 1985, de Rodón was appointed to the Supreme Court of

Puerto Rico. Since 1992, she has served as president of the Judicial Commission on Gender Bias. She is married and has two children.

Judge Rita Vélez-Borrás was educated in San Juan. In 1972, she obtained her B.A. summa cum laude with a major in political science from the University of Puerto Rico in 1972. In 1976, she received her J.D. magna cum laude from the UPR Law School. Prior to her judicial appointment, Judge Velez-Borrás was in private practice and also served as attorney general for Puerto Rico. In 1988, she was appointed to her current position of Superior Judge.

She has served as a professor of law at the UPR, Inter-American University, and Catholic University. In her work with the Institute of Judicial Studies, she has offered seminars for judges and law clerks. She is also active in the training and orientation program for newly appointed judges. In the past she served as president of the Personnel Board of the Judicial Branch and president of the Judicial Appointments Commission of the Puerto Rico Bar Association. Judge Vélez-Borrás is married and has one daughter.



Left to Right: Hector Reichard, Jr., Council member (Host), Selma Moidel Smith, Council Member; Superior Court Judge Carmen Rita Velez-Borrás, San Juan, Supreme Court Chief Justice Jose A. Andreu Garca, San Juan

[Photo caption corrected per next issue, 86:2 (Summer 2000), page 5.]

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