



Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles

WLALA Newsletter: April 2019

Wishing Selma Moidel Smith a Happy 100th Birthday

By Kelsey Maher & Elizabeth Bock (WLALA History Project)



Happy Birthday, Selma!



Here are just a few interesting articles throughout the years of Selma Moidel Smith.

[California Supreme Court Historical Society Grant Honors Selma Moidel Smith](#)

[Women Lawyers Journal's A Conversation with Selma Moidel Smith](#)

[A Tribute to Selma](#)

[Inaugural Life Fellows Achievement Award](#)

[Trailblazer of the Bar Award](#)

[The California Supreme Court Historical Society Law Student Writing Competition in California Legal History](#)

[Curriculum Vitae August 2018](#)

Wishing Selma Moidel Smith a Happy 100th Birthday

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Selma Moidel Smith, a member of the State Bar since January 1943, past president (1947 and 1948) and first honorary life member of WLALA, and a pillar of the legal community, has achieved countless milestones in her life and career. Soon she will reach one more: On April 3, Selma will celebrate her 100th birthday, adding yet another achievement to her already impressively long list of accomplishments, honors, and recognitions.

One of five women in her law school class of 150 students at the University of Southern California, Selma has always known how to stand out in a crowd. She gained prominence in the legal community early on in her career, particularly among women lawyers. Not afraid to make a name for herself within a profession dominated by male peers, Selma joined the Southern California Women Lawyers Association (WLALA's predecessor) on the very same day she was admitted to the bar; within four years, she was elected president and then re-elected the next year. As Selma has recounted of her past achievements in a 2017 profile in *Women Lawyers Journal*, "I never sought the spotlight or a leadership role but, time and again, my colleagues would honor me by recognizing my contributions in that way." (You can read the full profile [HERE](#).)

To read the rest of the article, please [CLICK HERE](#).

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Selma's 58-page resume (available [here](#)) reflects her many accomplishments over her decades-long career. In addition to her two terms as president of WLALA, highlights of Selma's achievements and accolades include: the National Association of Women Lawyers' honoring of her with its Lifetime of Service Award in 1999 and founding of a law student writing competition in her name in 2005; her membership in and presidency of the Los Angeles Business Women's Council; her election to the board of the California Supreme Court Historical Society in 2001, where she has served as editor of both the society's journal, *California Legal History*, and its semiannual newsletter; her decades of service to the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania, whose national board she helped charter in 1953 and on which she has sat throughout the board's history, including two years as president; and her selection as one of less than 100 women featured in the ABA's Women Trailblazers Oral Histories Project.

Selma has always been a champion of issues important to women. In addition to her positions of leadership within women's and other organizations locally and nationally, Selma has worked in the international community to advance women in the law. In 1965, she served as the official representative of a number of women's legal organizations at the Washington World Conference on World Peace through Law. She has also held various posts with the International Federation of Women Lawyers. And she was decorated with La Orden del Mérito Juan Pablo Duarte by the Dominican Republic in 1956.

While Selma's contributions to the legal community are ever-reaching, her talents go far beyond the law. Selma is a gifted pianist, violinist, Spanish guitarist, and composer of over 100 piano and instrumental pieces in classical, Latin, and other styles. Her music has been featured at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington, D.C. and performed by the Los Angeles Lawyers Philharmonic, to a standing ovation, at Walt Disney Concert Hall. Selma is also listed in the *International Encyclopedia of Women Composers*.

Selma's artistic side does not end with her passion for music. She is also a poet. Below are a few lines of one of Selma's earliest poems, composed at the age of 16, titled "Dawn and Sunset" (you can read the full text of the poem [here](#)).

Dawn — and the world awakens

From its peaceful slumber;

The pinkish hues of the morning sun

Are tinting the hills and valleys.

What can this new day bring?

Perhaps a smile, perhaps a tear.

But always inspiration!

As Selma sees in Dawn, so too we see in her: always inspiration. Join us in celebrating Selma's lifetime of service, talents, and achievements, and in wishing her a very Happy Birthday!