

Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles

Oral History Project

Selma Moidel Smith

President: 1947 and 1948

Self-Interview at the Request of WLALA

Audio-recorded January 5, 1986

This is Selma Moidel Smith speaking. I was president of the Southern California Women Lawyers Association from 1947 to '48 and '48 to '49. You have asked us to reminisce over the years of our presidencies and I think this will be best accomplished today, because the date today is January 5, 1986, and it happens that on January 5, 1943, I was admitted to the practice of law. With easy arithmetic, this is my 43rd anniversary today. I was then 23 years of age, and at the time that I assumed the presidency of this women lawyers' group I was 27, and the youngest president they had elected.

Our members came to our group from all over the Southern California area, from Fresno down to San Diego and all points in between. For this reason, we selected monthly dinner meetings instead of luncheons because this gave them the chance to come in from all the outlying areas. At that time our annual dues were \$2.00. Our dinners were \$2.00 – \$2.50, possibly \$3.00, and this included tax and tip.

The meetings were usually addressed by judges, court commissioners, those who were in position to give us some improvement of our lawyering skills. In addition, we occasionally had women lawyers who were specialists in various fields, and we were happy to share in their expertise.

We had three special meetings that were held annually. One was a joint meeting with the Los Angeles County Medical Women's Association. We alternated with them in who would present the program, and it was always a matter of some mutual concern. This was a very enlightening kind of experience we shared. Many

of us had problems that could be answered in one or the other areas, and it gave us an insight into problems that were faced by women doctors as well as those common to women lawyers.

A second group of meetings that we always held was with the new admittees. We realized from our own personal experiences that getting started was not the easiest thing, particularly for a woman lawyer. It was also true that we had much we could share both in the practical experience of where you could take your matter to be filed, which building you went to, which courtroom, simply the geography of where we needed to be, in addition to the preparing of pleadings and preparation of arguments for cases. It was a matter of women sharing with women in a way that really needed most to be done.

Another group with whom we met annually was the Los Angeles Business Women's Council, and as its name implies, it was a group of business and professional women in the entire Los Angeles community area. I happened to be on the board of this council at the same time that I was president of the Women Lawyers. Each year we presented a program to the council. Then, when I became president of the council itself in 1952, I presented them a full year of women lawyers, women judges, and legislative issues. I must say that they really had a full year of law. In fact, when I was installed as president of this council I arranged for Judge Roberta Butzbach to be the installing officer, and Judge Georgia P. Bullock, the one woman on the L.A. Superior Court, to be the guest speaker.

Also during my year with the council, I had occasion to write to Governor Earl Warren, requesting him to make an appointment of a woman to fill a Senate vacancy created by the election of Richard Nixon to the vice-presidency. I have his letter of reply in my file. Unfortunately, a woman was not appointed to fill that vacancy.

In referring to that letter of reply, I will say that I have provided, together with these oral comments, much in the way of copies of photographs, letters, newspaper clippings, brochures, articles, and other written materials which will be illustrative of all of the comments that I am making.

Returning to the Women Lawyers, in 1947 I served as the delegate to the State Bar convention during both terms, and I must add that it was really disheartening to look around at the Conference of State Bar Delegates and to see the very, very few women delegates present. We certainly have seen a difference in that direction in the years that followed, but I know that we want to see a great deal more of it in the future as well.

With the State Bar, I had already served on their committees in 1944 and '45 for the Servicemen's Legal Aid. These were the last two years of World War II, and I can say that at least on this committee there were a few women lawyers. One of them was Helen Kemble, and I well remember the evening she came by to pick me up at my home, so that we could go together and enjoy a thank-you dinner that was being offered to the lawyers by the servicemen themselves at a very nice hotel on the beach in Santa Monica. Helen and I got to share a lot of comparative notes on

our experiences on that committee, and we were very happy to have been able to give that kind of assistance to our servicemen through the State Bar.

Speaking of the State Bar, I was later appointed, in 1952, an examiner on their behalf, in disciplinary proceedings, and then in 1964, to the Conference Committee on Unauthorized Practice of Medicine. One amusing thing was that when they would send out their Certificate of Appreciation for service to these committees, and this was true for other Bar groups too, they always put the name of the woman lawyer, followed by "and we thank him for his work on the committee that he served." They never saw the need to make the gender agree.

During my first term in 1947 one of the issues we were confronting was a legislative one, and it came popularly to be known as the "Wives' Paycheck Bill." We were seeking the right of a working wife to collect her own paycheck. It seems inconceivable that this is something that should have to have been fought for. But the husband, as manager of the community, had the right to do this, and unfortunately, many husbands who otherwise absented themselves would return at the proper time and place in order to take that paycheck and absent themselves again. I should say that many of these husbands were not exactly sober at the time they came to collect these checks. This presented the county quite a problem, and therefore, perhaps not as the result of enlightenment, but consideration for the county relief rolls, the law finally was passed which gave this working wife the

opportunity to get her own hands on that paycheck, and then, hopefully, her family would be fed.

Another issue in 1947 arose when a Superior Court judge ordered a woman lawyer to remove her hat before addressing his court. We had never had an occurrence like this before, and it occasioned much press interest, both city press and our legal press as well. Members of the bench and bar were approached for comment including the two presidents of the women lawyers' groups. The one common bond that went through all of them was that no one had ever heard of anyone enforcing such a rule, if in fact, there was such a rule.

Also, that same year in 1947, I was elected dean of the Los Angeles Alumnae Chapter of Iota Tau Tau, an international legal sorority. Let me give you just a word about that sorority. It was obviously not intended as a social gathering; it was rather a sorority intended for one purpose, and that was to recognize scholastic achievement in women law students. They had, and continue to have, chapters in law schools throughout the United States, and in a good number of foreign countries as well. In 1942, I had won the First Place International Scholarship Award, and it so happened it was the first time a Californian had received first place. This was announced at their convention in Baltimore, Maryland. However, because of the war, the actual presentation of these awards was withheld until after the war had been concluded. In 1946, the presentations were actually made, and I received a beautiful gold key with a diamond, and the name of the recipient and the year

inscribed on it. It was a tangible expression of their concern that women law students receive recognition because they knew, things being as they were, they very likely would not otherwise receive it.

Later, I was appointed chairman of their Amendments Committee in 1948, chairman of the Placement Committee in 1949, and was elected the international treasurer from 1959 to 1962. I should say that the alumnae chapter represented those women law students who had become lawyers. During my second term [as president of the Women Lawyers], in the year 1948, I served on the Activities Committee of the Junior Bar Conference of the American Bar Association, and it was once again interesting to see that I was the only woman in a committee of 20 lawyers from different parts of the United States.

In 1948, I received an invitation from the International Bar Association to attend and present a paper to their conference at The Hague, to meet in August that year. This occasioned much response in our legal community, and it certainly signified to the women lawyers in the group a recognition of the existence of a woman lawyer and her worthiness to be present and to be listened to by an international group of jurists. It occurred to us that this was an all too uncommon event, and I must say that I enjoyed very much the appreciation expressed by the members of the bar who were male colleagues, and members of the bench who expressed their pleasure in having this extended to me. Many of them telephoned, and Leo Freund, presiding judge of the Municipal Court was kind enough to write

his congratulations. That is also among the many documents I have left with all of these comments.

My subject for the paper was [the need for clinical] legal education, and I was gratified to know that it was well received, and in fact, in 1954, at another of their conferences in Europe, that paper was still available in its various languages as a research tool and a paper for use by attorneys at the conference.

Before my term ended in mid-February of 1949, I received an appointment as regional director of the National Association of Women Lawyers. My regional area was to cover Utah, Nevada, California, Arizona, and Hawaii. Let me tell you just a bit about the National Association. This group served for the women lawyers of the country in much the same way that the American Bar Association served for men. In fact, we had a meeting with the American Bar Association, and always scheduled ours immediately before or after the sessions of the American Bar. My appointment was made by the president, Charlotte Gauer of Chicago, on the recommendation of Percilla Lawyer Randolph, a Los Angeles attorney.

And, while I speak of the National Association of Women Lawyers, I will mention other committees that I headed or served on during these years. I chaired the Committee on the Social Commission of the U.N. in 1946, the Committee on Unauthorized Practice of Law in 1952, the Uniform Divorce Law Committee in 1955, on Judicial Administration in 1960, and I also served on the Law Day Committee in 1960 to '61. In 1966, I chaired the Committee on World Peace through Law.

The opportunities to meet with women lawyers throughout the country was one of the valuable assets offered by membership in this national association. We tend sometimes to have our horizons too narrow, and the opportunity to meet with other women lawyers, to know what was happening in their practices, to know what their concerns were and the problems they solved, were of great assistance. It felt very good to enlarge the scope of friendships that had already been formed. The president of the National Association of Women Lawyers in the year that I was admitted was Marguerite Rawalt, and I will have occasion to refer to her again in two more comments that I make just a little later on.

The year 1949 provided three other bar appointments, and I will mention them at this point. The Lawyers' Club of Los Angeles appointed me to their Legal Aid Committee, and the Los Angeles Bar Association to its Psychopathic Court Committee, on which I served for six full years. Then, in 1958, the Los Angeles Bar appointed me to its Adoptions Committee. Referring to the Lawyers' Club again, there were several other committees on which I served, their Probate Law and Procedure Committee in 1950, the Public Defenders' Committee in 1951, and the Criminal Law and Procedure Committee in 1957.

I have been requested not to confine my report and comments to my tenure as president, since that came so early in my career. I have been asked to continue to make comments with regard to other activities, and I will do this at this time. As you see, I am really just laying the foundation for the introduction of evidence.

In the closing months of my term, early in 1949, we were preparing for the arrival of the International Federation of Women Lawyers. This group of women lawyers from different parts of the world would be arriving for their fifth conference in May, and it would be their first visit to the city of Los Angeles. These events, as they were being planned, would be hosted by the National Association of Women Lawyers, the Southern California Women Lawyers, and by the Los Angeles Business Women's Council.

There were delegates from 16 foreign countries, in addition to the American members who came from different parts of the country, and at our first opening plenary session the mayor, Fletcher Bowron, and Mrs. Bowron hosted the events. And it was a spectacular sight to see. In our City Council chambers, all of the foreign delegates were seated in the seats usually occupied by the council, with all the flags of the countries represented flying above them. Each of the foreign delegates was given the opportunity to speak, and of course, we had the translation of their speeches in different languages. It was followed by a tea hosted by Mrs. Bowron and all of the delegates were warmly welcomed by the multitude of people who came to see and hear this group of women lawyers from all over the world.

This was a signal occasion because it was the first time in our city where we hosted such an international gathering of women lawyers. It gave much credence to the idea that women lawyers did indeed exist and that, even in that year of 1949,

they convened for business and to meet each other as colleagues throughout the world.

We arranged quite a mix of both working sessions and social events, so that they might have an opportunity to gain some living memory of the city they were seeing for the first time. We took them to our courtrooms, so that they might observe the functioning of our courts; we took them to the women's jail, where we had lunch, waited on by the women inmates, and using the same utensils as used by the prisoners. We took them to institutions of art, such as the Huntington Gallery, to libraries, and to motion picture studios.

In these foreign delegates we found not only colleagues, but friends. Many of us had opened our homes to house our foreign delegates, and I was extremely fortunate to receive into my home a woman by the name of Milady Félix de L'Official of the Dominican Republic. Because her English was extremely limited, we made good use of the Spanish I had acquired. I learned that, seven years before, in 1942, the women of her country were first granted equal rights and the right to vote, and in that first election, she was elected a senator and the only woman in the Congress of her country. She was a staunch fighter for women's rights, and they were only too happy to give her this recognition for her victory for them.

She and I became fast friends, and we continue so to this day. She was our hostess when she presided at the conference of the International Federation of Women Lawyers in the Dominican Republic in 1956, and anyone who attended will,

I am sure, agree that we have never before or since received better or warmer hospitality than she made possible for us. During that conference in the Dominican Republic, I was also given an award, a decoration. Its name was, in Spanish, La Orden del Mérito Juan Pablo Duarte, named for one of their very early patriots. I learned that a few months earlier, a higher rank of that decoration was given to our vice president, Richard M. Nixon.

Milady Félix de L'Official really served as a role model in her country. She was not only an outstanding orator, a lawyer, president of the women's bar, but she was also the wife of a prominent physician and mother of a son who would himself become a physician. She combined all of these roles with grace and beauty.

While talking about the International Federation, I really should tell you about their conference in Europe in 1954, a conference which lasted some four and one-half weeks, and in which the American delegation, for a change, were the visitors. The initial meeting of our conference was in Helsinki and we were hosted by Helvi Sipilä, who was the president of her country's Women's Bar. Helvi later went on to become assistant secretary-general of the U.N., and I will mention her again later in another connection. At this point we were very happy to be guests in her home, and to meet the women who were lawyers in Finland.

This was the beginning of a long list of official receptions throughout all of the Scandinavian and European countries, and we realized by the time we had

concluded our trip and had had the opportunity to meet our colleagues, that something they told us was true in each of their countries.

Each group told us that our conference had raised immeasurably the stature and the status of women lawyers in that country. Because each one had had to involve their governments in the official receptions, because their governments were also sponsoring many of the conferences and events, they had to become very consciously aware of the existence of women lawyers in their midst, and plan recognition for them and their visiting colleagues from other parts of the world. Fortunately, they never returned to the status they had held before.

Barriers of language were easily surmounted by everything that we had in common. This was an unparalleled experience for all of us. We learned how these women lived, how their families lived, how their courts conducted their business, what the practice of law really amounted to in their countries, and the part that women lawyers could play in that country. This was an experience that all of us will always remember.

In 1958 the International Federation returned to Los Angeles for their ninth conference, and I was delighted to have Milady in my home again as my very honored houseguest. We provided a series of meetings and conferences and receptions that we hoped were up to the standard they had set for us. One of these social events took place at my own home where I was delighted to have all of the

foreign delegates and the American delegates enjoy an evening repast, and to see all of them, as we had asked for the closing occasion, in their national dress.

Returning from the international to the local bar association scene, one year after I had completed my term as president I was named Charter Secretary of the Council of Bar Associations. This was in the year 1950. A meeting was scheduled at a private club, and I approached the entrance at the proper time and place, briefcase in hand and ready to take up my business as the secretary. To my surprise, I was challenged at the door, and in the discussion that ensued it seemed that it was going to be a problem in that no woman had ever set foot or was going to set foot into that area, and even though I indicated that I was there for a bar association and that the members were all men and that I was expected to be there, nothing could avail. Despite all my efforts I had to return to my office, attempt to telephone, but they would not put him on the telephone, and I finally sent a wire to tell the president why the secretary had not appeared. I am happy to say no meeting of this group was ever scheduled there again.

Speaking again of women's organizations, in 1951, I was elected a director of the California Business Women's Council, and in 1953, first vice president of that council.

In 1953, I received a letter from the president of the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. The president invited me to become a charter member of a National Board, whose members would serve as ambassadors of good

will for the college. This Woman's Medical College, it seems, had been founded in 1850 for the express purpose of providing an institution that would permit the training and education of women to become physicians. At this point I was sure that the letter had been misdirected, intended for one more of the many Smiths, and I replied to the president to that effect. He immediately responded saying that he knew exactly who I was and renewed the invitation. I said that I would come back to visit the college and make my determination.

In May of 1953, I did visit the college and its teaching hospital, and from everything that I could see and learn about it, I came to realize that it was fulfilling a unique role for women in a sister profession. I did indeed become a member of that National Board and remain so to this day. Once again, I found that I was, by far, the youngest member of that National Board.

In the intervening years I have served on its Awards Committee from 1972 to 1984, and this in itself was a most worthwhile occupation. I learned, as a member of the Awards Committee, that we would be selecting annually a woman medical scientist who would be honored by an award from our National Board to be presented at the college during our National Board functions. This gave me the opportunity, and in fact the obligation, to examine very closely the curricula vitae of all of the candidates for this award, and this served to bring recognition to a member of the medical community, a woman who otherwise would have been passed over in many other situations. Nominations were made by medical

institutions throughout the country who themselves, for the first time, had to pay attention to women on the staff, in the institution, in the teaching hospital, in whatever medical pursuit, with letters of reference, letters of praise for their own respective nominees.

In 1958, a very special occasion was scheduled for the members of the National Board. We were to be received at the White House by President and Mrs. Eisenhower and hosted to a tea. In the cab going to the White House that afternoon, I was accompanied by another member of the National Board, Mrs. John B. Kelly of Philadelphia, whose daughter was also a member of the National Board. Her daughter was Grace Kelly, later Princess Grace of Monaco.

At the White House that afternoon, a very interesting thing took place. I was approached by a member of the National Board who said to me, "My name is Selma Smith," and I said, "Well, my name is Selma Smith," and she said, "Yes, I know." She continued, "And I was born in Ohio," and I said, "So was I." And she said, "Yes, I know." I looked at her, puzzled, and she said, "I'm Selma [Smith] Burton." She was indeed the wife of Associate Justice Harold Burton of the U.S. Supreme Court. I said, "It so happens I have business with your husband because tomorrow morning I will be admitted to practice before the U.S. Supreme Court, so I will see him then." And she said, "I'll be happy to let him know you're coming."

This was a lovely way to meet her, and it certainly paved the way for the next morning. And, as I stood in the front row, waiting for the justices to take their

places, all entering in their black robes, as Justice Harold Burton passed before me, he turned in my direction, made a broad wink which was enjoyed by everyone, and proceeded to seat himself. This was a special note in the ceremony that morning, and Chief Justice Earl Warren also greeted me specifically to welcome me as a colleague from California.

My admission was moved by Marguerite Rawalt, who had been the president of the National Association of Women Lawyers when I was first admitted to practice in California. When I requested her to serve me in this capacity, she said, "I will do it with pleasure, and I will ask you for a favor later on." In fact, she did. In 1960, she asked me to write a letter of recommendation for a position she was seeking in Washington, D.C. The letter was to be written to President-Elect Kennedy, and I was very happy to do so. I'm happy also to say she received the position she was seeking.

At this time the National Board membership included Marguerite Rawalt and Charlotte Gauer, both past presidents of the National Association of Women Lawyers. Another woman lawyer crossed the scene of the medical college in 1976, when Helvi Sipilä, our hostess in Finland of the International Federation of Women Lawyers, and now assistant secretary-general of the United Nations, arrived to become the commencement speaker at the invitation of our medical college for the graduation of its medical school. It was a great occasion for a reunion. Helvi and I spent a lovely evening together before the commencement, reminiscing about our

International Federation, about women lawyers in general, and remembering many wonderful occasions between the two of us.

In 1976, the National Board appointed me to its Executive Council, a post I held from then until 1980. In 1980, I was elected president of the National Board. I served for two years and in 1982 to 1984 served again on the Executive Council.

During my years on the National Board I was able to perform a special function for the medical college. I was the official college delegate to the inaugurations of two University of California presidents, Charles Hitch in 1968 and David Gardner in 1984. At these International Convocations it was of interest to me to note, in the programs listing the delegates and the institutions of higher learning, that I was the only woman lawyer listed by name and title among all of them. In 1985, I was asked to chair their Past Presidents' Council.

To conclude with the National Board, I simply indicate that the name was changed in 1970 to the Medical College of Pennsylvania. This was necessary at that time for federal funding regulations, since men would now be admitted. But I am happy to say that 60 percent of every freshman class is still reserved for women, and they still continue to offer many special programs for women which do not exist in any other medical school. One of these is the Archives and Special Collections on Women in Medicine, and this is a program by which they are conserving and preserving all of the memorabilia and histories of women in medicine, not only of this medical college, but of women in medicine wherever. It is a source for scholars

who come from all parts of the world to study the lives of women physicians in history. For all of these many reasons it was a particular pleasure for me to chair the 30th Anniversary Celebrations of our National Board in Washington, D.C., in 1983.

Let me go back now to the years 1957 and 1958 for two particular events at that time. At the end of 1957, I received a letter from the Marquis Publications House inviting me to be listed in their forthcoming First Edition of *Who's Who of American Women*. It would appear in 1958, and as it turned out, it has appeared regularly since then. Later, I would be listed in their *World Who's Who in Commerce and Industry* and each issue of *Who's Who in American Law*.

Also in 1958, I was presented an Award of Merit from the Los Angeles Business Women's Council which said in part, "By reason of the devotion to the advancement of women in business, industry and the professions." It was presented to me by Judge Stanley Mosk of the Los Angeles Superior Court, who was later elevated to our state Supreme Court.

In 1960 President Eisenhower with the Joint Resolution of Congress, proclaimed May 1, 1960 as Law Day U.S.A. This opened a new chapter in the activities of the bar associations and the women lawyers in particular. The National Association of Women Lawyers sponsored Law Day observances throughout the country. I served as California member of its National Law Day Committee, and participated in the luncheon in a variety of ways.

The luncheon was held at the Ambassador Hotel in the Cocoanut Grove, and the principal speaker at our luncheon was Justice Mildred Lillie of the California District Court of Appeal. Other women judges who attended were Municipal Judges Ida May Adams, Leila Bulgrin, May Lahey and Kathleen Parker. Judge Parker was later elected to the Superior Court.

A special feature of our luncheon was an essay contest on the subject, "What Law Day Means to Me." I chaired the essay contest and was happy to award the prize to a first-year woman law student who was a young mother of five sons ranging from three and one-half to twelve years of age. The prize was a two-volume set of *California Family Law* published by Bancroft-Whitney. The contest winner's family was very happy, all of them, to witness the award.

We had representatives at the luncheon from all the bar associations; we had representatives from many, many women's organizations; the mayor's wife was in attendance. Also honored at the luncheon was Raymond Burr of Perry Mason fame who made the response to Justice Lillie's luncheon address. He was also presented with an emblem of law and justice in recognition of his performances on television.

In preparation for this luncheon, I appeared as a special guest on a program of Groucho Marx's on his television show, *You Bet Your Life*, and I can certainly tell you that it was a memorable occasion. Groucho Marx made full play of the idea that he was interviewing a woman lawyer, and he made capital of every foible that could be fastened on, and for those of you who remember his show, I did guess the "secret

woyd,” as he would have said it. This show was repeated for many, many years, and it’s entirely possible that some of you have seen the reruns. If not, just wait and I’m sure it will be back again. In spite of all the antics, I did deliver the message of Law Day and the forthcoming luncheon that would be held [which was heard by the studio audience but edited out of the final version shown on television]. Even he expressed great interest in it.

In 1961 the National Association of Women Lawyers again sponsored a Law Day Luncheon and I served again on this national committee. I also served as chairman of all of its contests and these included, in addition to the essay contest, Court Motto, Slogan, Poster and Song Contests. All of these had the design of highlighting the observance of Law Day and generating interest in its objective of world peace through law.

In preparation for the luncheon I again appeared on television, this time on a public service interview program, to give the highlights in advance: the master of ceremonies would be T.V. star Steve Allen, and we did indeed have an all-star program of motion picture and television personalities, including Pat O’Brien, MacDonald Carey, Robert Stack, Broderick Crawford, Loretta Young, Barbara Stanwyck, Jayne Meadows, and Mary Pickford.

The luncheon was again a great success, and we had in attendance all of our women judges, including Justice Mildred L. Lillie of the District Court of Appeal and also Municipal Judges Kathleen Parker and Ernestine Stahlhut. Leaders of the bench

and bar were present, as well as the mayor and many public officials. Also attending were representatives and presidents of many civic and women's organizations. Actually, the details of this program and all of our Law Day programs are in clippings that I have attached to these comments and I certainly recommend them to anyone who wishes to know all of the details of these events.

In 1964, a long-awaited event finally took place. I am referring to the merger or unification process that took place between the Southern California Women Lawyers Association and the Women Lawyers' Club.

For myself, I can say that I had enjoyed friendships in both groups, as I do to this day, and it was perhaps for that reason that I was appointed to the Merger Committee, and shortly after that appointed chairman of the first Nominating Committee of our new Women Lawyers Association.

That process had a happy ending. The process itself was not always easy, and I think it really was a tribute to the patience and good will of every member of that committee. We met in each other's homes, including my own, and I treasure a certificate that was presented to me from which I will partially quote, "KNOW ALL MEN AND WOMEN BY THESE PRESENTS: it is hereby proclaimed that by service at considerable personal risk, Selma Moidel Smith has distinguished herself and is hereafter entitled to wear and display this award, which is admitted to be a most inadequate physical manifestation of our heartfelt appreciation and esteem. Presented this 6th day of November, 1964," and signed by the members, Lucille

Watt, Eddie May Armstrong, Doris Baker, Ariel Hilton, Jessie Torrance, Evelyn Whitlow, Martha Yerkes, Judge Kathleen Parker.

In 1965, I was appointed to the Law Day Committee of the Women Lawyers Association with Evelyn Whitlow as chair. Our luncheon was held in the International Ballroom of the Beverly Hilton Hotel, and the guest of honor was Sarah T. Hughes, judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas, who administered the oath of office to President Johnson in November of 1963.

A new element was added to our luncheon and that was the Ernestine Stahlhut Award. Unfortunately, the year before, on May 1st, Ernestine Stahlhut, presiding judge of the Municipal Court, died. It was decided that in order to honor her memory, each year thereafter on Law Day, May 1, an award would be made to an outstanding woman judge or lawyer.

The recipient this year was Judge May Lahey of the Municipal Court. I remember very well the first time that I met Judge Lahey. She was the judge presiding in my very first civil case in 1943, and I was much impressed by the manner in which she listened to the testimony of witnesses. Instead of simply sitting back and observing and listening as most judges did, she always leaned forward where she could watch very intently the face and behavior of each witness for every clue as to credibility. This made quite an impression on me, and I remembered it always. She was also exemplary in the matter of her fairness to counsel in her courtroom. It was a happy experience for me, and I cherished her

friendship through these many years. I was therefore personally delighted to see her receive this award in the name of her dear friend, Ernestine Stahlhut.

During the planning for this Law Day luncheon an idea occurred to me which I thought might be beneficial not only to our women lawyers but to the community in which we lived. I conceived the idea of inviting to our luncheon the women of the Latin-American consular corps who were, themselves, good examples of achievement by women of other countries. I was not referring to the wives of consular officials, but to the women officials themselves. I also wanted to invite the presidents of the most prominent organizations of women in the Spanish-speaking community, and among the members of the bench who would be attending, I wanted to include judges from the Spanish-speaking circle as well. This was something that I finally did work out.

As a result, I was able to introduce, in Spanish and then again in English, all of the women consular officials from Latin America, including the following countries: Panama, El Salvador, Paraguay, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Dominican Republic and Colombia. As a special welcome, I decorated their tables with the flags of the countries they represented. We were also honored to have with us Carlos de la Torre, president of the Cuban Bar Association, now living in exile in this city.

That same year, in 1965, a conference was being planned for September 13 to 18 in Washington, D.C., by the World Peace Through Law Center. It would be known as The First Washington World Conference on World Peace Through Law. The

president of that center appointed me to its Spanish Language Reception Committee.

Shortly after, the International Federation of Women Lawyers created a new committee on World Peace Through Law. I was appointed the International Spanish Liaison and chairman of that committee. I was to correlate that committee's Spanish language activities for the purpose of bringing to the attention of Spanish-speaking women the objectives of World Law Day.

September 13 was proclaimed World Law Day by governments throughout the world. The goal was to establish a system of law and courts for the settlement of international disputes, rather than by war. I was appointed by various organizations to represent them at this conference. These included the National Association of Women Lawyers and our own Women Lawyers Association.

The events of that conference have been detailed in a report written in the journal of the National Association of Women Lawyers, and I recommend to all of you to read that report. It was memorable in every aspect, and it was a great personal pleasure to be able to welcome, in Spanish, jurists from all over the world, and we then learned how very many do speak Spanish. My one regret was that there were so very, very few women who were there to attend this conference.

The opening session was presided over by Chief Justice Earl Warren. It began with a solemn procession by the judges, including one woman, from all parts of the

world dressed in their judicial robes of every color and design. Although we had many working sessions, there were also a number of beautiful receptions in the Supreme Court building which gave us the opportunity to get to know each other on a different basis, as person to person, with the common bond of the judicial system and our desire for world peace through law. I have enclosed a copy of a photograph showing a genial Chief Justice greeting me.

In 1966, I was appointed Law Day chairman for the Women Lawyers Association. I again made an appearance on television, this time on the Tom Frandsen program on Channel 4 KNBC. I discussed Law Day, and, of course, our luncheon which was scheduled for the Beverly Hilton Hotel, in the International Ballroom.

As part of my activities, I served as Essay Contest chairman, and arranged for various prizes which included a 24-volume set of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and also a set of Dean Roscoe Pound's works on jurisprudence. Certain contests were open to law students, some just to women law students, and others to lawyers.

Our guest speaker was the Honorable Lorna Lockwood, first woman chief justice of the Supreme Court of Arizona. She was the first woman chief justice of any state supreme court. The Ernestine Stahlhut Award was won this year by Edna Covert Plummer, and this was presented to her by Judge May Lahey, its recipient the year before.

When the business portion of our meeting was concluded I did something that I had never done before for the Women Lawyers — I went to the piano on our platform, and I performed several of my own compositions. At the conclusion of the meeting my colleagues expressed their surprise and appreciation for this interest that they were completely unaware of. I remember especially Ariel Hilton, who after congratulating me, expressed concern for whether I had thought to copyright these compositions. I thanked her very much and assured her that I had indeed had them all copyrighted first. She has always been very kind to remember this, and we have yet to see each other in recent years that she hasn't inquired again for what I'm now doing at the piano.

I am happy to say the luncheon was very well attended by members of the bench and bar and I was pleased to receive a letter which read in part, "The luncheon last Sunday was most enjoyable, and you are to be complimented upon providing such an interesting Law Day program for the Women Lawyers Association and their guests. I thought Justice Lockwood's address was one of the finest I have heard." The letter was signed by Marshall McComb, associate justice of the Supreme Court of California.

When I made my report to the American Bar Association of my activities as Law Day chairman, I also included the following: announcements and information on Law Day which were sent to 352 women's organizations, speaking programs in school assemblies, court tours for women's clubs and high school girl honor

students, the tours to end in the courtrooms of women judges. I think we can conclude that the message of Law Day was certainly communicated by our Women Lawyers Association.

In 1967, our Law Day luncheon was held in the Embassy Ballroom of the Ambassador Hotel. Our speaker for this luncheon was to have been Ivy Baker Priest, who had served as U.S. treasurer. She was taken ill with the flu at the very last moment and sent to us in her place Houston Flournoy, our state controller. That year the recipient of the Ernestine Stahlhut award was Ariel Hilton. This award was presented to her by Justice Shirley Hufstедler of the District Court of Appeal.

In 1968, we celebrated Law Day with a luncheon at the Biltmore Hotel, in the Biltmore Bowl. Our speaker that year was Yvonne Brathwaite, a member of the state Assembly, and the winner of the Ernestine Stahlhut Award was Judge Kathleen Parker. The award was made to her by Ariel Hilton. This year, as well as the previous year, I served as Spanish Liaison to both presidents; in 1967 the president was Evelyn Whitlow, and in 1968, Margery Lowenstein.

I need to say at this time that the activities on behalf of our Spanish-speaking friends bore great fruit in the Spanish press. They were eager to anticipate and appreciate our cooperation with them and our sharing with them of an event that was important to us as women lawyers and residents in the same community. We learned from meeting them, and they certainly learned from meeting us.

This was an exchange of women with other women, and the Spanish press made the most of it for us. We were favored with extensive coverage and they were very generous with photographs and lengthy articles to cover all of our proceedings. I have attached many copies of articles for different occasions that appeared in the Spanish press. You are welcome to enjoy the Spanish if you can read it. In the years that followed, the Law Day celebrations were planned by the Los Angeles County Bar Association.

In 1971, I was invited to travel as a member of a "Distinguished Delegation of Representative American Women," to meet with professional counterparts and government officials in Russia, Romania and Hungary. I did not accept that invitation.

The intervening years have been filled with many activities; they are all listed in my resume, which I have attached to these comments. I will say that in 1977, I was again appointed by the president of the World Peace Through Law Center to another committee, this time to the Committee on Planning and Goals for the upcoming Manila Conference that was planned for the fall of 1977.

Before I conclude let me say that I enjoyed very much attending the dinner that was given to honor the past presidents in July, 1985, by the Women Lawyers Association. It was a lovely idea.

It may be of interest to some of you to know how this career in law began. I therefore conclude on a very personal note, a note about my own family. When my

parents, Louis and Mary Moidel, married in 1902 in Pennsylvania, a businessman married a woman who had a deep desire to be a lawyer, but for a woman to become a lawyer in 1902, and especially a married woman, was a practical impossibility.

As a result, all of her children were trained in the law. I am the youngest of five children and my three older brothers were all lawyers both in Ohio and California. They were Isadore, Jay, and Mitchel Moidel, and they were all active in bar associations in this community. The family office was first opened in 1930 on Spring Street, when it was the heart of the legal and financial center of the city. My older sister, Gussie, chose not to continue on to practice. I want to stress that my family, and this includes my son, Mark, who is an architect, were all brought up in an environment where women were always equal human beings, subject to no special limitations.

Perhaps this is reflected in the personal story I have just recounted and the pleasure I have had in being a part of the Women Lawyers Association and its history.