

Selma Moidel Smith

Oral History, Session III — October 24, 2013

Interview by Attorney Rosalyn Zakheim

Women Trailblazers in the Law Oral History Project of the American Bar Association

Zakheim: Hello, this is Rosalyn Zakheim, on October 24th, 2013. I'm here to interview Selma Moidel Smith — to continue our interview, actually — for the Women Trailblazers in the Law of the American Bar Association. We are in Selma's home in Encino, California, and we left off speaking about Selma's immense involvement in all different women lawyers' organizations. I'd like to start again with your involvement in the Southern California Women Lawyers.¹ Could you talk about that, Selma?

Smith: While I was president and, actually, it was for two terms — two years, 1947² and 1948³ — there were a variety of events and issues, of course. I will simply mention that our first event included Judge Edwin Jefferson,⁴ who was historically, as we can put it now, the first black judge west of the Mississippi. Later, he was elevated to the

¹ Smith was appointed the first and only Honorary Life Member of the successor group, Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, in 1998. See "Life Membership in WLALA," *WLALA Newsletter* 3:3 (November 1998), p. 1 (with biography and photo of Smith). Available at: <http://wlh-static.law.stanford.edu/articles/SMSwlalaBio.pdf>.

² "Selma Smith New Head of Women Lawyers," *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Jan. 23, 1947); "Women Lawyers Dine Tomorrow," *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 27, 1947): A5; "Lawyers to Install Officers," *Los Angeles Examiner* (Jan. 28, 1947): 8.

³ "Law Group Picks Selma M. Smith," *Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 28, 1948): A16; "Women Lawyers Group Again Picks Selma M. Smith," *Metropolitan News* (March 2, 1948) [apparently the first story about a local women's bar to be printed in this legal newspaper].

⁴ "Women Lawyers To Hear Three Judges Tonight," *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Feb. 25, 1947).

California Court of Appeal. We know him also as the older brother of Justice Bernard Jefferson. In addition, Mildred Lillie had her first speaking engagement as a new judge at the Biltmore Hotel at our luncheon, and after that, I appointed her to our Executive Committee.⁵

Zakheim: And for those who don't know, Justice Mildred Lillie was a judge for a very long time in Los Angeles and became a justice of the Court of Appeal.

Smith: Yes, and for many years on the Court of Appeal. I can jump to the final event of the presidency — and I, of course, will be speaking more about it — with Judge Clarence Kincaid who was presiding judge of the superior court.



And he was the speaker of the event, as well as with Judge Leo Freund who was the

At the Installation Dinner of the Southern California Women Lawyers Association — Superior Court Presiding Judge Clarence L. Kincaid (center), Municipal Court Presiding Judge Leo Freund (right), SMS (outgoing president, standing), and Stella Gramer (incoming president, left), Hotel Clark, February 16, 1949.

presiding judge of what was the municipal court at that time.⁶ We had those two sets of courts. Now, of course, we have only the one, the superior court. Our locales for our events were the Biltmore, also the Hotel Clark, and occasionally the Chancellor.

⁵ “Judge Lillie Guest at Luncheon,” *Los Angeles Examiner* (April 26, 1947); “Women Lawyers Fete Judge Lillie,” *Metropolitan News* (April 25, 1947); “Women To Fete Judge Lillie,” *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (April 26, 1947).

⁶ Photo and caption, “Women Lawyers Install Officers, Hear Address by Judge,” *Hollywood Citizen-News* (Feb. 17, 1949) [see photo above, this page].

I'm often asked those questions, so that's why I mention it at the outset. They wonder where would the women lawyers have been gathering, and those were usually dinner meetings. Occasionally, we had a luncheon.

Zakheim: How frequently did you meet?

Smith: We met every month. They were full programs. I can say that at those programs, I had arranged for speakers that would be very educational to our women lawyers — judges who would be able to give us something of the inside, the do's and don't's, something about forthcoming decisions (that is, that have already been made, and would soon be able to be made familiar). By this means, the women lawyers actually had a college that they were attending, and I wanted them to continue, always, to be learning. No matter how long, there is always something more you can learn. Many who started out to be, perhaps, working primarily in the office, were tempted into the trial court, to try their skills and to gain some skills so that they could represent someone in court — which they really felt was the ultimate. I had judges come in for that purpose as well, to say what would be most advantageous in the courtroom. They were receiving the equivalent of another degree [laughing]. Often, I spoke on different topics myself.

Zakheim: What kind of topics?

Smith: It would include, automatically, pending legislation, because this was something we needed to know. If we were going to be working within the framework of that new legislation, we had better know about it. Also, in court, if we are going to cite the case [chuckling], we had to be up on the decisions that were coming down. We had

better know about those, too — no point in citing something that’s just been reversed. So it had to do with every phase of a practitioner, including the very simple matter of locating where you were going to go before you got there. Because I do recall that on one occasion I was chatting with Judge Georgia Bullock, and it was just about time for me to leave for Department 1. There had been some new thing at that point, for a temporary purpose, and so she asked if I knew where that was, and I said, “Actually, I haven’t located it yet.” And so she said, “Bailiff, escort Attorney Smith directly.” This is something I passed along to them, and I said, “Be sure that you have done all this. You are expected to know many more things than just what is on the papers you have filed and the pleadings. You will be interviewing your witnesses.” And there was a whole session on interviewing witnesses. There was another session on opening statements, and closing statements.

Zakheim: Selma, will you remind the listener how old you were at this time?

Smith: Well —

Zakheim: Or how young I should say [both laughing].

Smith: I was admitted to the bar, of course, on January 5, 1943, at the age of twenty-three, and this was 1947 [chuckling]. I think they can do the math.

Zakheim: And you were very comfortable in inviting judges to come and speak to the group.

Smith: Oh, yes! Of course, because I felt that the better our relationships with members of the bench, the better it would be for making your appearances. Just in general, it’s one thing to appear before a stranger, and to whom you are a stranger, than it is to

someone who has already had the ability to, shall we say, “size up” who the person is, going both ways [laughing]. It was very instrumental in that first step that all of the women lawyers had to take to familiarize themselves and to make connections.

Zakheim: Now, I know one of the controversies at that time was a hat controversy. Can you speak about that — in 1947?

Smith: Oh, yes. Yes, I certainly can. It was just two months after I became president when a judge was assigned from some other county to a court in Los Angeles County, and we were equally unfamiliar with each other. It just happens that one of our lawyers — her name was Nadia Williams, a very competent lawyer — was appearing before him, and of course she was dressed in what she felt was the most — . I was quoted later in the newspaper as saying that women feel that they are often better dressed, and with more respect to the court, to have on a hat as well.⁷ And she was wearing one that actually completed her outfit. The moment she tried to speak, the judge said, “Take off your hat.” And she was absolutely nonplussed, of course. This had never happened before, and none of our Los Angeles County judges had ever raised this issue. She said, “Well, may I speak?” And he said, “After you take off your hat.” And I happen to know that she had a hat pin, that was holding it on, and that when she would take it off, her hair would be down in a different arrangement [both laughing]. The hat was holding it in a certain place. At any rate, she had to take off the hat. This was a disturbing thing to everyone in the courtroom, except to that judge. One week after that event, I was there at the courthouse, in the courtroom in what would have

⁷ “L.A. Judge Makes Woman Lawyer Doff Hat in Court,” *Los Angeles Herald Express* (April 7, 1947): 1, 8.

been Department 1, for the swearing-in of one of our judges to the superior court. That was Paul Nourse, a very competent judge, at that. This was the celebratory gathering of all the bar associations to wish him well, et cetera, and I was there representing the Southern California Women Lawyers. Up to a certain point, I made the usual complimentary comments about his reputation and recognition that he had received, and then I said, "Speaking on behalf of women lawyers, we would appreciate it very much if you would give us *some* advance information now as to any particular requirements of dress." At which point, everyone in the courtroom just completely [both laughing] — it just broke down everything, and the judge laughed very heartily as well, and he said, "No, I don't." And, at any rate, it had to be repeated in the columns of the newspapers, because it was quite a startling event that had taken place a week before.⁸

Zakheim: What was the attire of women going into the courtroom?

Smith: It was regular business dress, I would say.

Zakheim: In addition to being active with the Southern California Women Lawyers, and other groups, you were also active with foreign women lawyers. Can you tell us about that?

Smith: Yes, I will do that at this point just to make mention that, during my term, there were some women lawyers who came to Los Angeles, who sought me out, who had learned that I was president of the women lawyers, and I was happy to host them as best as I could in courts. For example, there was Helga Pedersen from Denmark, who was in

⁸ "Paul Nourse is Inducted as Member of Superior Bench," *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (April 16, 1947).

fact a prosecutor and personal assistant to the minister of justice of Denmark [and later minister of justice herself]. I took her to visit the courts of our women judges, which were Georgia Bullock, Ida May Adams, and Mildred Lillie.⁹ She was quite impressed, quite impressed, and thought that we had done a very good job of women lawyers making their way, and of course we certainly wanted her to see the best of ours.

Then later, Josefina Phodaca, who was a councilwoman from Manila, in the Philippines, came — and this was quite a different kind of visit. I showed her around. She met with our group informally. I will say that by the time we had struck up some kind of friendship with her, we were made aware of the sad plight of the women lawyers in the Philippines. So we gathered together five hundred dollars, and we gave it to her as a gift to the women lawyers of the Philippines.¹⁰ It was something that I was very proud of, that we were able to do, and they were most grateful. We had future relations with them and certainly with Josefina. (We would understand it as “Josephine.” It was [pronouncing the name:] “Hosefina Podaca.”) She had done quite a great thing for them, although when she came she didn’t know that was what she was going to be going back with. So, it was, again, just something of women lawyers helping women lawyers — not with boundaries.

Zakheim: In addition to that, you had a very busy two years as president. I know there was an annual women lawyers and doctors dinner you’re very proud of. Could you discuss that? Actually two of them.

⁹ “Danish Woman Guest At Portia Affair,” *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (May 1, 1947).

¹⁰ “Women Lawyers: Membership Will Add 12 Wednesday,” *Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 26, 1948): C1; “Women Lawyers Will Welcome New Members,” *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Dec. 22, 1948).

Smith: Yes, actually, that was a custom that was initiated by the Southern California Women Lawyers Association. That existed only in our group. And in 1964 when we did unify, that was kept as part of the tradition, although the other group, Women Lawyers' Club — they were certainly aware of it — and thereafter we would have that, and it's been kept to this day, although they've lost track of where it originated and why they have it. Again, it was a matter of our *broad* outreach, something that I felt — you know, women lawyers—women doctors. We have many things in common as problems. There'll be more of that later on when I talk about what was known as the Medical College of Pennsylvania — originally as the Woman's Medical College — in Philadelphia, and my fifty years with them [see interview Session VIII].

Zakheim: What were the topics that the women lawyers and doctors discussed, or presented I guess would be the word?

Smith: Well, we alternated as to who was presenting. We did this annually. In '47, the topic that *we* brought to the table was “legal-medical problems arising out of psychiatry.”¹¹ It was quite an engaging conversation, back and forth. Then, the following year, it was the medical women's, and that was artificial insemination. Again, we're talking now in 1948, when that was something that was being discussed in the entire medical profession. So, of course, there would be legal ramifications without end.

Zakheim: As we've seen since.

¹¹ “Women Lawyers And M.D.'s In Meeting Tonight,” *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Oct. 29, 1947); “Women Lawyers To Hear Address On Insemination,” *LADJ* (Nov. 22, 1948).

Smith: As we've seen. In 1948 that was a topic that we were discussing and bringing authorities to bear on, and so on. It has been a very rich interchange. It's something that I'm so glad we did, and I was very happy to continue the practice to this day. When I see in our newsletters, online and whatever, that we're having that meeting, I nod to myself and say: Little do they know where this began, and little do they know what they are now about to do, when they're not aware of the tradition.

Zakheim: I hope maybe you'll write a little note for the bulletin next year and inform people.

Smith: Well [chuckle], that remains to be seen.

Zakheim: I know after you were president, you stayed active in the Southern California Women Lawyers. Can you discuss that?

Smith: Oh, yes! Yes, of course. I continued to do all the things, unofficially, that I had been doing. I spoke on election measures, issues on domestic relations, child care, education in general, taxes, taxation. I had it under the heading of "Law Every Woman Should Know," and I gave that on a panel for the Los Angeles Business Women's Council, with which I was involved as well. That was in 1954.¹² Then, in 1955, the Legal Secretaries Association invited me to be the speaker for their meeting, and so I decided to, maybe, drop a few seeds here and there and talk about law as a career for women. And indeed, in fact there were several who did go on to become lawyers, and I'm very glad for that because many of them had not been able to afford

¹² "Legal Program Planned By Women Lawyers," *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Oct. 7, 1954); "Attorneys to Speak," *Los Angeles Times* (Oct. 12, 1954); "'Law For Women' Is Subject Of Panel At Dinner," *Metropolitan News* (Oct. 12, 1954); Also previously, "Portias, Business Women Set Meet, Panel Discussion [on "Laws Pertaining to the Rights of Women"], *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Sept. 9, 1953).

to pay the tuition for law schools, and they were working to provide for themselves and their families. This gave them the prospect and the hope, and some familiarity with it, so that they would not feel that this was some closed thing to them but rather to open it to them, and to give them some idea of what they might have if they were able to make that struggle to become a lawyer. And I'm happy to say, several did, and as we know, many more have followed.

Zakheim: That's right. In addition to speaking, I believe you hosted events at your home.

Smith: Oh, yes, for almost twenty years. I was happy to do that. I've always been happy when all the women lawyers are getting together and seeing each other socially as well. These were mixed — we had business to transact at our meetings. The fact that we could also then break for our meal and so on, on the patio or whatever, was just another way of doing our work in a familiar setting.¹³ And it helped open up doors in several instances of women who, in connection with other women in the group, were able to become on a friendly basis, rather than just professional. Ties were made that lasted into all the years. So I'm glad that I was able to add that feature to it, too, because we wanted to remain — I believe we want to remain, always — as well-rounded in the way we live, and inclusive.

I just remembered, too, for about three years at UCLA, I was asked — in fact, the request was made to the Women Lawyers to send someone to “a class of women who are looking for where they should live their lives professionally,” who want to

¹³ For example, “So. Cal. Women Lawyers To Honor Admittees,” *Metropolitan News* (Jan. 4, 1955); “Swim Party For Women Lawyers,” *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Aug. 11, 1955); “Southland Legal Unit Will Install,” *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 15, 1956): C3; “Women Lawyers Elect Officers,” *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 19, 1962): A4.

enter a profession — and what would I tell them about becoming a lawyer and being a lawyer, the life of a lawyer. So I did. They sent back my name to them, and so I appeared there in the classroom at UCLA to address this group and to give them all the very positive things that there were for becoming women lawyers. And I'm happy to say that I heard afterwards, a few years later, from some of the people who had been around, that it did bear fruit. I was glad that that opportunity was open, too. Believe me [chuckling], I've waved the flag for the women lawyers. And I'm really very proud of women lawyers. I have great respect for them.

Zakheim: By staying friends with people and opening up the profession, it seems you were the ideal person to forge the relationship between the two women lawyers organizations in Los Angeles. Can you describe each of the organizations and how you brought them together?

Smith: Yes, that goes back to 1964. At that point, it took a number of months to accomplish, and a number of meetings, including at my home. [chuckling] There were different points of view, because, well, there were certain individuals in each group who felt that they had different missions and that possibly it was better to just go as they were. Somehow, it seemed to me, as the numbers were growing, and Los Angeles was growing, that for all purposes it would be something to our mutual advantage if we could “pool our assets,” as it were, and work together. And so, if it took a little bending on missions, or whatever, the approach might be to newly-admitted women — and therefore candidates for membership — then perhaps everything would be improved. With that in mind, there were several of us who were like-minded, on both sides, and from that, at our various meetings, we, shall we say, hammered out — and I

do mean at times, physically hammered out [both laughing] — the various points of any organization — who would be doing what, and how, and when.

And of course, came up the matter of succession. They said, “Well, all right, but then what happens?” I will tell you that I was told that both sides would have agreed on me as their first president. Frankly, I felt that having been president, for not one year but two years already — that that would be *much*. And so they insisted that I chair the first nominating committee. So here came the meeting, the crucial meeting for the chairman of the first nominating committee of the new organization. I had worked out in my mind what I thought would be the fair and equitable thing to do. When they walked in, you know, they walked in kind of lacking determination in the feeling that “we’re going to do it now.” They didn’t know how it was going to end. Well, I proposed to them — speaking for Southern California Women Lawyers, and my group got to hear it [chuckling] — that we would agree that the first president would be from the other group. That was Carla Hills. However, her term was quite short. It happened that on our calendar, at the point where we were in the year, we would be really breaking up the order of when a term commenced, what our fiscal year was, so she had a term of about six months [laughing]. I said, “We will give it to *you* — for six months.” When I first said, “We’ll give it to *you*,” I saw some eyes open, you know, and when I said, “for six months,” then the *other* eyes opened [both laughing]. I said, “After which, we will go on the ladders of both. We will alternate so that everyone who was in line for president will be a president, and we will all unite behind that one president, and we will commence our operation. I’m sure we will all be happy together.”

Zakheim: And were you?

Smith: Yes, we certainly — we are today [laughing]. Yes!

Zakheim: What were the names of the two groups?

Smith: The other group was the Women Lawyers' Club, and the Southern California Women Lawyers [Association] of which I was president.

Zakheim: And what was the name of the group once they joined forces?

Smith: It was the combined name. They dropped "Southern California" and they took on "Association" — "Women Lawyers' Association."¹⁴ They had never used anything but "Women Lawyers' Club." And now it was an association of lawyers, women lawyers.

Zakheim: Weren't you recognized by the Club with which you joined?

Smith: Well, yes.

Zakheim: They were very appreciative of what you had done and how well you had done it.

Smith: Yes, it sits here. As you can see, we're looking at it. Would you like to read this?

Zakheim: I'd like *you* to read it. I think it's such a wonderful tribute to you.

Smith: All right [both laughing]. "Know all men and women by these presents: It is hereby proclaimed that by service at considerable personal risk in an area of danger by

¹⁴ The name was expanded to "Women Lawyers' Association of Los Angeles" in the early 1970s, and the apostrophe was omitted in the early 1990s.

explosion, 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 the 6th day of November, 1964, at Temple City, California.” And it was signed by all of the people who were officers of the other organization. All their names appear here, and their names were: Lucile Watt, Eddie May Armstrong, Doris Baker, Ariel Hilton, Jessie Torrance, Evelyn Whitlow, Martha Yerkes [Robinson], and Judge Kathleen Parker.

Zakheim: That’s quite a tribute to you. I think it’s hard for people now to realize what difficulty was involved in merging the two groups.



Smith: Yes, I’m sure it’s hard to ever replay for someone what really took place. I was just happy, and so were all of us

“The ‘Roots’ of Women Lawyers in Los Angeles,” panel discussion, May 12, 1987 — SMS (past president, SCWL, 1947, 1948, speaking) with past presidents of the Women Lawyers’ Club: (l. to r.) Lucile Watt (1956-57), Helen Kemble (1953-54), and Ariel Hilton (1963-64).

finally, that we were all together now, all under one umbrella. And that’s what it has been ever since, and I have taken personal great delight to see the fruits of the labors of this particular group and to know that such a thing can be accomplished, and with positive results into the future.

Zakheim: You already mentioned the Los Angeles Business Women’s Council. Could you describe your activities with that group?

Smith: Yes, their mission was “the advancement of women in business, industry, and the professions.” I became president of that group as well.

Zakheim: That was in 1952?

Smith: Yes.¹⁵ This was a group that also got quite an education from the speakers that I selected for them. In fact, it was not unusual that someone would become president on condition that I would be program chair, and this was one more of those groups. So, I was program chair [in 1951], and believe me, they heard about law, and lawyers, and women lawyers — I would say, most of the time. I felt that this was a great opportunity for women to become more informed, and I arranged for speakers and spoke several times myself during the year. Many of them related to me afterwards that, really, it was quite an education. They had no idea how important it was to their very personal lives to know about what women could do, and could not do. And what we needed to be changing. At that time, too, was the “Wives Paycheck Bill.”

Zakheim: Could you describe that?

Smith: Yes, briefly, it was a bill that would permit a woman to collect her own paycheck. It’s called “Paycheck Bill” because, under the law of community property, the husband was the one in charge. He was the one who collected the paychecks. Unfortunately, it became obvious from the number of cases that arose of women who had earned their paycheck, only to have their husbands arrive in time to collect the paycheck — and that would be the last of it. Unfortunately, the wife had to continue to find some way to feed the children. Really, it was not even just largesse on the part of men who had previously opposed letting women collect their own. It became more a matter of the fact — and I was one of those who pointed it out — that the rest of the men, who

¹⁵ “Selma Moidel Smith To Head Business Women’s Council,” *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (Jan. 29, 1952); “Business Unit Plans to Seat New Officers,” *Los Angeles Times* (Jan. 29, 1952): B4.

did support their families, would be carrying the weight of the others who would eventually become recipients of county relief, who would come for social welfare, who would have to ask for someone to feed and clothe the children and have a roof over their heads. And so, finally, it was changed. We actually lobbied for it in Sacramento and otherwise. Finally, the law was changed,¹⁶ and oddly enough [both chuckling], a wife would be able to collect her own paycheck.

Zakheim: You should be very proud about that.

Smith: Well, I —

Zakheim: You made generations of women happy about that.

Smith: Yes, and unaware of course of the fact that, until that was changed, that this was the sorry state. It was a very big step forward.

Zakheim: What other kind of topics did you engage as program chair or as president?

Smith: Yes, also in connection with taxation, because it was usually a very oblique kind of thing, something they had really very little contact with, or any semblance of any idea about it. And I'm referring just even to a simple personal income tax return, and what kinds of things could be deductions, things that would be considered income. This was all news to them. They were unaware of anything that actually led to change of decisions about how they were going to do certain things, knowing what would be the advantages and disadvantages. They got a primer in a basic need that I think everyone should have. It's one thing for a complicated affair, but for many people it would be a

¹⁶ California Civil Code Section 171c, signed by Governor Earl Warren, June 16, 1951.

very simple thing if they were ever in position to learn about it. So I felt that this was something that women had to do and to learn.

And I'm sorry to say that I well remember in my own practice, in various estates, I have to say that I was embarrassed myself to find that my woman client, who was the executrix of her husband's estate — I'm picturing a particular woman whose name I won't mention — she had never written a check, and she had never dealt with a check. Her husband had taken care, and that's in quotes, "taken care" of all things, and so she knew nothing about it. She had a check in her hands that she had received in the mail, and she didn't know how to even endorse it. And she was embarrassed to ask a man, "How do I do this?" She was very happy that she had a woman lawyer, and could say, "Would you please tell me, what do I do with this?" And I showed her the back of the check, and where to endorse, and how to endorse, and various kinds of endorsements. I assured her that she would be able to do it very well, and to not be — . Well, I'm picturing her now, and she was all the things that I'm hesitating to say — about the responsibility. She had been named, and how did he expect her to do *anything* if he left her in that state of total lack of knowledge.

Zakheim: In addition to giving this knowledge to the Business Women's Council, did you also expose them to political candidates, ballot measures. Could you describe that?

Smith: Absolutely. Yes, we were particularly talking to them about the judges, because they would have no way of knowing the judges. We could pass along what experience we might have had with regard to the general reputation of the judge, you know. And in most cases, it would certainly have been approbation. Instead of just blankly stabbing at anything that was on the ballot, at least to do so in an informed way, and when they

got to hear about some of them, and more about them and the kinds of things they had done, and stood for or whatever, they felt really quite good about approaching the ballot and, with some knowledge, being able to vote intelligently rather than just with absolutely no information at all.

Zakheim: Did women candidates come to the group to talk?

Smith: Oh, yes. Yes. They were invited [chuckling]. If there was a vacancy, we always sent something to the governor requesting the consideration of a woman. We gave all of the details about her qualifications in the hope that more women would be added to the bench.

Zakheim: Did you at one point, or your organization, write to Governor Earl Warren about an appointment?

Smith: Oh, well, yes. This was at the time that former President Nixon had become vice president. That created a vacancy [in the U.S. Senate], so we had urged him to consider — . Yes, there were other occasions as well.¹⁷ And in most instances it just didn't happen, but on rare occasions it did and, thankfully, the governor's office in more recent years has been more open to the petitions made, both orally and in writing, with regard to qualified women candidates.

Zakheim: I believe there was an installation dinner of the Los Angeles Business Women's Council that you wanted to talk about.

¹⁷ "Favor Promotion of Woman Judge," *Los Angeles Daily Journal* (April 30, 1947).

Smith: Yes. On the occasion of my installation as president of the Los Angeles Business Women's Council, I was happy to have our very popular judge, Georgia Bullock, as the speaker for my installation.¹⁸ A young woman, Judge Roberta Butzbach, was the installing officer. She later became quite active and established a good name for herself. I won't go into Judge Bullock's very kind references [chuckling]. She was very complimentary in her talk, the manner in which she expressed her belief that it would be a very good day for the women lawyers that I was assuming the presidency [of the Council].

Zakheim: Well, I know that your successor thought the same thing, because I've seen a letter from June Taylor, who succeeded you as president of the Los Angeles Business Women's Council, in which she said, "Life has been good to me as a whole, but it really put the jackpot right in my lap when it gave me the privilege of working with you. You will always be an inspiration to me. I know there will come a day when we can all say of you, 'I knew her when.'"

Smith: Yes, that was very kind of her. She was on the board of governors for some time before she became president, and we did work together quite nicely, as I hope I did with the others as well. That was on a happy note, too. A life membership was also presented to me. It's a bronze plaque which says, "Life Membership, Los Angeles Business Women's Council, is presented to Selma Moidel Smith, President in 1952, for outstanding service in behalf of California women." And that is something that I was very pleased and proud to receive from them, as that was not something that was routinely done.

¹⁸ "Business Women: Judge Bullock to Speak Tonight at Installation," *LADJ* (Jan. 31, 1952).

Zakheim: And I think it also ended with a presentation by Judge Stanley Mosk, at one time, in appreciation of your work. Could you describe that?

Smith: That was an award that bore the heading of the Los Angeles Business Women's Council. We're looking at it at this moment. It says, "This certifies that Selma Moidel Smith, Past President, with honors in public speaking, and also by reason of devotion to the advancement of women in business, industry, and the professions, is entitled to this Award of Merit duly presented in open meeting by Judge Stanley Mosk, L.A. Superior Court, in witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands, this 18th day of January, 1958." And that was signed, of course, by the officers and by the board of governors. And the very same June Taylor who wrote *that* note is the one who headed the board of governors at that time.

Zakheim: Thank you, Selma. And now we'll conclude this session — like the previous ones — with a selection from your musical compositions. The orchestral version of this piece was played at the 1968 Installation Dinner–Dance of the Lawyers' Club of Los Angeles by Ivan Scott and his orchestra — in the Crystal Room of the Beverly Hills Hotel.¹⁹ Here is the original piano version. It is titled, "Beguine in F minor, Opus 2."

[Click below to play music.]



¹⁹ "SURPRISE," *Metropolitan News* (Nov. 26, 1968): "Only a few of those dancing at the Lawyers' Club installation realized that 'Bolero in F Minor' and 'Argentine Tango,' played by Ivan Scott's orchestra, were among the 100 musical compositions of Atty. Selma Moidel Smith, Los Angeles."