

LEGAL MINDS :

Queens of the Court

For the first time in Arizona, a number of women are simultaneously holding some of the highest ranking positions in our state's judicial system. These legal minds, who are clearly the queens of their court, are succeeding in an exciting and challenging career field. And, many others are courageously following in their footsteps. This is cause for celebration.

In honoring these women and others in the law profession, we bring you this special feature:

- *Learn of our past—pioneers who have paved the way for women.*
- *Learn of our present—high ranking attorneys making a difference in our communities.*
- *Learn of our future—lawyers impacting our lives daily in their special areas of practice.*

STORY BY **JESSICA PARSONS**



REBECCA WHITE BERCH

*Chief Justice of the Arizona
Supreme Court*

A graduate from ASU's College of Law, Rebecca White Berch had high hopes and desires to help people, which initially attracted her to the profession of law. "Most of us who went to law school in the mid 70s wanted to save the world, clean up the planet, stop injustice and end poverty and war," says Berch. "We haven't accomplished any of these goals, but I admire those who try."

Berch has been an attorney for 31 years. Following graduation, she worked as a trial lawyer for eight years and then became the director of the legal writing program at ASU. In 1991, she worked for the state which led her to the Attorney General's office. Governor Hull appointed Berch to the Arizona Supreme Court in 2002.

"It is a humbling experience—a position of great responsibility and trust," says Berch. She was then elected to serve a five-year term as chief justice in 2009 and spends much of her time speaking to the public about the courts and the legal system. "I enjoy the opportunity it provides," says Berch, adding that she is "passionate about helping Arizonans appreciate their rights and the role of the courts in our society."

Berch feels women are finally beginning to fill positions of influence in the legal profession, although their numbers in the partnership ranks is lagging. "While the appointment of Sandra Day O'Connor to the Supreme Court occurred many years ago, in 1981, only in recent history has the legal profession truly embraced women in leadership roles," says Berch. Her advice: "Go for it," adding that, "it's a fascinating profession."



SARAH M. BUEL

*Faculty Director of the Diane
Halle Center for Family Justice*

Growing up in a poor family and later becoming a victim of domestic violence, Sarah M. Buel has been on a mission to fix a system she feels is broken. "I had a loving supportive family, and many people helped me along the way. I owe them my life," says Buel.

"But, the legal system did not help," she adds. "At so many steps along the way, I said, 'I'm going to remember this,' so I can help fix this system someday." And, that's exactly what she hopes to accomplish as she joins us here in Arizona as the faculty director of the new Diane Halle Center for Family Justice located at the Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law at ASU.

"The vast majority of victims don't have anybody to help them," says Buel. "Or, the people they know are just as impoverished and uneducated, or have no knowledge of the system."

Buel, who was a welfare mother, worked full time in the day and went to school at night for seven years to obtain her undergraduate degree. She then graduated cum laude from Harvard Law School in 1990.

Having spent 32 years working with battered women, abused children and juveniles, Buel calls this center and her new position, a dream come true. "It epitomizes the fulfillment of a lifelong dream to bring all the pieces together to help victims," she says... "so they don't have to go to 32 different agencies around the city hauling three children with no car and no money."

Buel is actively involved in human rights issues in Cambodia, China and Kenya addressing gender-based violence and human trafficking.



HELEN PERRY GRIMWOOD

The Grimwood Law Firm

Recognized as one of the Valley's "most influential" lawyers, Helen Perry Grimwood is truly a leader in her field with 30 years of experience. "My husband says my passion for law comes from my well honed sense of justice," Grimwood says, jokingly adding that, "it sometimes turns to 'righteous indignation' and, at its worst, 'self-righteous indignation.'"

Grimwood, who practices employment and commercial litigation, admires and is inspired by "bright people who pursue positive change." She cites her mother, Betty Perry, Madeleine Van Arsdale, a community leader and Roxana Bacon, the first woman president of the State Bar of Arizona, as inspirations.

In fact, Grimwood has held the position of president of the State Bar of Arizona as well. She was also the past president of the Arizona Women Lawyers Association. She holds an "AV" rating, the highest ranking for professional skill and integrity by the Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review, and has been named to the Southwest Super Lawyers and Best Lawyers in America.

"The face of justice is changing" says Grimwood. "Young girls and women can look at the courts and see (not just hope) that they too can aspire to becoming lawyers, judges and leaders."

The legal profession, which Grimwood calls honorable, has led her to founding The Sudanese Education Foundation and providing pro bono work representing refugees. She considers herself lucky to be in a position to help others, and offers advice to women interested in pursuing her field. "Keep focused on being your best, developing your talent, honing top notch skills, being prepared and finding good groups and mentors who will support you in every way possible."



PAMELA DONISON

Donison Law, President of the Arizona Women Lawyers Association

Attorney Pamela Donison, of Donison Law, is changing the world “one divorce at a time,” with somewhat of a holistic approach. Instead of facing off in a court room, with emotions running high, she focuses on out-of-court solutions to benefit both parties. This includes mediation, collaborative divorce, arbitration, negotiation and consulting.

“The best part of my job is mending family fences,” says Donison. “I absolutely believe that families should not litigate against one another. You can be divorced all day, but if you have children, you are still part of the same family and you will be for life.”

After spending 20 years in journalism and publishing, Donison returned to school graduating from the University of Arizona James E. Rogers College of Law right before her 40th birthday. She realized her first “legal love” was in contracts and copyrights, but after spending almost seven years in litigation practice, she discovered her true passion: alternative dispute resolution. “I can’t say it enough; court is no place for families.”

Approaching each day and situation with pause, a sense of gratitude and compassion, Donison reminds herself of the business she is in—to serve her clients, the courts and her community. “I approach all cases as problems to be solved, rather than just another case to be tried,” says Donison. “When I can help a couple move through their differences to reach an agreement that helps them become better co-parents, I think I have provided an invaluable service to the family and our community.”



PAULA KIRBY

Paula G. Kirby PLC

“When I was in third grade, one of my best friends and I used to spend our summers at the Tennessee courthouse in my small hometown,” says Paula Kirby who loved to sit in the back of courtrooms and watch trials. Her friend became an attorney, as did Kirby who admits, “other careers never really had a chance.”

Early interest in law and politics propelled Kirby into law school, but the sense of accomplishment and desire to help people through difficult times is what sustains her as a lawyer. “I derive great satisfaction I can help a divorce client move on with his or her life, help a decedent’s family make decisions at a very stressful time, or represent an elderly person who doesn’t know what to do or where to turn,” says Kirby.

Kirby has practiced law in Arizona for 27 years and is also licensed in California. Her practice focuses on divorce and family law issues, probate, guardianships and limited commercial litigation. “An attorney must know how to determine the truth, which sometimes hides behind our clients’ colorful versions of the facts,” says Kirby, recognizing that as a lawyer, her days, clients and situations are always different, challenging and unique.

So, as a rule, Kirby takes one day at a time, often asking herself what “next thing” she should focus on because she says, “then you can take time to be grateful for what you have, savor life’s little lessons and to try to live in the moment.”

Kirby is an American Bar Association (ABA) liaison to several committees and is serving for the second year as the Chairman of one of the ABA family law sections. She is a mother, a wife, an advocate for her clients and believes “law is a wonderful field for women.”

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A HIGHER OFFICE. A HIGHER GOOD.

Rebecca White Berch
Chief Justice of the Arizona Supreme Court



Barbara Rodriguez Mundell
Former Presiding Judge of the Maricopa County Superior Court
(retired June 4, 2010)



Carey Hyatt
Family Court Presiding Judge Maricopa County Superior Court of Arizona



Rosa Mroz
Probate Court Presiding Judge Maricopa County Superior Court of Arizona



Roxanne Song Ong
Chief Presiding Judge of the Phoenix Municipal Court



Jan Kearney
Presiding Judge of the Pima County Superior Court





JORDAN ROSE
Rose Law Group

“I love what I do,” says Jordan Rose, founder and managing partner of the largest law firm owned by a woman in Arizona history. “My favorite thing is to listen to anyone talk about their business, from the small business to the billion dollar private equity firm, and formulate a plan to help them be more profitable,” says Rose.

Leasing space for just herself, in another lawyers storage room, is where Rose began her journey to owning her own firm. And, boy has it grown. Today, it is the largest law firm owned by a woman in the western states and offers 27 different areas of practice to include litigation, employment law, real estate law and renewable energy development. “My attitude is, be yourself, find your God given talents and use the heck out of them,” says Rose.

Rose has been named by the Arizona Republic as one of the “20 Women Who Will Shape Arizona by 2020.” But, she is most proud that her law group was chosen as one of the “Best Places to Work,” three years in a row, by the Phoenix Business Journal and BestCompaniesAZ.

Also, passionate about her family, being a mom and charitable causes, Rose donates time and money to organizations promoting freedom, longevity and education. She balances this, along with her roles as an attorney, because she is driven to live her best life. “If you work hard, surround yourself with brilliant and motivated people, insist on excellence and find a career that you excel in, you will succeed.”

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A PIECE OF HISTORY.

Legal “First’s” for Women



Sarah Herring Sorin

In 1892, Sarah Herring Sorin became the first woman licensed to practice law in the Arizona territory. She was a pioneer during a time when few women in the U.S. could vote, let alone argue a case before the highest court—she accomplished this in 1906 (story on page 80). To this day, the Arizona Women Lawyers’ Association honors a woman attorney each year with the prestigious Sarah Sorin Award. She is an inspiration to women and women attorneys who followed her, including Lorna Lockwood.



Lorna Lockwood

In 1925, Lorna Lockwood graduated from the University of Arizona’s College of Law—the only woman in her class and the first woman to graduate with a law degree. In 1948, Lockwood was appointed as Arizona’s first woman assistant attorney general. She then became the first woman to sit on the bench of the Arizona Superior Court. In 1961, Lockwood was elected to the Arizona Supreme Court and became chief justice four years later—the first woman in U.S. history to hold this esteemed position.



Sandra Day O’Connor

A graduate of Stanford University, Sandra Day O’Connor had initially found it difficult to find work as a lawyer, and was offered positions as a legal secretary. But, she didn’t shy away from the uphill battle she faced. In 1974, O’Connor was elected as a trial judge for Maricopa County, then served on the Court of Appeals. In 1981, President Ronald Reagan appointed Arizona Judge O’Connor to the U.S. Supreme Court—the first woman member of the highest court of the land. She has been named one of the most powerful women in the world and on Aug. 12, 2009, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honor of the United States.

Source:
www.womensheritagetrail.org,
www.wikipedia.org

Women such as Sarah Sorin, Lorna Lockwood and Sandra Day O’Connor have made major contributions to Arizona’s development. The Arizona Women’s Heritage Trail links women’s history to historic sites throughout the state, educating the public on women’s contributions and leadership while promoting women’s history. Through collaboration with the ASU Institute for Humanities Research, this Centennial Legacy project will also include driving and walking trails, primary school curriculum, website, tourist maps and publications. For more information about the project, or to request a speaker, visit womensheritagetrail.org.

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Rose Law Group



Lauren Elrod grew up in an entrepreneurial family and always had a passion for business.

She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Arizona in 2001 where she graduated magna cum laude, then earned her J.D. from Arizona State University.

"I love that being a lawyer affords me the opportunity to deal with a very diverse spectrum of clients," says Elrod. "I am able to interact with people from all walks of life, from members of our community to elected officials and everyone in between." Elrod leads the Trust and Estates Team at Rose Law Group and is a member of the Employment Law Team.



Carolyn Oberholtzer focuses her practice on zoning, real estate and government relations at Rose Law Group. "In law school, I had no idea what kind of lawyer I wanted to be," says Oberholtzer. "My passion for my career was really sparked by accident—that accident was finding the right job," she adds.

Oberholtzer has served as the assistant city/town attorney for Avondale and Fountain Hills and is heavily involved in west Valley issues. She earned her J.D. from ASU, is a third generation Arizonan from Tucson and is committed to her community through numerous volunteer efforts.



Laura Bianchi is living her dream by helping families plan for and safe guard their future. As a key member of Rose Law Group's Estate Planning and Asset Protection Team, Bianchi focuses on traditional estate, special needs and business planning. "We all face challenges everyday," says Bianchi. "But, the ability to turn

those challenges into our greatest accomplishments is what I find most rewarding."

Bianchi is an active member of the Brain Injury Association of Arizona, the State Bar Association of Arizona and the Arizona Women Lawyer Association. She also donates her time and estate planning services to a wide variety of organizations serving individuals with special needs, the elderly and those with traumatic brain injuries.

Gallagher & Kennedy



Susan Charlton practices in the area of governmental affairs and has been with Gallagher and Kennedy for more than seven years. "I love my current area of practice because I'm involved in the shaping of public policy," says Charlton who has served as Counsel to the Majority in the State Senate.

"My job may be frustrating at times, but it is never boring," she adds. Charlton holds a B.A. from Smith College and a J.D. from the University of Arizona. She serves her community as a board member of the YWCA and the Arizona Kidney Foundation's Children's Literature Luncheon.



Dana Belknap practices in the areas of land use, real estate and governmental affairs and is the head of the Government Affairs Department at Gallagher and Kennedy.

Belknap holds a B.A. and a J. D. from the University of Texas. She has been named to the 2009 "Best

Lawyers in America" list and received an "AV" rating from Martindale-Hubbell.



Anne Leary practices in the areas of employee benefits and executive compensation and represents some of Arizona's largest employers. "My practice area strikes many people as dry and boring," says Leary. But, she doesn't see it that way. "On any given day I can be called to address tax, employment,

corporate or family law issues, which keeps things interesting."

Leary is a prolific speaker, holds a B.S. from Boston University, a J.D. from Boston College and a LL.M. from Georgetown University. She has been named to the 2009 "Best Lawyers in America" list and received an "AV" rating from Martindale- Hubbell.

LEGAL BRIEF:

Approximately 140,000 prospective students take the LSAT each year.

— bekindtolawyers.com

Lewis & Roca



Frances Haynes is a partner and a leading attorney with Lewis and Roca's Litigation and Construction Practice Groups. She provides legal advice to businesses on all facets of commercial law and development issues. "I am passionate about facilitating a just result for my clients," says Haynes, adding that,

"winning on their behalf, is what drives my day and helps me sleep at night."

Haynes has more than 25 years experience and recommends this field to all women. "Most women have a natural curiosity about how things work, great passion and drive...that "triple threat" makes us a natural for the legal arena."



Jennifer Van Kirk is a partner in Lewis and Roca's Intellectual Property and Technology Practice Group and is the only Arizona lawyer featured in the International Bar Association's *Who's Who Legal —Trademarks*.

Focusing on brand protection, Van Kirk counsels clients on trademark clearance to help clients secure and

protect trademark rights in the U.S. and around the world.

"Law provides a constant challenge," says Van Kirk, adding that her career, although demanding, has provided her with satisfaction and flexibility.



Mary Ellen Simonson is an attorney at Lewis and Roca with 26 years experience in representing businesses and employers in both litigation and counseling. Her practice includes wrongful termination issues, advising employers on compliance with federal, state and local employment laws and handling equal

employment and department of labor matters.

Simonson has successfully briefed and argued appeals before the Ninth Circuit and Arizona State Court of Appeals, and has successfully briefed and argued before the Arizona Supreme Court.

LEGAL BRIEF:

According to the American Bar Association there are 1,143,358 active and inactive lawyers in the U.S.

— bekindtolawyers.com



International
Women's Day

Women of Courage: Making a Global Difference

(right) Ambassador and Keynote Speaker Vicki Huddleston (center) with Alicia Young (left) and Kathryn Lopez (right), two scholarship recipients who shared their stories at the luncheon of how the scholarship changed their lives.



(left) Members of the Phoenix Women's Commission and IWD Steering Committee.

Left to right: Andrea Moreno, Laura French, Jasmine Cortez, Sandy Ram and Sherry B. Williams.

During the past 19 years, the city of Phoenix Women's Commission has awarded more than \$900,000 in scholarships from the IWD event proceeds to help more than 900 women return to college.

This year, approximately \$60,000 will be awarded to 10 local colleges and universities.

A \$2,500 fellowship will be awarded to the Arizona State University School of Public Affairs in memory of Mary Ann Huerta Jenkins, a city employee and ASU graduate.

This year's major financial and in-kind contributors include:

Henkel of America, Phoenix Woman Magazine, Prensa Hispana, 3TV Arizona's Family, Arizona Public Service and Salt River Project, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, John F. Long Foundation, Maricopa County Community Colleges, National Bank of Arizona, The Business Journal, Asian American Times, FedEx and the Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce.

The annual International Women's Day celebration commemorates the continuing struggle of women to improve their lives and status.

For more information about the Phoenix Women's Commission, call the city of Phoenix Equal Opportunity Department at 602-495-0358 or visit phoenix.gov/phxwomen.

Sign up for e-mail updates about Phoenix Women's Commission activities at phoenix.gov/subscribe.

Follow the Equal Opportunity Department on Twitter at twitter.com/PHXEqualOpprty



City of Phoenix