



Newsletter

Spring & Summer 2013

Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys



Judge Ruth Klotz in her chambers

Inside this issue:

Judge Ruth Klotz	1-2
Culture Corner: Book Review: <i>Lean In</i>	3
The Magistrate Appointment Process	4
Third Judicial District Women Attorneys	5
Pottawattamie County Women Attorneys	6

At the beginning of this year, Judge Ruth Klotz from the 5th Judicial District retired. The Des Moines Register published an article about her and we have reprinted it here. Judge Klotz has been a long term member of the Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys, has a career dedicated to helping families and has mentored countless young attorneys.

90-year-old Iowa Judge Decides to Retire

By Jeff Eckhoff

Originally published in the Des Moines Register on December 4, 2012

The tiny, elderly lady in the smart business suit still drives herself to work six days a week, carefully gliding her huge white Buick into a premier parking space that sits nearly on top of the eastern door of the Polk County Courthouse. District Associate Probate Judge Ruth Klotz gets a kick out of the parking space. "Seniority," she says, smiling. Next year, someone else will claim the parking space.

Ninety-year-old Klotz, Iowa's oldest judge, is scheduled to retire Jan. 31, triggering a seismic shift in the way Polk County's courthouse handles wills, estates and legal guardianships for troubled children and the feeble elderly.

Klotz, soft-spoken but a stickler for the details, has spent 34 continuous years as Polk County's chief overseer of such matters. By all accounts, her colleagues and the lawyers who appear before her continue to respect her.

Fellow judges marvel at Klotz's stamina — she routinely works half-days on Saturdays although she is not required to do so — and her ability to recall detailed information about some family fights that have stretched across several decades and multiple court files. "We might have to replace her with two people because of the workload that she takes care of," said Senior Judge Donna Paulsen, who calls Klotz the best-ever role model for a female lawyer in Iowa. "She was not a complainer. She would just quietly go in and do her job and do her job well."

So why leave now? Klotz and those closest to her say several factors are at play, including her desire to travel, to gain continuity for her co-workers by passing the torch to a younger judge, and to avoid next year's looming,

all-electronic court document system — a system Klotz could learn but doesn't want to. "I think that she's very dedicated to the people she works with and never wants to leave them in the lurch," daughter Holly Klotz said. "There's no particular reason," Ruth Klotz said last week. "I just decided that I've been here long enough. ... When you think about all the people you've known through your life, like all the relatives who are your age level and they're all gone, that makes you think maybe you've been overstaying something."

Klotz was born in Mason City, Iowa, in 1922, the daughter of a garage owner and a housewife. Her parents divorced when she was 5, and Klotz grew up living with maternal grandparents in Iowa Falls, Iowa, watching as her mother worked long hours as a clerk and bookkeeper in grocery stores.

90-year-old Iowa Judge Decides to Retire, cont'd from page 1

After two years at Ellsworth Junior College, she wound up here in 1942 working as a stenographer for state government, a job that frequently put her in the room during arguments over unemployment appeals. She grew to like the law.

In 1950, she married Earl Fritz, a lawyer. He mentioned law school one day as she pondered what kind of additional schooling she would need for her career to advance, she said.

Four years later, in November 1954, the then-Mrs. Fritz was the only woman in her class at Drake University Law School when her husband dropped dead in a courtroom. At the time, she was eight months pregnant with the couple's daughter.

"Once my daughter was born, I thought, 'I've just got to buckle down and get through this,' " Klotz told an interviewer two years ago for an Iowa Bar Association oral history project. "I'm going to have to support somebody. I've got to get a job." She hired a nanny — a 65-year-old woman — and graduated from law school the following August. She took the bar exam on a Friday in October and started work the following Monday for the Iowa Department of Revenue.

She married Richard Klotz a few years later and briefly tried her hand at a practice in Hampton, Iowa. It was a few years later, at the Dickinson law firm here, that she developed an expertise and soon began doing most of the firm's probate work.

Klotz later decided to transfer that specialty to a job managing trusts for Bankers Trust. Klotz became the Polk County courthouse's "probate referee" in 1978, the same day her husband retired from a job at Farm Bureau. Klotz was formally named a judge in 1996.

State lawmakers worked a special exemption into the law that otherwise would have forced her to stop working at 80. Two years ago, leading up to her last retention election, lawyers in an Iowa State Bar Association survey gave her an approval rating of 96.9%.

She is the only probate judge in Iowa, a recognized Polk County expert in a courthouse where most judges seldom deal with the intricacies of estates and guardianships.

For now, Klotz continues to work 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., hearing cases in a corner fourth-floor office. An average of 300 people pass through her door in a given month. She listens, she asks questions and she makes certain lawyers know what she requires. She's noticed people tend to fight a lot more over estates now. And more guardianships exist, possibly a sign of the elderly not doing well in their declining years.

Richard Klotz has been dead for more than two decades now. His widow used to take long cruises for vacations, but two of her traveling partners have since remarried and one passed away. She'd like to get back to

"She has such great knowledge and wisdom, and she's a worker bee.

She never raises her voice. ... If you were to get her mad, then you've really gotten her mad."

-Linda Janssen, Court Attendant

traveling again, someplace warm, she hopes. Klotz's daughter, Holly, and two grandchildren are in Chicago, and she said she'll probably see them more now. Holly Klotz and others around the judge, including Klotz herself, are a little worried about what will happen after Jan. 31. Will the judge be bored?

"I may be," Klotz said. "You kind of get used to seeing a lot of people every day."

"Leaving is very difficult for her," Klotz's daughter said. "I am concerned that she won't thrive in retirement the way she thrived when she was working."

But all that comes later.

For now, she has decisions to make. Klotz hopes to settle a few more complicated estates before she leaves. She plans to spend some time in the coming weeks pondering travel possibilities and exploring places where she can volunteer more.

And at some point, she's going to have to get signed up for something she's never used: Medicare.

Beyond that, she says, "I don't have any particular plans."

For once.

Culture Corner: Book Review of *Lean In*

By Shellie Mackel

So says Margaret Fuller, "Very early, I knew that the only object in life was to grow." In an effort to promote growth and enrichment among women of the Iowa Bar, I.O.W.A. is piloting a column for discussion of books and films of interest to women.

Timely to this topic is the recent release of the book, "*Lean In: Women, Work and the Will to Lead*" by Sheryl Sandberg. The author is the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook and is ranked on *Fortune's* list of the 50 Most Powerful Women in Business and as one of *Time's* 100 Most Influential People in the World. Following a stirring presentation where she explained her belief that women are hindered from leadership positions and in some cases, inadvertently hold themselves back in their careers, Sandberg was inundated with personal stories from listeners about their own experiences. These stories were the inspiration that prompted Sandberg to write *Lean In* and to further explore an apparent stall in women's advancement.

The book is essentially a guide for professional women that offers insights and strategies about reaching one's full potential as well as guidance on avoiding traps into which women tend to fall. Sandberg gives a nod to institutional and external barriers for women, but primarily focuses on individual behaviors of women that result in self-sabotage, and offers tactics and advice for addressing those. Examples include women denigrating themselves to be liked, phrasing assertions like questions, and obsequiously participating in professional meetings.

For I.O.W.A. member, Anjie Shutts, one of the principles that resonated for her was the question Sandberg challenges women to ask themselves—"What would you do if you weren't afraid?" This is not only important for adult women, but for Shutts this is an important message to share with her two daughters. She said, "I really have thought, since I read the book, about the messages that my daughters are sent. Not every message they receive is a positive

and personal life choices. This book envisions and promotes the notion that professional women can have it all.

However *Lean In*, like many notable and popular works, has met with a fair amount of controversy and criticism. While there have been various approaches to this criticism, they boil down to a few recurrent themes. First is that the model employed by Sandberg is not accessible to women of even moderate resources, rather are available only to the most affluent and privileged among us. Another persistent critique is that there is an inherent assumption in the book that women leaders will create workplaces that are responsive to the realities of most women, which many argue is not the case. Finally, perhaps the most prevalent censure is that the book is essentially a fault-finder on women and ignores or forgives institutional sexism.

Whether one loves the book or not, it is undeniable that it has sparked lively conversation and a reinvigorated interest in gender roles, the workplace, and the ongoing underrepresentation of women in professional leadership positions. This is an issue of particular relevance to attorneys in Iowa, to the degree that it is being included in the ISBA Annual Conference on Thursday, June 20, 2013. According to Chief U.S. Magistrate Judge Celeste F. Bremer, "We absolutely need to continue this discussion, with all men and women in the Bench and Bar, particularly the ambiguous concepts of "work life balance" or "having it all." We all face tensions of balancing our personal and professional lives, whether it's due to raising children, caring for elderly parents, participation in charitable or social activities, continuing education, teaching, writing, or whatever else competes with the time and energy we devote to work. 'Having it all' means different things to different people, at different stages. But we can all work together to make the court system more humane for all participants, and more representative of society."



LEAN IN

WOMEN, WORK, AND
THE WILL TO LEAD

one, so it is even more important that the messages that I send to them are." Another principle of the book that spoke to Jennifer Donovan, attorney with Iowa Legal Aid, was the book's message, 'don't leave before you leave' which is the tendency of women to preemptively hold back from advancing in their careers because they anticipate they will have to pull back in the future to pursue a family, essentially out of reservations about their ability to combine work

The Magistrate Appointment Process

By Elisabeth S. Reynoldson

Increasing the number of women on the bench allows the judiciary to more accurately reflect the role of women in a democratic society. In 2012, 21% of all general jurisdiction judges in Iowa were women. One way to gain judicial experience that may improve your chances of being appointed a district or appellate court judge is to serve as a county magistrate.

Each county has a magistrate appointing commission. The magistrate appointing commissions chose the magistrates for that county. Iowa Code §602.6403. Each magistrate serves for a term of four (4) years and must reapply at the end of each term. The terms of all magistrates in the State of Iowa are ending on **July 31, 2013**, and the process for appointing the magistrates has begun.

The commissions also nominate the candidates for district associate judge positions. The district associate judge is then chosen from those nominees by the district court judges. Iowa Code §602.6304.

Iowa Code section 602.6501 provides the following composition of these commissions:

1. A district court judge designated by the chief judge of the judicial district to serve until a successor is designated.
2. Three members appointed by the board of supervisors, or a lesser number provided in section 602.6503(1).
3. Two attorneys elected by the attorneys in the county or a lesser number provided in section 602.6503(1).

The attorneys in a county may elect only one commissioner if there is only one who is qualified and willing to serve, and if there are no resident attorneys in a county or none is willing to serve as a commissioner, none shall be elected. Iowa Code § 602.6504 (1). If only one attorney is elected, the board of supervisors shall only appoint two commissioners, and if no attorney is elected, the board of supervisors shall only appoint one commissioner. Iowa Code § 602.6503(1).

Additional guidance on the composition of the commissions is provided by Iowa Code section 69.16A. That section mandates a gender balanced composition unless the code specifically provides for an exemption. Moreover, Iowa Court Rule 22.34 provides "It is a policy of the judicial branch that all boards, commissions, and committees to which appointments are made or confirmed by any part of the judicial branch shall reflect, as much as possible, a

gender balance. If there are multiple appointing authorities for a board, commission, or committee, they shall consult with each other to avoid contravention of

Judicial nominating commissions and magistrate appointing commissions are to be gender balanced.

Please consider forwarding this information on to the chief judge of your judicial district, discussing it with your county attorney and/or board of supervisors and by educating women attorneys in your district.

this policy."

Please consider forwarding this information on to the chief judge of your judicial district, discussing it with your county attorney and/or board of supervisors and by educating women attorneys in your district.

If you believe that you possess the necessary experience and expertise to secure a magistrate position, and would enjoy the job, please consider submitting an application. Additional information is available on the Iowa Supreme Court website.

Information on pursuing a judicial career can be found on the following websites:

* Infinity Project: www.infinityproject.org

* National Association of Women Judges:

www.nawj.org

Third Judicial District Women Attorneys Gather to Discuss I.O.W.A. and Gain Insight from Judge Sokolovske By Lindsey Buchheit

Female attorneys of the Third Judicial District of Iowa gathered over the noon-hour on February 7, 2013 at the Marina Inn in South Sioux City, Nebraska to learn more about the Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys. Lindsey Buchheit, I.O.W.A.'s Third Judicial District Representative, hosted the event. The seventeen women attendees enjoyed appetizers and cupcakes while listening to a motivational speech from guest speaker, Judge Mary Jane Sokolovske.

Sokolovske has served as the first woman District Court Judge in Iowa Third Judicial District since 1992. Prior to serving as Judge, Sokolovske was as an Assistant Woodbury County Public Defender from

Sioux City, Iowa from 1978 to 1984. Sokolovske earned her bachelor's degree from Regis College in Colorado and her law degree from Creighton University. During her presentation, Sokolovske commented she was living a dream serving as a Judge, and encouraged women to take advantage of the support and resources I.O.W.A. offers.

To date, four new individuals from the Third Judicial District have joined and become members of I.O.W.A., taking the Third Judicial District from eleven to fifteen members. Buchheit hopes to host another even next year and double the Third Judicial District's membership.



Judge Sokolovske, the first woman district court judge in the 3rd Judicial District hard at work.

Pottawattamie County Women Attorneys: Building Bonds and a Mentorship Program

By Shelley Whitcher

Council Bluffs attorney Ryann Glenn opened her home to the Pottawattamie County Women's Bar Association and Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys members for a Cocktails and Hors D' Oeuvres event on April 18, 2013. Cocktails and Hors D' Oeuvres were partially provided by Peterson Law (Deb Petersen - PCWBA president) and Overton Law (Suellen



Suellen Overton, Deborah L. Petersen, Hon. Kathleen A. Kilnoski, Jennifer A. Carlson and Helen Broadway-Savage show off their perfect picture poses.

Overton). Deb Petersen's and Ryann Glenn's husbands graciously "volunteered" to serve as bartenders for the event.

Topics of discussion ranged from how to take a vacation while managing a full caseload to how to look 10 pounds thinner in photos. The event not only served as a great way to blow off some steam

after a long week, but also allowed lawyers from a variety of different fields and practice areas to mingle with one another. Members were also encouraged to sign up for a mentor/mentee program, where "veteran" attorneys would impart their knowledge and experience onto those newer to the profession. The event was a success and plans are underway to hold another event this summer.

2013-2014 I.O.W.A. Leadership

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