



# Newsletter

**Spring 2012**

## Springing Forward in Your Career



**Judge Donna Paulsen**



**I.O.W.A. 27th  
Annual Meeting and  
Dinner  
June 19, 2012**



**Liz Nead**

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Twenty years ago, Judge Donna L. Paulsen became the first woman District Court Judge ever to serve in Iowa's Fifth Judicial District and only the sixth woman District Court Judge in Iowa. Judge Paulsen retired in February of 2012 after a distinguished career. Paulsen was born in Des Moines and earned her high school diploma from Saint Joseph's Academy before attending the College of St. Catherine in Minnesota for two years. She then transferred to the University of Iowa, where she earned her B.A.

Paulsen remembers that "in the old days" many women were married soon after high school and, if a woman went to college, it was usually for teaching or nursing. Judge Paulsen followed that pattern initially, teaching for two years in Minneapolis. While Paulsen learned to love the law through discussions with her father, who was a lawyer, she always assumed she would marry a lawyer instead of becoming one.

\*Come see **Natasha Kaiser Brown** speak at our 27th Annual Meeting and Dinner! It is June 19, 2012. See the website for details: [www.iowawomenattorneys.org](http://www.iowawomenattorneys.org)

## Judge Donna Paulsen— One of Iowa's Women Trailblazers By Dawn Boucher

During the time she taught school in Minneapolis, she went to visit her boyfriend, a law student at Notre Dame. At his suggestion, she attended one of his classes. During that class, a light bulb went off and Judge Paulsen realized that she was just as capable as the men in the class, and that she was meant to be a lawyer, despite the fact she knew only one woman lawyer, her family friend, Naomi Mercer. At that time, female lawyers were rare. Judge Paulsen visited with Mercer to discuss whether attending law school was a good idea, and ultimately decided to return to Iowa and attend the University of Iowa for law school. She

graduated in the top 20% of her law school class. During law school, Paulsen interned for the Johnson County Attorney's Office in Iowa City where she gained experience in criminal law matters.

At that time, University's law classes were 90% male and Paulsen remembers the women were targeted for embarrassment during class. Sexual harassment was also rampant, creating a very difficult learning environment. Judge Paulsen feels lucky to have found a mentor in Professor Allan D. Vestal. Professor Vestal took her under his wing, and she became his research assistant.

After graduating from law school, Paulsen joined the Cedar Rapids law firm of Keyes & Crawford. At that time, Cedar Rapids had only two other women lawyers in private practice. This first job was an office sharing arrangement; essentially, she had to drum up her own clients and was on the court appointed list. Early in her practice, Paulsen started the Linn County Women's Attorney's Association. At that time there were so few women attorneys that they all fit in one booth at the local restaurant where they held meetings.

In 1978, Paulsen was appointed as a Judicial Magis-

trate for Linn County. Although this was a part-time position, she was responsible for handling cases involving misdemeanors, small claims, mental commitments, traffic violations, search warrants, felony arraignment and other jury trials. Being a Judicial Magistrate allowed Paulsen to expand her areas of expertise and develop a broad range of skills. During this time Paulsen was also employed as an associate attorney with the law firm of Terpstra, Wilkinson & Van Horne in Cedar Rapids. In 1981, she joined the law firm of Lynch, Dallas, Smith & Harman in Cedar Rapids as a partner. Her practice continued to be wide ranging, encompassing

## Judge Donna Paulsen — One of Iowa's Women Trailblazers (cont'd from page 1)

civil litigation, personal injury, products liability, real estate, probate, family law, insurance and appellate practice. Paulsen was a partner with the Lynch Dallas firm for six years.

In 1987, Paulsen's husband received a job offer in Des Moines, and the family moved to Des Moines, where she joined the Grefe & Sidney law firm and later became a partner. Paulsen's practice at Grefe & Sidney primarily included civil litigation and insurance defense work. She practiced law at Grefe & Sidney for five years before being nominated to the bench in 1992.

One of the funniest moments Judge Paulsen remembers is from the day before she was sworn in. She was in her office cleaning and dusting when an attorney came in, looking for the judge. He thought she was the cleaning lady and asked where the judge was. Paulsen responded by saying, "well, what judge are you looking for?"

Over the course of her twenty-years on the bench, Judge Paulsen has presided over hundreds of jury trials and thousands of bench trials, including everything from murders and kidnappings to medical malpractice and contract disputes. During her time on the bench,

she has witnessed many changes to the practice of law and the roles of women in the judiciary. Paulsen notes it is extremely important to have race, gender, religion, ethnicity, and age diversity on the bench because the court should look like the population it serves. Diversity adds legitimacy to the court system because a Judge's background and experiences play into how they interpret the rule of law. Paulsen has seen diversity grow, but feels Iowa can do even better and hopes Iowa's women lawyers will step up and apply for judicial positions.

Paulsen believes that one of the biggest issues facing the court system today is that the public needs to be informed about the need for a first class court system. A good, efficient and fair court system is one of the most important parts of having a civilized community, and cannot occur if the public does not demand it. Paulsen feels our historically great system is threatened by the current state of affairs, including being open only part-time, having rundown facilities, having too few staff to promptly and competently attend the needs of Iowa's citizens, and the recent threats to our merit selection process. Paulsen believes the issues with the budget crisis over the past few years are compounded by the public's lack of un-

derstanding of the importance of courts in a fair society.

One of Judge Paulsen's proudest accomplishments is her involvement with alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") and other types of non-traditional problem-solving courts. Paulsen was an early advocate for developing programs to encourage mediation, and served as Chair on the first Iowa Judges Association ADR Committee. She has also served on the Iowa State Bar Association ADR Section Council and served as a member of the Iowa Attorney General's Task Force on ADR. Paulsen believes that ADR helps reduce the cost of litigation, allows parties to be in control of their own results and allows for faster resolution of disputes. She also believes that the increase in problem-solving, specialty courts like truancy court, drug court and family court has been a positive change to the court system as a whole, and feels many women lawyers have played a special and massive part in bringing about these changes. Paulsen is also proud of the opportunities that she has had to mentor new lawyers and judges over the years and being able to encourage students to consider a career in the law.

### Judge Paulsen's Advice for New Attorneys

1. Get a mentor. Judge Paulsen feels her mentors – including Allen D. Vestal, Naomi Mercer, and Judge Lynne Brady – were instrumental to her success. Reach out to other lawyers that practice in those areas and have them walk you through what you should be doing. If you know that you are going to have a specific type of case, go sit in on a trial with similar facts. A more experienced lawyer may be willing to help with your trial, or let you second-chair one of theirs.
2. Talk to the Judge. Many times a judge has a specific way of handling her courtroom. Ask ahead of time for any preferences. Judge Paulsen feels most judges
3. Prepare, prepare, prepare. You cannot over prepare for a case. Keep in mind this is usually the first trial for jurors, so they have nothing to compare you to!
4. Be efficient and be organized. You only have so much time in the day. Women lawyers have many responsibilities in and out of the office, so spend your time at the office wisely to maximize your ability to juggle home and work.
5. Manage client and law firm expectations. If you intend to have a family and a career, you have to be sure to carve out the time you need to spend with your family. If your child is sick or has
6. Don't try to be perfect. If you are going to be a full-time career woman and full-time parent, remember it's a difficult path. You will rarely be perfect in either role. If you have to buy the birthday cake instead of making it, that is ok. If you have to buy the Halloween costume instead of sewing it, that is ok. Create balance in your life.

\*Judge Paulsen will remain active in the 5<sup>th</sup> Judicial District as a senior judge. She has blazed the path to the bench in many ways for women lawyers and all of us certainly appreciate it.

# Spring Forward Your Professional Career: Get a Mentor

By Dawn Boucher

On Sunday, March 11, 2012 we all set our clocks ahead in order to “spring forward” into Daylight Savings Time. As I was changing my clocks ahead one hour, I began to wonder what this meant for me.

In doing a little bit of research I found that Benjamin Franklin was credited with daylight savings time and the purpose was to conserve energy. However, daylight savings time was not widely used until after World War II. In 1966 the Uniform Time Act provided that clocks should be set forward on the last Sunday in April and should be set backward on the last Sunday in October. This Act was amended in 1986 to start daylight savings time on the first Sunday in April beginning in 1987. Now, daylight savings time begins the second Sunday in March and ends the first Sunday in November. This law doesn’t require observance, however, and there are states that do not observe daylight savings time including Arizona, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa. Also, for some time the State of Indiana has battled itself on whether or not to recognize daylight

savings time. This battle stems from the fact that the State of Indiana is itself split between two time zones. In 2005, the Indiana battle came to a close when the legislature passed a law to observe daylight savings time, beginning in April of 2006.

All of this information had me thinking that many days I, myself, feel like I am split between two time zones, just like Indiana. In light of this extra hour of daylight, does this mean that I am supposed to be more productive at work? Does an extra hour of daylight mean an extra hour of billable time must be done? Now, I know that this is not necessarily the case, but it got me thinking about productivity and how to be at the top of your game. What do I do with this “extra” time? I then thought about when I was most productive at work and the answer came to me: When I am able to talk through my legal problems with my colleagues and mentors.

While it is embarrassing to admit it, there are many times in my day that I have cases and legal issues that I cannot figure

out. This is where I turn to my mentors. Having one, two or more mentors in your legal profession is absolutely essential to not only your legal career; but your overall well-being. Having mentors and their support leads to reduced stress, allows you to expand on your legal reasoning, enhance your leadership skills, and leads to greater job satisfaction.

Therefore, as homage to all of those mentors that have helped guide us along the way, I have asked I.O.W.A. members to identify and pay tribute to their mentors in this article. I received a great response and have memorialized the responses as follows:

“I have been practicing law for only a few months. After being sworn in on September 23, 2011, I went from law clerk to associate at the law firm of Hayek, Brown, Moreland & Smith LLP in Iowa City. Alison Werner Smith has been a fantastic mentor to me. She – along with the other attorneys in our firm – has actively taken me under her wing on a variety of cases, large and small. Alison has given me numerous clients and made sure I get time meeting with

## Giving Thanks to our Mentors

them face-to-face. Alison has also encouraged the aspects of practice that have taken me to the courtroom. With Alison’s support, I have already gone from sitting in on minor hearings to giving the closing argument in a multi-day jury trial. I am so grateful to Alison for her part in giving me the opportunity to build an interesting and satisfying legal career.” (Submitted by Laura Bergus; Hayek, Brown, Moreland & Smith, L.L.P., Iowa City, Iowa).

“I’ve been lucky to have many mentors and friends who have helped me become a better lawyer over the years. The first would be Bonnie Campbell, who encouraged me to go to law school in the first place. I also owe a great deal to Roxann Ryan and Ann Brenden, who were my first bosses at the Attorney General’s Office. Finally, I’ve been inspired over the years by the work of Janet Lyness, now Johnson County Attorney, and Linda McGuire, now associate dean at the University of Iowa College of Law.” (Submitted by Mary Tabor; Judge, Iowa Court of Appeals).

“Miki McGovern has been and still is a mentor to me. As a new attorney at the Iowa Division of Labor over 20 years ago now, she came over from the Workers’ Compensation Division of our state agency and introduced herself and encouraged me to join and be an active member in various Bar Associations, including PCWA, IOWA, PCBA and ISBA. She is a shining example of what professional associations need and how women attorneys can make a difference. What a great person and wonderful mentor!” (Submitted by Gail A. Sheridan-Lucht, Attorney for the Labor Commissioner, Iowa Division of Labor Services).

“I met Maureen Roach Tobin and her family in January of 1994, when I was in my first year of law school at Drake. I met Maureen because her nanny was a good friend of my younger sister’s and Tracey (Maureen’s nanny) knew that I was a starving first year law student. They asked me to come over for din-

ner. Maureen had just come back to work after maternity leave with their youngest daughter. She had just made partner at Whitfield. I was in my first year of law school and I remember feeling overwhelmed that I was never going to be able to have a legal career and a family. That night at dinner, I remember asking Maureen about having both. Her reply was that with a law degree and in the private practice of law, she had many more opportunities and choices and flexibility than her secretary did and ever would. Maureen was instrumental in helping me get a clerkship at

Whitfield, which turned into an associate position, and nine years almost to the date that I met her, I became a partner at Whitfield.” (Submitted by Anjie A. Shutts, Whitfield & Eddy, P.C.)

“Linda Del Gallo was my mentor once I became a second year law student. At the time, she was a partner in the then law firm, Parrish and Del Gallo where I

**“Miki McGovern is a shining example of what professional associations need and how women attorneys can make a difference.” Gail Sheridan-Lucht**

## Spring Forward Your Professional Career (cont'd from page 3)

was hired as a law clerk. Linda and I were close to one another in age as I had not gone to law school immediately following undergraduate school. Because our age and gender were similar, I found it easy to bring all of my questions and numerous insecurities to Linda. She taught me the importance of clear and concise writing. She introduced me to all the court personnel at the Polk County courthouse. She was so correct; the court attendants and clerks were the people who could help me become successful. Many thanks go out to Linda and her words of advice." (Submitted by Michelle McGovern, Deputy Workers' Compensation Commissioner, Iowa Division of Workers' Compensation).

"When I was a novice lawyer, attorney Mike Liebke, of Davenport took me under his wing at both the Scott County Attorney's Office and in private practice. Mike not only showed me how to try a case, but exemplified graciousness. He was a successful trial lawyer due to hard work, but kept a good sense of humor, and humility. He was committed to pro bono service, and was part of the Scott County Bar that always took cases from HELP Legal Assistance. He modeled professional-

ism in his relationships with other lawyers. I learned how to treat clients, jurors, lawyers, judges and court staff by working with Mike. His approach to the practice of law continues to serve me in good stead to this day. Also, when I was first in practice as an Assistant County Attorney in Scott County, the County Attorney who hired me left abruptly, and Elizabeth ("Betty") Shaw replaced him.

Betty had served in the Iowa Legislature, and had not been in private practice. She installed procedures, and a more orderly approach to how the office was to be run – certainly with more formality than it had been in the past. Also, Betty was reserved, and expected a level of professionalism and decorum in the office, which also took some adjusting to by all of the staff and attorneys.

One day I was complaining to her about what some attorney had done – he promised something and didn't deliver and it looked to the judge like I had dropped the ball. Imagine my surprise when she said: "Celeste don't you know the first rule of politics? Don't get mad, get even." After that I never trusted someone to act on face value; followed up if there was something that needed to be done, and yes, from time-to-time made sure that judges knew who really did not follow through on promises." (Submitted by Celeste F. Bremer, U. S. Magistrate Judge).

"I have appreciated the mentorship I have received from a number of women attorneys. As a law clerk, the women judges on the Court of Appeals provided great role models. Miki McGovern has been particularly influential to me too. She informed me of potential job opportunities and allowed me to job shadow her to learn more about the work of an administrative law judge. She also helped me become better at networking by introducing me to others and suggesting I become more involved in legal groups, especially I.O.W.A. Her advice and guidance gave me confidence to move forward in my career and get more involved in our legal community." (Submitted by Ann M. Smisek, Administrative Law Judge, Public Employment Relations Board).

"I have been lucky to have several mentors throughout my career who are also my friends. My mentors include Kristina Stanger, Kelsey Knowles, Allison Steurterman, and Hannah Rogers. Any time I have an issue that I cannot figure out or just need to exchange ideas; they are there. It is important to have these connections and people in your life to turn to, not only for legal issues but life issues as well." (Submitted by Dawn R. Boucher, Phil Watson, P.C.)

## I.O.W.A. Hosts CLE & Life Coach Lesson

By Elisabeth Reynoldson

On December 14, 2011, IOWA hosted a free CLE and life coach seminar at the Iowa State Bar Association headquarters in Des Moines. Approximately 30 IOWA members attended. Intellectual property attorney Brett Trout provided one hour of CLE entitled "The Security and Ethics of Telecommuting." Brett's presentation qualified for ethics credit and focused on the ethical issues of using technology in our law practice.

Following the CLE, life coach and television host Liz Nead challenged the attendees to rethink how we use the 1440 minutes we are given each day. If you were given that time in the form of dollars, how would you spend that money? If every minute you spent thinking or doing something cost \$1.00, would you spend your time the same?

Liz challenged us to get rid of those things we do every day, whether thoughts or actions, that we would not waste time on if doing so cost us money. Would you pay your workplace? If you wouldn't give money to a relationship or career, then why give it your time?

As Liz challenged us, begin to see your time as the ultimate resource. Use that time as the ultimate investment.

You can learn more about Liz Nead at:

<http://www.neadinspiration.com>

\*Many thanks to I.O.W.A. district 5 representative, Elisabeth Reynoldson, and our vice president, Dawn Boucher, for organizing this event.

## I.O.W.A. Board Members Attend ABA Mid-Year Meeting

### By Miki McGovern

The Mid-Year Meeting of the American Bar Association took place in New Orleans, La from Thursday, February 2, 2012 through Tuesday, February 7, 2012. In conjunction with the ABA Mid-Year Meeting, the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations, (NCWBA) also held its Mid-Year Meeting of the Board of Directors.

IOWA board members, Emily Gould Chafa and Miki McGovern, attended the Mid-Year Meeting and met with a number of the board members and the Executive Director, Diane Rynerson, from the NCWBA. Diane expressed her pleasure with the support IOWA had provided over many years.

The ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, (The Commission), presented a free two hour panel, "Visible Invisibility: Breaking Down Barriers to Women's Leadership." The panel focused on the results of the Commission's survey of diversity dynamics in Fortune 500 corporate legal departments. Members of the panel were: Dominique Bright-Wheeler, Vice President, Assistant General Counsel, Capital One, N.A.; Michele Coleman Mayes, Senior Vice President and General Counsel, Allstate Insurance Company; Isabella Fu, Associate General Counsel, Microsoft Corporation; Denise Keane, Executive Vice President and General Counsel, Altria Group, Inc.; and Gloria Santona, Executive Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, McDonald's Corporation.

The panelists discussed four phases of a woman's career. The first two are the hiring and recruitment phases. The third phase

is the retention phase. The last phase is the advancement phase. All panelists discussed compensation as a concern for attorneys in the corporate world. Informal mentoring was also mentioned as an important element for success in the corporate sector. Desirable assignments were noted as stepping stones to advancement.

The National Conference of Women's Bar Associations (NCWBA) held a networking reception on the evening of Friday, February 3, 2012 at the Hilton Hotel on St. Charles Street. The reception was held to market and develop business from the corporate counsel perspective. Following the reception, there was a dinner for the board of directors and certain "invited guests," i.e. Emily and Miki at Mike's Place, (formerly owned by Mike Ditka). Much of the discussion at the dinner meeting was about the upcoming NCWBA Symposium that will take place in Chicago during the ABA Annual Meeting from August 2, 2012 through August 7, 2012. The Symposium will take place on Friday, August 3, 2012. There will be a networking reception also.

After the board dinner, Marjorie A. O'Connell, the NCWBA delegate to the ABA House of Delegates, "invited" Emily and Miki to a dessert and drinks reception at the ABA convention hotel. There was ample opportunity to network with other ABA members and enjoy the wonderful cuisine.

\*I.O.W.A. is helping sponsor attendance at the NCWBA Symposium at the ABA Annual Meeting in August. Contact us if you are interested in more information.

## Join I.O.W.A. Today!

### 2011-2012 I.O.W.A. Leadership

**President:** Ann Smisek

**Vice President:** Dawn Boucher

**Treasurer:** Josey Bathke

**Secretary:** Jessica Doro

**Past President:** Jennifer K. Smith

**Committee Chairs:** Gail Sheridan-Lucht, Miki McGovern, Alissa Smith, Rebecca Goodgame Ebinger, Beth Myers

**Judicial District Representatives:** Allie Wilske (1st), Amanda Van Wyhe (3rd), Elisabeth Reynoldson (5th), Jenn Smith (6th), Kate Evans (7th)

**Advisory Members:** Emily Chafa, Mary Walsh, Roxann Ryan, Alison Werner Smith

Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys (I.O.W.A.) provides an excellent opportunity to network with other lawyers throughout the state and have an impact on issues affecting women and the legal profession. Members stay informed and stay connected through a list serve, an email distribution list for announcements, a membership directory, board meetings and other I.O.W.A. meetings, CLEs, and website. More information at: [www.iowawomenattorneys.org](http://www.iowawomenattorneys.org)



E-mail: [president@iowawomenattorneys.org](mailto:president@iowawomenattorneys.org)