



NCWBA NEWSLETTER

for the National Conference of
Women's Bar Associations

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Volume 20, No. 4

"The Voice of the Women's Bar"

Spring 2003

Women's Bar Leadership Summit 2003: "BUILDING OUR FUTURE"

The **National Conference of Women's Bar Associations**, along with co-sponsors Golden Gate University School of Law, National Association of Women Lawyers, California Women Lawyers, and Queen's Bench, have planned an exciting all-day program for women bar leaders nationwide. All are invited to bring your inspiration, advice, and active participation to this unique opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other bar leaders from across the country, and to hear how women's bar associations can build the future for women lawyers today.

Featured Summit panels include **Mentoring** with author and lecturer Ida O. Abbott and Heather Zona, immediate past president of the New York City Women's Bar Association. **Marketing and Professional Development** will be discussed among panelists Angela Bradstreet, immediate past president of the Bar Association of San Francisco and Paula Hudson Holderman, director of Professional Development, Winston & Strawn. The timely topic of **Getting Women on the Bench** will be addressed by Alameda County Superior Court Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte, Pauline Weaver of the JNE Commission, and Alabama Circuit Court Judge Caryl Privett. Focusing more globally and rounding out the Summit is the topic of **Changing the World – International Issues** with Stella Odife, coordinator of Women's Organization for

Gender Issues in Lagos, Nigeria, Nancy J. Newman, immediate past president of NCWBA, and Eva Herzer, NAWL International Committee Chair.

The Summit will break at mid-day for a special N C W B A / NAWL Awards Luncheon, with presentations of NCWBA's Public Service Award and NAWL's President's Award. We are honored

Senator Barbara Boxer

to have two keynote speakers. The first speaker is **U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer** speaking on "Pending Threats to Freedom of Choice." Senator Barbara Boxer is a forceful advocate for families, children, consumers, the environment, and her State of California. The Senate's leading advocate of a woman's right to choose, Senator Boxer authored the Family Planning and Choice Protection Act and helped lead the floor fight for passage of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act. She is now leading the Senate effort to overturn the Bush international gag rule and other anti-choice efforts. Boxer has also acted as the lead advocate in the Senate to end the suffering of Afghan women under the Taliban. She also authored the Violence Against

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President's Message

by Dawn Siler-Nixon

Twenty-First Century life for women lawyers and women in general in North America can only be characterized as a cake walk, in light of the persecution and barbaric laws imposed on women around the globe. As women lawyers in the United States, we have endless opportunities to have our voices heard both individually and collectively as bar associations. Yet, at times we sit silent, despite the struggles of women suffragists such as Lucy Stone and Susan B. Anthony, who never lived to see the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1920, which guaranteed a woman's right to voice her opinion and be heard in the political arena. Achieving this milestone required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest. Yet, those rights are so easily taken for granted and discarded in an aloof manner. We rarely acknowledge those rights, which we flippantly deem "inalienable" – the right to practice religion, free speech, due process, and equal protection of the laws – rights that each and every one of us would, if asked, indignantly state cannot be surrendered by anyone other than ourselves.

It is these rights that I think of and cherish when the women of Haiti, Iran and Africa come to mind. Women in these countries are not free to stand up and be heard. They do not have "inalienable rights." Many are denied even a basic education, and are not allowed to learn to read and write. Iranian women who dare to oppose the practice of veiling have been exiled and executed. The Iranian electoral law of Septem-

ber 1906 expressly barred women from the political process, and when some bold women appealed that law, they were told that "the women's education and training should be restricted to raising children, home economics and preserving the honor of the family." Family law remains within the domain of Shariat with no change and emancipation of women. Similarly, Haitian women are treated as second-class citizens, at times only considered useful for child bearing, rearing and domestic tasks. I visited Haiti in November 2002, and was appalled, not only at the living conditions (which were unsanitary at best), but at the treatment and perception of the female gender, down to the smallest child. I saw small female children carrying 10 to 20-pound water bottles from the stream, uphill, to their huts, while the male children rode the same path on the back of a donkey. So too, at the height of the turmoil in the world is the plight of Amina Lawal and the Nigerian Shari'a law, which many would characterize as barbaric. In March 2002, Ms. Lawal was sentenced to death by stoning – not for a crime which we would believe would warrant such a cruel punishment, but for an act that is so commonplace in the United States it does not warrant a second thought – having a child outside marriage. In Nigeria, pregnancy outside of marriage, even in the Twenty-First Century, constitutes a *prima facie* case of adultery – for a woman. The man identified as the father of Ms. Lawal's baby was released based on insufficient evidence. For him to be convicted, he must either confess, or four other men must testify that they witnessed

the adultery. Although international women's voices in these and other countries may be muffled, we can speak for them. Amnesty International obtained and presented 1.3 million signatures urging the Nigerian government to take effective measures to ensure that human rights violations, such as the sentence imposed on Ms. Lawal, are abolished and that the new Shari'a penal legislation is in line with the Nigerian constitution, which guarantees the right to life and to freedom from torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading punishments, as well as the right to a fair trial (basic "inalienable" rights).

Each of our women's bar associations has the opportunity to stand up and be heard on issues of concern to women and women lawyers. We are knowledgeable as to current events and issues raised in our cities, communities and around the world, and should effectively utilize our collective voice to bring about positive change. NCWBA, once again, is a resource for you and your local bar associations in this regard. NCWBA is hosting its annual Summit – Building Our Future – in San Francisco, on Friday August 8, 2003, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., at Golden Gate University School of Law. This is an exciting opportunity for you and your bar association to gain invaluable insight into Mentoring, Marketing and Professional Development, Getting Women on the Bench and Changing the World – International Issues. Don't miss this opportunity to find out how you can effectively use your bar association's voice and make sure that it is heard, loud and clear.

“Laying Down the Law” to Receive NCWBA Public Service Award

The North Carolina Association of Women Attorneys (“NCAWA”) has been chosen as the 2003 recipient of the NCWBA Public Service Award for its innovative television program, “Laying Down the Law.” The television show features attorneys discussing consumer-oriented legal topics ranging from domestic violence law and child custody and support to starting a business and disability benefits. The television show aims to assist people throughout the state who have legal problems but no easy access to legal advice.

Women lawyers are involved extensively through the creation, production and distribution of the television show. The television show was created and is hosted by attorney Lynne Albert from Durham, North Carolina. Of the thirty programs filmed to date,

twenty-two shows feature women lawyers. In addition, women lawyers from NCAWA suggest topics and potential guests for the show. A statewide network of NCAWA attorneys then operates to distribute the show to local cable-access channels for airing. Other NCAWA members contribute by writing press releases, working on grant and sponsorship requests and generating ideas for publicity. Finally, tapes of the television show are distributed to various women’s groups, such as domestic violence shelters, to assist women with legal problems and to prepare them for their court cases.

Estimates are that the television show reaches 75% of the homes in North Carolina or approximately six million viewers on a weekly basis. The feedback received by NCAWA indicates that the show is a much-

needed and much-appreciated public service. Congratulations to the NCAWA for this worthwhile community service project for being chosen as the NCWBA’s 2003 recipient of its Public Service Award.

The NCAWA will be presented with the Public Service Award at the Joint NCWBA/NAWL luncheon on August 8, 2003 in San Francisco.

Visit the NCWBA Bulletin Board at
www.ncwba.org/BulletinBoard.html
in the upcoming weeks for information on other ABA Annual Meeting events of interest to women lawyers

“Building Our Future” Continued from Page 1

Women Act while serving in the House and helped steer it successfully through the Senate; it is now also law.



Barrister Stella Odife

The second keynote speaker is **Barrister Stella Odife** speaking on the topic of

“Women’s Rights and Democracy in Nigeria.” Ms. Odife is a senior partner at Odife & Co. Solicitors/Advocates in Lagos, Nigeria. In 1998, she helped found the Women’s Organisation for Gender Issues (WOGI) in Nigeria, to encourage grassroots mobilization of

rural women, and she is currently WOGI’s National Coordinator. Through WOGI, Ms. Odife works to provide humanitarian support, empowerment, and free legal services to women in Nigeria. WOGI operates programs throughout Nigeria to provide start-up capital for women to become economically independent. Through contacts made with Ms. Odife at the World Women Lawyers Conference in London in 2001, WOGI became an international association member of the NCWBA.

The Summit will take place on Friday, August 8, 2003, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Golden Gate University School of Law, Room 3214, located at 536 Mission Street, San Francisco, California. The Joint NCWBA/NAWL Awards Luncheon will take place from 12:30 p.m. to

2:00 p.m. at the Westin St. Francis Hotel, 335 Powell Street, San Francisco.

The NCWBA would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to the law firms of **Winston & Strawn** and **Hanson, Bridgett, Marcus, Vlahos & Rudy** for their generous support as our Susan B. Anthony Underwriters and **Holmes Roberts & Owen LLP** as our Eleanor Roosevelt Sponsor of the Women’s Bar Leadership Summit this year.

To register for the Summit or the Joint Luncheon, see the enclosed registration form or, to receive more information, please visit the website at NCWBA.org or contact Pamela Ly Nicholson at pnicholson@ncwba.org or phone at 503/657-3813.

“YOU CAN CHANGE THE WORLD”

NCWBA Attends International Meeting on Islamic Law and Women’s Rights

By Nancy J. Newman¹

On March 31, 2003, the International Diplomacy Council (IDC) hosted a roundtable discussion in San Francisco on Islamic law and the US legal system with the goal of promoting international understanding and world peace. The NCWBA participated, through its member association Queen’s Bench, in a lively discussion of women’s rights and civil rights.

The IDC receives grants from the State Department to bring prominent scholars and jurists from other countries to the United States to meet with their American counterparts and to engage in dialogues about their respective systems, with the goal of improving justice and international relations. I was fortunate to be asked by President Eliza Rodrigues to represent Queen’s Bench at this event, and I also attended on behalf of the international committee of the NCWBA, and Women Engaging in Bridge Building - USA. The international visitors were lawyers, judges, and law professors from Algeria, Bahrain, Jordan, Oman, Qatar, the West Bank, Yemen (all men), and a woman lawyer from Morocco. They were each wired with an earphone, and interpreters provided simultaneous translations from English to Arabic, and vice versa.

Before I arrived, the IDC advised that I would be among several invited representatives of the California bar. As it happened, however, I was the only US lawyer guest to attend, so the IDC asked me to start the discussion, noting issues related to women’s rights and women in the law. I explained that women’s bar associations work to promote equality and equal opportunity for women in the legal profession, not just to become lawyers, but to be able to advance and participate equally in all levels of the profession. In addition, I said we take positions to protect and promote reproductive rights, and we take positions against unfair or inhu-

mane treatment of women in other countries, when we become aware of it. As an example, I explained that women’s bar associations and the Bar Association of San Francisco had written the Nigerian government to protest the sentence to death by stoning of a Nigerian woman for adultery. Thus began an animated discussion with our visitors.

Ms. Najat Chentouf from Morocco noted that there is a big difference between the reality for women in her country and what the laws and the constitution reflect. Laws often make little difference in the lives of women whose rights are limited by rigid custom and tradition. She noted that while some women lawyers in Morocco exist, mostly in the cities, they are still far fewer than men. She said United Nations non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a major role in encouraging women’s participation in the political process. She said women need to become active in politics; they are allowed to vote and participate by the laws, but it is frowned upon in society. Women’s organizations have pressured the government to allow women to participate, but it is only just beginning.

Mr. Ali Al-Baker, a legal researcher and volleyball coach from Qatar, noted that until recently there were no women in the law in his country, but now there are a few. He said it had nothing to do with gender – the small numbers were reflective of women’s “skill and ability.” He said women do not need any assistance, they have “fully accomplished their rights” but abortion is a crime under Islamic law and women should not have the right to commit this crime. As to our objection to the Nigerian sentence, he said we have to accept that this is the Nigerians’ law, that it is their right to choose their laws, and adultery is, after all one of the six crimes pro-

scribed by God and this “cannot be disputed.”

Au contraire, mon ami, I thought. If abortion is a crime, I asked, then do women have ready access to birth control in Qatar? Well, not exactly. He said it is called “family planning,” and is only available to a married woman with her husband’s written permission. I noted the injustice of denying a woman the right to control her body, or punishing her for making a choice, when a man who was equally involved bears no consequence unless he is willing to confess to it. As to Nigeria, I noted that these are not necessarily laws of “Nigerians” but the laws developed and enforced by men, that there are women in Nigeria today who are working for women’s rights and to change the unfairness of the legal system as it applies to women, and I could put him in touch with the Women’s Organisation for Gender Issues there if he was interested in helping. I noted that “the word of God” as he put it was most likely the word of men purporting to speak for God, and that each human has the right to listen to his or her own God. I also pointed out that there are women Islamic scholars – like WEBB’s Dr. Riffat Hassan – who interpret the Qur’an as prohibiting sexism, and until men and women share equally in the construction of the governing texts, societies are unlikely to achieve equal rights for all.

Well, that certainly got things going! The Islamic participants then began discussing these issues with each other, and speaking to me, but there were too many at once for translation. The interpreters asked them to slow down and go one at a time, and one of the IDC people said maybe

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this topic is “too hot” and we should change the subject. But by then, these lawyers and judges were fully engaged and wished to continue the discussion. Mr. Ali Salim Al-Na’mani, of the Supreme Court of Oman, said there are no women lawyers from Oman, but there are some women international lawyers who live there. He said “women’s nature is centered around reproduction,” and this is a noble thing because it is women who instill values in the children, and without women “we would not be here.” He then asked if it was okay to address a pointed question to me. “Go right ahead,” I replied, “I can take it, I am tough.” When this was translated, many of the guests laughed heartily with encouragement.

The Justice from Oman then noted that interpretation of the Qur’an by women was not necessary, because the text was clear. He said if the Qur’an says the sentence for the crime is 100 lashes, that is the sentence, and do I claim that such a clear directive can ever be legitimately subject to “interpretation”? Absolutely! I replied. I said context is everything. The context in which this text was written is very different from the modern world. Individual passages must necessarily yield to the overarching themes of justice, respect for all humans, and realization of potential. If you deny yourselves the ability to interpret your texts, you deny your society the ability to grow, and evolve, to address modern issues, to allow all the people in your society – men and women – the opportunity to reach their full potential. I said all of us must be willing to think, and grow, and change, to move all our societies toward basic justice, equality, and peace.

The representatives from Jordan, Bahrain, and Algeria seemed to appreciate this response. The Justice from Oman did not bristle at this, but nodded thoughtfully. The fellow from Qatar

seemed perturbed, and the lawyer from the West Bank and judge from Yemen seemed to share his annoyance. Ms. Chentouf from Morocco noted that her country was not in the Persian Gulf and, while Islamic, did not have the same orientation on these issues as many of the Gulf States. She said they have a system of civil laws, and only the family law portion is derivative of Islamic Shariya law. She said contraception is readily available to women in Morocco.

From there, the discussion moved to more common ground, and the IDC representative asked the visitors to comment on what had surprised them about their visit here and the meetings they had already had in Washington DC, Williamsburg, VA, and New Orleans. Mr. Asem Miqdad, a Jordanian lawyer, said that he was surprised to see a retreat from civil rights in the United States. He said that economic freedom and freedom of expression go hand in hand, yet they noted that many people they met with seemed reserved about what they said, afraid to dissent or disagree with the current government – even university professors. Mr. Nourredine Younsi, a professor of criminal law at the University of Algiers in Algeria, agreed, and said they had learned the value of freedom in his country from a bloody battle for independence in 1962, yet noted the US calls his country part of the “third world.” He said they respect the rule of law, and thought the US was the leader of the world in adhering to the rule of law. He was surprised to observe on his visit that the rule of law is being trampled, changed to something that allows the government to do whatever it wants to a person and then find out later if the person is guilty. He said this conduct is setting a bad precedent. He said that in American law schools they are not teaching international law, and now the United States is ignoring it. These comments were seconded and agreed with by Mr. Salah Al-

Qattan, a judge in the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs in Bahrain.

The IDC hosts asked them for examples of the “trampling” noted. Mr. Miqdad cited the banning of Al-Jazeera reporters from covering the New York Stock Exchange as an example, and said Americans are only getting one point of view from the American press. Mr. Al-Qattan gave the Patriot Act as another example, the holding of people without charge or access to counsel, and that he himself was detained for four hours at the airport, even though he was a guest visitor on this program who had filled out exhaustive paperwork to get his visa in the first place. When I commented that many Americans shared their concerns about these issues and asked what can we all do together to change it, they responded that they cannot do much about this because they think they would be arrested if they did. In fact, they had asked about some of these issues when they met with state department officials upon arrival. The response, they said, was “No comment.”

The meeting then came to an end, the two hours consumed in the blink of an eye. Ms. Chentouf and Mr. Younsi gave me their cards and encouraged me to stay in touch. Best of all, the Arabic woman interpreter gave me a hug, and whispered “That was terrific! These men needed to hear what you said. I am just the mouthpiece for them, I do not say what I think. But you were right in what you said, and your women’s bar associations are doing great work, so please keep it up! You can change the world.”

¹Nancy J. Newman, 1996 past-president of Queen’s Bench, is the immediate past-president of the National Conference of Women’s Bar Associations. She is also on the steering committee for WEBB-USA, the US arm of Women Engaging in Bridge Building, an international coalition dedicated to building bridges of understanding between the Islamic world and the western world. See www.webb-international.org.

TAKING A BREAK: ONE ATTORNEY'S CHOICES ABOUT LAW AND LIFE¹

By Jackie D. Armstrong

There I was, in a fairly small city in Iowa. I had not practiced law in eleven years. How on earth did I get there? The answer to that question lies along the quirky career path that I picked out years ago. My daydream in law school was to be so brilliant that I could live in the wilderness and clients would helicopter to me for advice. Notwithstanding my inflated aspirations about my intellect, I did get to come close to my vision of wilderness living and urban work. I lived in the mountains in Massachusetts and worked for Schlumberger Limited. They flew me to cities around the country to help them with various legal needs of their corporate subsidiaries. This was glamorous and fun (particularly for the granddaughter of a Tennessee moonshine maker) but working away from home for two week stretches did not lend itself to parenting an infant very well.

Initially, I figured that I would just soldier on after the baby arrived. I identified with the Chinese woman Pearl S. Buck wrote about, you know, the one that just squatted in the field to give birth and then kept on plowing. I figured I would renegotiate my work week to a three-day week out of town, briskly pump milk in my spare time in hotel rooms, and trot the stored supply home each week on dry ice in the airplane. Negotiating the three-day week with my boss was a piece of cake compared to my naïve understanding of biology, so I decided to stop working altogether for awhile to focus on my daughter. Then I had a son. Then I had another son. Then my beloved mother-in-law, may she rest in peace, could no longer live alone in New York due to her slowly but relentlessly developing dementia and she joined our household. My first career in the law lasted eight years. I always knew that I would be back;

I just had no idea that it would take 11 years. Although the length of my break complicated my plans for a return to work, it also provided me with a perspective that enabled me to re-enter the legal profession with a specific and clear determination about the work that I wanted to do.

William Frank, with the Career Lab, lists 22 lessons that he has learned in his over 30 years as a career planner and consultant. In my view, his most important lesson is that we are responsible for planning, focusing and determining our futures. When I first arrived in Iowa, I confided to a new acquaintance that I was in a long-term but not permanent break from work, and that I would renew my legal career when my third child started school. She is a smart woman, but somewhere along the way in her life, she had become discouraged and she told me "No one will ever hire you in this town. They will not take you seriously." I was astonished. It was as if she announced that the sun rose in the north in Iowa. She turned out to be mistaken, and the important lesson I gleaned is that I was right not to falter from my assumption that I would find a job when I was ready.

The corollary to Frank's rule about individual responsibility is that those who don't manage their careers -- who just let things happen -- often end up in painful, dead-end jobs. In 1996 as I prepared to return to work my plan was to tell prospective employers exactly what I wanted. Although I did like corporate law, after years at home I wanted my second career to relate to me more on a personal, not just intellectual, level. I was raised in a blue-collar family and I wanted to work with employees. Labor Law had been my favorite course at law school. If I had

stayed in corporate work without a break, I might never have had the insight that I would find more contentment in a different specialty.

Sometimes advice needs to be modified to fit our lives, not completely thrown out. That's what I did with the classic career advice to "network, network, and network." It is good advice and my career may have been enriched if I had applied the traditional concept of networking and I had stayed in contact with other attorneys. Instead, I modified the idea by networking with other parents that had chosen to stay at home. It is not as easy today as it was in our parent's generation. I had to organize and develop these friendships. I found women at the 10 a.m. YMCA swim classes for toddlers, in the parks with strollers, and pulling toddler carriers behind bikes on bike trails. Then I nourished them, gave countless luncheons to introduce women to one another, and formed book clubs and playgroups. At the end of it all, I have been left with lifetime fabulous friends. These women were and continue to be cheerleaders for one another. Networking is most effective when it is personalized.

The key networking lead that led to my job came through my youngest son. Watching a soccer game, I chatted with the father of a child that attended preschool with my youngest, and he suggested that I talk to his law partner. Flooded with employment and workers compensation cases, this law firm was looking for another attorney and thus was born my fortunate relationship with my current firm, a group of attorneys that share my values about the smart balance between work and families.

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Toppling the Maternal Wall, Shattering the Glass Ceiling

By Ellen M. Jakovic¹

Since the 1970's, women have entered the legal profession in increasing numbers. Women now constitute almost 30% of American lawyers and over 50% of law school entering classes. Increasingly, many of us expect to combine, or already are combining, a career with significant family responsibilities.

What we are discovering, however, as documented in the recent study by the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, *Balanced Lives: Changing the Culture of Legal Practice*, is that traditional legal workplaces, designed for men with little or no family responsibilities who can devote virtually unlimited time and energy to their careers, are not compatible with many women's lives. Women attorneys struggle unsuccessfully to fit into the male competitive model, while shouldering the lion's share of domestic and child-rearing responsibilities. The result is an alarmingly high attrition rate for women attorneys, especially among law firms, and thus, a significant barrier to the advancement of women attorneys into leadership positions.

Although legal employers increasingly are adopting alternative schedules and flexible workplace arrangements to improve work/life balance, these policies frequently are inadequate, not truly supported by management, or viewed as jeopardizing career advancement. Indeed, many law firm policies do not allow women to advance toward partnership. The Commission's recent study reports that although about 95% of law firms have policies that allow part-time work, only three percent of lawyers actually use these policies. Moreover, many firms that allow reduced-hours schedules significantly restrict their availability. Only 6 percent of surveyed firms make their programs

available to all lawyers, irrespective of seniority or practice area.

The inability to achieve work/life balance in the legal profession is not just a "mommy" issue, although its impact is manifested disproportionately among women with families. Recent surveys by the National Association for Law Placement and Catalyst, a national non-profit organization dedicated to advancing women in business and the professions, document that the single biggest source of dissatisfaction among both men and women lawyers is the inability to achieve work/life balance. At a recent Women's Bar Association of the District of Columbia ("WBA") Communications Forum program titled *The Glass Ceiling Revisited-A Reality Check for Women in the Workforce*, Angela Williams, Counsel at Bryan Cave LLP, and a member of the ABA Commission on Women in the Profession, confirmed that women attorneys without families increasingly are dissatisfied with a career that does not allow time for personal interests or commitments.

Still, woman attorneys without family responsibilities may be more worried about the glass ceiling than work/life balance. To shatter the glass ceiling, however, we first need to increase the number of qualified women attorneys in the workforce at the time of decisions on partnership and promotion. And that means slowing significantly, if not stopping, the exodus of women from traditional legal employers for work/life reasons. As Professor Joan Williams, Director of American University's Project for Attorney Retention, explains: "Most women never get near the glass ceiling; they are stopped by the maternal wall."

It's time we topple that wall.

The WBA has been at the forefront of this effort by promoting meaningful work/life policies that offer realistic opportunities for career advancement and by providing support and resources to attorneys seeking balanced work arrangements. But we need your help. Unless women and men in positions of influence in the profession are committed to such policies and to effect the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to make these policies effective, glass ceiling and work/life issues will continue to drive talented women from traditional legal practice. Unless women and men at all levels of the profession are willing to take risks to change the way legal practice works – including challenging traditional workplace policies – attorneys will continue to be dissatisfied with the balance between their personal and professional lives.

¹Ellen M. Jakovic is Counsel in the Antitrust Practice Group of the Washington, D.C. Office of White & Case LLP. A wife and mother of two, she has been working a reduced-hours schedule since May, 2000. This article first appeared in the March/April issue of *Raising the Bar*, a publication of the Women Bar Association of the District of Columbia.

Please update the NCWBA contact information in your records if you have not done so:

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Another career consultant, Dawn Rosenberg McKay, advises her clients to keep their skills sharpened so that they are not hopelessly out of date when they decide to return to their career. She recommends several alternatives to accomplish this “keeping your foot in the door” strategy. Part-time work is the best amongst her suggestions. You stay connected, you keep up with changes and you get paid to do it.

When you put together a resume for your return to work, some career development professionals advise to use a “functional resume” that highlights skills as opposed to a chronological resume that focuses on each job held to avoid a gap in the resume for the time chosen at home. You might consider, however, whether it is smarter to be unapologetic about your decision to take a break from the law. My hunch is that, if a prospective employer does not value your time commitment to your family, you probably don’t want to work for her anyway.

As I prepared these reflections, I wondered whether my sense of fulfillment is a rarity in our profession, whether I was unusually lucky in the gratification that I have found. I discovered some surprising and encouraging information as I looked at some of the data on this question.

Professor David Chambers at the University of Michigan has been studying data from research about women who graduated from the University of Michigan in the late 70’s. His early analysis was published in 1989 in the Law and Social Inquiry Journal of the ABA and he has continued to review ongoing studies of these women as their careers and personal lives matured. Two of his conclusions I would like to share, which inspire confidence in anyone who has contemplated an

adjustment in her career to attend to family interests.

First, as a group, when surveyed five and fifteen years after graduation, the Michigan Law School graduates who are women with children are substantially more satisfied with the balance of work and private or family life than are women without children or than men, whether or not they have children. He also found that women with children who have stopped working for long periods or who are currently not working are as satisfied with their careers overall and much more satisfied with the balance of work and family than the women who have always worked full-time. His findings are consistent with a report done by the Families and Work Institute, on a study of 1,000 workers on work stress and families. That 2001 report found that having children under 18, having children under 6, having elder care responsibilities, and having child care and elder care responsibilities at the same time are not — in themselves — associated with feeling more overworked.

A second tentative conclusion reached by Professor Chambers’ preliminary analysis is that the actual long-term impact on income appears slight for those who have spent time out of the work force altogether or who have worked part-time. Obviously we make less when we work less and make nothing when we don’t work, but the studies suggest that, when we return, we do not pay a substantial penalty for the time that we have been off, particularly if we take a break earlier rather than later in our careers.

Thirty years after women have entered into the profession in large numbers, Professor Chambers found that very large numbers of the female Michigan law graduates have made major adjustments in their work in order to care for children. Forty percent of the mothers 15 years out of law school and 53 percent of the mothers 5 years out of law school report stopping work for a pe-

riod of at least three months to care for children. In contrast the men with children work just as long hours as the men without children, and they almost never work part-time or take time out of the labor force to care for children. In Professor Chambers’ findings, the life scripts for women are much more varied than the scripts for men. In his words,

Thirty years after women have entered into the profession in large numbers, men are still behaving like the men of the past, even with the example around them of women who fashion different lives...the women with children in the classes studied have come about as close to ‘having it all’ as any women in our culture. They earn good incomes of their own. They have very high family incomes. They can work full-time and afford expensive childcare. Or they can work less than full-time and return to the labor market later with some but very little decline in their earning capacity.

With the wide options open for us to write our own scripts these past 30 years, we can find data and anecdotal support for what ever we want to do. Whether man or woman, whether a break is for children, to learn French or hike Everest, our profession offers us unusual flexibility.

Carpe Diem.

¹This article is reprinted in an abridged version with permission from the author. The article first appeared in a publication of the Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys. The author is an attorney at Brown, Kinsey, & Funkhouser in Iowa.

**National Conference of Women's Bar Associations
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Please identify your leadership on the reverse of this page. This year's deadline for submitting the bios of your president, president-elect and executive director for inclusion in NCWBA's Leadership Directory is March 14, 2003. Please add us to your mailing list, so we can share your ideas and activities with other women's bar associations! *IRC Sec. 6033(3) (1)(A) Notice: No portion of these dues is allocable to lobbying activities.*

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Thank You for Your Renewals

Thank you for your continued support of the NCWBA. The following organizational members have renewed their membership for 2003 since the last issue:

- ◆ Arkansas Association of Women Attorneys
- ◆ New Mexico Women’s Bar Association
- ◆ Polk County Women Attorneys
- ◆ Queen’s Bench (OR)

Welcome Back

The following organizations have recently rejoined the NCWBA. We’re glad to have you back!

- ◆ Nebraska Women’s Bar Association
- ◆ State Bar of Texas Women and the Law Section

Welcome to Our Newest Member

Association of Women Attorneys (TX)

Contact

**Ellen Kearns at
 ekearns@ebglaw.com for
 Information on Membership in the
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IS YOUR LAW FIRM THRIVING OR DYING?

By Lynne Townsend Albert, Esq.

In these difficult economic times, lawyers need to know whether their firms are on-track for success or headed for disaster. Here are fifteen ways to gauge if your law firm is thriving or dying:

1. Thriving firms’ lawyers focus on doing what’s best for the firm; dying firms’ lawyers focus on doing what’s best for them personally.
2. Thriving firms are always short of office space; dying firms have excess space to sublet.
3. Thriving firms welcome diverse lawyers with diverse ideas; dying firms hire only clones of the existing lawyers.
4. Thriving firms are constantly changing, improving and planning for the future; dying firms worship the past because “that’s the way we’ve always done it.”
5. Thriving firms take calculated risks; dying firms are overly cau-

tious and reluctant to try anything new.

6. Thriving firms support pro bono activities and helping their communities; dying firms help only themselves.
7. Thriving firms’ lawyers share the firm’s wealth fairly and equitably; dying firms’ lawyers fight over every nickel.
8. Thriving firms have a diversified client base; dying firms rely heavily on a few major clients.
9. Thriving firms’ lawyers take time to care for themselves, their families and each other; dying firms’ lawyers care only for billable hours and fees received.
10. Thriving firms willingly share power and decision-making authority among their lawyers; dying firms are consumed by bickering and political infighting.

11. Thriving firms are filled with motivated, productive lawyers; dying firms are filled with “deadwood” lawyers waiting for retirement.

12. Thriving firms market themselves aggressively; dying firms print business cards.

13. Thriving firms have more clients than they can handle; dying firms wonder how they will find enough work to keep their lawyers busy.

14. Thriving firms have dynamic, visionary leadership; dying firms put risk-adverse, retirement-age lawyers in charge.

15. Thriving firms dream great dreams of the future; dying firms live in the past

Hanson Bridgett salutes the National Conference of Women's Bar Associations for the leading role it plays in facilitating the exchange of ideas and information vital to the organizational growth and individual success of women in the legal industry.

In addition to proudly serving as a Susan B. Anthony Sponsor of the Women's Bar Leadership Summit 2003, the attorneys at Hanson Bridgett are happy to announce the arrival of their newest partner:

Nancy J. Newman

Immediate Past President, NCWBA

Nancy is not only a tireless advocate for women's rights, within the legal industry and in greater society, she is also recognized as one of the preeminent attorneys practicing in the arenas of commercial and real estate litigation.

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National Conference of
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The **National Conference of Women's Bar Associations**, with co-sponsors
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 and Queen's Bench,

proudly presents an exciting all-day program for women bar leaders nationwide:

Women's Bar Leadership Summit 2003:

"BUILDING OUR FUTURE"

Friday, August 8, 2003, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 Golden Gate University School of Law, Room 3214
 536 Mission Street, San Francisco, California

and

Joint NCWBA/NAWL Awards Luncheon

12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Westin St. Francis Hotel, 335 Powell Street, San Francisco

Bring your inspiration, advice, and active participation to this unique opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other women's bar leaders from across the country, and to hear how women's bar associations can build the future for women lawyers today. Featured panels include:

Mentoring: with author and lecturer *Ida O. Abbott* and *Heather Zona*, immediate past president of the New York City Women's Bar Association; **Marketing and Professional Development:** with *Angela Bradstreet*, immediate past president of the Bar Association of San Francisco and *Paula Hudson Holderman*, director of Professional Development, *Winston & Strawn*; **Getting Women on the Bench:** with *Alameda County Superior Court Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte*, *Pauline Weaver* of the JNE Commission, and *Alabama Circuit Court Judge Caryl Privett*; **Changing the World – International Issues:** with *Stella Odife*, coordinator of Women's Organization for Gender Issues in Lagos, Nigeria, *Nancy J. Newman*, immediate past president of NCWBA, and *Eva Herzer*, NAWL International Committee Chair.

The Summit will break at mid-day for a special NCWBA/ NAWL Awards Luncheon, with presentations of NCWBA's Public Service Award and NAWL's President's Award, and featuring keynote speakers:

U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer on "Pending Threats to Freedom of Choice"
Barrister Stella Odife on "Women's Rights and Democracy in Nigeria"

Special Thanks to the law firms of **Winston & Strawn** and **Hanson, Bridgett, Marcus, Vlahos & Rudy** for their generous support as our Susan B. Anthony Underwriters of the Women's Bar Leadership Summit this year.

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Send check payable to "NCWBA" for receipt no later than Monday, August 4, 2003, to NCWBA, PO Box 82366, Portland, OR 97282. No tickets will be mailed, your name will be included on a registration list. Questions? Contact Pamela Ly Nicholson: pnicholson@ncwba.org or phone: 503/657-3813