



# WWL State Reporter

A publication of WASHINGTON WOMEN LAWYERS

WINTER 2007

## WWL Annual Symposium and Dinner Features National Speaker, Honors Justice Bridge and Others

By *Gwen Marie Forrest, WWL Newsletter VP*

Washington Women Lawyers ended its year with a spectacular all-day CLE and Annual Dinner at the Bell Harbor Conference Center September 28, 2007. The CLE, titled "Equal Access to Client and Career Development," focused on skill building and career advancement. The CLE featured Joan Williams of UC Hastings and the Project for Attorney Retention, who shattered myths regarding the costs to employers in providing part-time employment and discussed the benefits for both legal employers and lawyers of balanced hours programs.

The Annual Dinner was just as inspiring. Women and men

from across the state gathered to celebrate WWL's many achievements and toast WWL's honorees.

Among the honorees was Justice Bobbe Bridge, who received the "Passing the Torch Award" not only to honor her spectacularly successful legal career, culminating in her service on the state's highest court, but for her extraordinary mentorship of scores of women lawyers. WSBA President Ellen Dial and Dean Kellye Testy of Seattle University law school were co-recipients of the President's Award for their work to promote women in the legal field and their support of the Breast Cancer CLEs and legal handbook.

Carla Lee was named State Board Member of the Year for

her contributions to making the successful breast cancer CLE series a reality. The WWL Foundation award went posthumously to Norm Maleng in recognition of his support of women lawyers; his wife and son accepted the award on his behalf.

Prof. Williams's keynote concluded the evening, as she shared with a new audience her analysis of the important role balanced hours programs can play in retaining women lawyers. Said incoming President Janet Chung, "Prof. Williams provided a real call to action for everyone concerned about retaining women attorneys. WWL looks forward to working with the legal community to build on her ideas to improve the professional lives of women lawyers in our state."

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

|  |   |
|--|---|
| WWL Annual Dinner                        | 1 |
| Court Appointments                       | 1 |
| John McKay Talk                          | 2 |
| President's Letter                       | 2 |
| Female Law School Applicants             | 3 |
| Reah Whitehead Breakfast                 | 4 |
| Announcements                            | 4 |
| Finding Your Moral Compass               | 5 |
| Governmental Affairs                     | 5 |
| MAMAS Takes Off                          | 5 |
| Spokane Chapter Highlights Cancer Issues | 6 |
| Member in the Spotlight                  | 6 |
| Volunteer Opportunities                  | 6 |
| Surviving the Sophomore Slump            | 7 |

## Governor Gregoire Appoints Judge Debra Stephens of Spokane to Washington State Supreme Court

By *Marzia Meade, WWL Judicial Affairs VP*

Stating that that Washington's Supreme Court should resemble the population it serves, Gov. Christine Gregoire appointed an Eastern Washington native, Judge Debra L. Stephens, to replace the retiring Justice Bobbe Bridge.

Currently serving on the Court of Appeals, Division III, Judge Stephens is a Spokane-born, raised, educated, and practicing lawyer. On December 4, 2007, with only short notice that the Governor would be making an announcement about an appointment, 275 attendees—judges, local attorneys, faculty and citizens—filled the Gonzaga University School of Law moot court room to witness the Spokane announcement of Judge Stephens's appointment. With a humble but commanding presence, in accepting the ap-

pointment, Judge Stephens stated, "I'm humbled when I look at what this appointment means, not only to me but this community." She continued, "We have a responsibility as lawyers to make the legal system accessible. I pledge to listen, to work hard and give my best."

In April 2007, Judge Stephens was appointed to the Court of Appeals, Division III. WWL evaluated and rated her "exceptionally well qualified." Before coming to the bench, Judge Stephens had a distinguished appellate practice. She has briefed and argued before the



*(Continued on page 3)*

### WWL Mission Statement

*The principal purposes of Washington Women Lawyers are:*

- to further the full integration of women in the legal profession, and
- to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and to prevent discrimination against them.

# PRESIDENT'S LETTER



The year 2008 is almost upon us. It's been almost 140 years since the U.S. Supreme Court famously upheld the denial of Myra Bradwell's admission to the bar on the grounds that as a woman, she was "unfit" for an occupation outside the domestic sphere. Times have certainly changed, and so I often get asked the question, "Is a women's bar association really still necessary?" The answer to that is easy: Absolutely. Let me tell you some of the reasons why.

It's true that women are no longer excluded from the legal profession outright. We enter law school and gain entry to the profession in greater numbers than a generation ago. However, to quote former Washington State Bar Association President Ron Ward, "Women in this society have broken through the glass ceiling, but they can still bleed to death on the protruding shards of glass."

Look at the numbers: According to a 2006 survey by the National Association of Women Lawyers, women constitute roughly 47 % of law students. On average, within law firms nationally, women constitute 45% of associates; 26% of non-equity partners; 16% of equity partners; and just 5% of managing partners. Nationally, just over one-third of in-house counsel are women, and approximately 37% of law faculty are women.

It doesn't take a mathematician to see the downward trend in numbers as women get further away from their law school graduation. Figuring out why that is, and how to change those numbers, is a challenge

for the entire legal profession. But it is up to women's bar associations to provide focused leadership and a voice for issues important to women in the profession.

It is our charge as Washington Women Lawyers to speak up – not only to track failures and advocate for changes, but to celebrate successes, identify and highlight best practices, and build a community that is truly supportive of women lawyers.

And indeed, there are successes. Women lawyers occupy judicial and political positions at all levels, up to and including the governorship. Four women sit on our state's highest court – come January, those will include two former WWL board members, Justice Mary Fairhurst and Judge Debra Stephens. Women are leading the way in law firms, corporate law departments, law schools, and organizations around the state.

WWL's goal is to ensure that we continue to have these successes to report. This requires building a supportive community at all points along the trajectory of a legal professional's life. Accordingly, WWL has an ambitious agenda, which includes the following:

- We will continue to build on the ideas shared by our 2007 annual event speaker, Professor Joan Williams, a national expert who analyzes barriers to retaining women in the legal profession. We will be working to arm both women attorneys and legal employers in Washington with concrete solutions and best practices from around the country that they can implement to make legal employment better adapted to the needs and realities of women's lives.
- We've pledged to create opportunities

targeted at women who are, or are seeking to be, in-house counsel, to share strategies and find common ground.

- We're working on a revamped website that will serve as a centerpiece in our efforts to strengthen our state-wide community. On our website we'll be sharing information important to women lawyers – such as research, legislative or regulatory proposals, and events.

- We will continue to conduct judicial evaluations around the state for candidates for judicial election and appointment, pro-

*(Continued on page 7)*

## WWL Capitol Chapter Hosts John McKay

*By Lynnda Brown, WWL Capitol Chapter VP, Programs*

John McKay, the former US Attorney for the Western District of Washington, gave a presentation to the Washington Women Lawyers' Capitol Chapter on November 15, 2007, at the Water Street Café in Olympia. McKay has had a varied and impressive legal career in private and, most notably, in public service. He has not only served our country as a U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington, he has also been the president of the Legal Services Corporation in Washington, D.C., a non-profit corporation ensuring equal access to justice, and has been on state and national bar boards promoting access to justice. He presently is a law professor at Seattle University teaching Constitutional Law of Terrorism and National Security Law, and will lead a new ethics center at the school.



McKay spoke about his distinguished service as a U.S. Attorney, as well as his dismissal, and the ramifications in and for the Justice Department regarding the firing of seven U.S. Attorneys, some of which appears to be as a result of political consideration. McKay also talked about the recent issue in the news about whether water boarding was considered torture.

### Thank You to Our Generous 2007 Annual Event Sponsors!

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# Fewer Women Seeking Law Degrees Nationally and in Washington State

By Grace Ariel Wiener, 3L Seattle University School of Law, WWL Liaison

The American Bar Association reports that, since 2002, the percentage of women enrolled in law schools has declined each year. While women made up 49% of law school enrollment five years ago, this year only 46.9% of law school students are women.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, according to the Law School Admissions Council, while both men and women are applying to law schools in smaller numbers, women are deciding in larger numbers not to apply. Applicants among both men and women plunged by 7.4% for the fall of 2006, the biggest drop since 1995. However, the drop in female applicants accounted for more of this drop: the percentage of men applicants in 2006 decreased only by 6.7%, while the percentage of women applicants fell by 7.7%.

In Washington State, the percentages of women enrolled at law schools in Washington also generally reflect this national decline of women enrollment. Of the students currently enrolled at Seattle University School of Law, 49% are women, a drop from 52.8% in fall 2006.<sup>2</sup> Gonzaga University School of Law experienced a similar drop, but with even lower overall female enrollment: this year, only 40% of the students are women,

compared with 44.3% in 2006. The University of Washington, however, bucks this trend. UW's law school reports that 66% of the students in their 2007 entering class are women. In 2006, 56.8% of the overall student body was female.

Various theories exist as to what may be contributing to the dip in women choosing to attend law school. Some suggest that a strong economy from 2004 until recently has prompted people who would otherwise have gone to law school to start working right after college. In weighing the costs and benefits of various career paths, potential law students might be lured by the instant gratification of a post-undergrad offer and signing bonus in a non-legal career. It may be the case that women in larger numbers are considering the prospect of an immediate paycheck more attractive than the prospect of three more years of studying while racking up loan debt.

Still other observers view the decline in women applicants as a rejection of the "lawyer's life." These observers suspect that women do not believe that a career in law will offer them the schedule flexibility they require to fulfill their home and family responsibilities. This belief may have been derived from media attention that law firms have recently received about the scant num-

ber of women partners and the problems firms have in retaining women.<sup>3</sup> However, the desire of professional women to balance a rigorous career and healthy personal life is hardly a recent development, rendering its impact on this national decrease inconclusive.

Indeed, it may not be possible to discern beyond conjecture whether the national decline of women attending law schools has been caused by perceptions about the strength of the economy, broader career options, concerns about work-life balance, or the many other relevant factors not listed here. Whatever the cause of this decline, it should further underscore to existing women lawyers the importance of acting as supportive mentors to other women who also have chosen this, albeit often challenging, honorable and rewarding profession.

<sup>1</sup>See [www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/charts/stats%20-%202006.pdf](http://www.abanet.org/legaled/statistics/charts/stats%20-%202006.pdf).

<sup>2</sup>Current figures are from sources at each school. Figures for the preceding year (2006) are from the 2008 Searchable edition of ABA-LSAC Official Guide to ABA-Approved Law Schools.

<sup>3</sup>See, e.g., Leigh Jones, "Fewer Women Are Seeking Law Degrees," *The National Law Journal*, Oct. 1, 2007.

## Stephens Appointment

(Continued from page 1)

Washington State Supreme Court over 100 times. Additionally, she has been lead counsel in cases before Washington Court of Appeals, Idaho Supreme Court, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and has appeared as counsel of record in the United States Supreme Court.

As reported in the *Spokesman Review*, in appointing Judge Stephens, Gov. Gregoire said she repeatedly changed her mind on the appointment, nearly settling on three other candidates in recent weeks. Washington Women Lawyers was well aware that Gov. Gregoire had a number of quality candidates from which to select. Among others, WWL evaluated and rated four other candidates as "exceptionally well qualified" for the Supreme Court: Court of Appeals, Division I Judge Mary Kay Becker, King County Superior Court Judge Mary Yu, former Court of Appeals, Division II Judge, and now practicing appellate attorney Charles Wiggins, and

practicing attorney Hugh Spitzer.

From this selection of "exceptionally well qualified" candidates, Gov. Gregoire related that Stephens was selected because she's "an absolute legal scholar" who also knows the importance of making the law meaningful to everyday people. The Governor's Press Release highlights Judge Stephens's multiple legal, education and community activities — which includes service on the board of WWL — that demonstrate a solid history of supporting equal access to justice.

WWL Judicial Evaluation Committee (JEC) is pleased that WWL was able to provide the Governor with nine separate judicial evaluations to assist with the difficult decision of making an appointment to the Washington Supreme Court. WWL extends a heartfelt appreciation to the state JEC, whose members have devoted over 750 hours of attorney time to these nine Supreme Court evaluations.

### WWL WEBSITE VPs Gena Bomotti and Sara Springer Seek Your Input for the Website!

Have a voice in the WWL website! Gena and Sara are excited to incorporate member suggestions into the website design and content. Contact Gena Bomotti or Sara Springer at [gmbomotti@yahoo.com](mailto:gmbomotti@yahoo.com) to pass on your ideas.

# Seattle University Honors Alumna Linda Strout with Reah Whitehead Public Leadership Award

By Terra Evans, 1L WLC Seattle University

Seattle University School of Law students, alumni, faculty and staff gathered on October 30th at the Rainier Club to honor alumna Linda Strout. This year marks the third annual Reah Whitehead Public Leadership Award Breakfast hosted by the Women's Law Caucus and the Alumni Office of Seattle University. This event honors the legacy of Reah Whitehead, one of the first women to practice law in Washington State and one of the first female judges in the country. The Reah Whitehead Public Leadership Award is presented each year to a woman who has shown outstanding dedication to public service and

leadership.

This year's honoree, Linda Strout, has been the Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Seattle since 2004. She is a member of the Port's executive leadership team, leading the Port's environmental and security strategy teams. She currently serves on



**Linda Strout, Dean Kellye Testy, and Sara Hixson—Photo Courtesy of Seattle University**

several community boards, including the Artist Trust Board of Trustees, Columbia Legal Services Board of Trustees, and the

Seattle University School of Law Alumni Board.

While introducing this year's honoree, Dean Testy spoke about the outstanding contributions that women have made to the school and the legal community, and she counseled the students present to find role models and mentors to guide them as they make their own contributions to the world. Several on the Women's Law Caucus board spoke of their own mentors, and recognized those in the room who had impacted their lives. The School of Law's dedication to training outstanding leaders for a just and humane world was a subtle undercurrent of the morning, reminding us all that we must strive to be leaders in our own lives and communities, and to live up to the stellar examples set by Reah Whitehead, Linda Strout, and so many others in the room.

## BRIEFLY SPEAKING: REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- WWL's **King County chapter** hosted a well-attended Annual Holiday Party on November 6th at Farestart. Thank you to the outgoing board, and congratulations to the new board!
- WWL's **Pierce County chapter** is pleased and proud to report that it held a very successful auction on October 20 this year. Over 200 were in attendance, and although the final figures have not been calculated, we were able to raise a substantial amount of money for the Pierce County Sexual Assault Center and the YWCA Legal Services Program for Victims of Domestic Violence. The bidding was fierce!
- WWL's **Pierce County chapter** hosted its Holiday Sparkles Party on December 4th, toasting successes of the past year and introducing exciting events for the upcoming year!
- Have you always harbored a secret desire to be a journalist? Join **WWL's newsletter** editorial and content development committee. Contact Gwen Forrest, WWL's VP, Newsletters, at [gwen.marie.forrest@gmail.com](mailto:gwen.marie.forrest@gmail.com).
- **UW Law Women's Caucus** is seeking nominees for the annual "Outstanding Advocate for Women" award.
- WWL's **St. Helen's chapter** is hosting a Happy Hour at Gray's at the Park on Wednesday, January 9, 2008, at 5:30 PM. Mark your calendars!



**Outgoing Board of WWL's King County Chapter at its Annual Holiday Party, held November 6 at Farestart. Photo courtesy of Tracy Sarich.**

### THANK YOU TO OUR 2007 ANNUAL EVENT VOLUNTEERS

Meagen Burrows, Darcel Desjardins, Victoria Daniels, Kimberly Dean, Bette Fleischman, Valerie Holder, Holly Henson, Emily Klockenkemper, Jordan Stephens, Grace Wiener, Ashlee Wiese, and Pauline Woodman

*We could not have done it without you!*



## Finding Your Moral Compass: "Mentoring Circles" to Help Women Lawyers Achieve Leadership Goals

By Gwen Marie Forrest, WWL Newsletter VP

Dr. Susan Secker is inspiring women across the state. A retired provost of Seattle University, Dr. Secker is a consultant in leadership development and has held positions that included responsibilities for strategic planning, team building, diversifying the workforce, and cultivating leadership.

Recently, Dr. Secker spoke at WWL's Annual CLE about finding and maintaining your moral compass. By the term "discovering a moral compass," Dr. Secker is asking what a person's core values are, and what grounds that person's life and gives it direction and meaning.

One of Dr. Secker's latest projects, leadership mentoring circles for women lawyers, is about to take off. Through these leadership circles for women lawyers, Dr. Secker hopes to help women lawyers' careers grow, to help women lawyers achieve balance in work and life, and to help women lawyers empower themselves.

These circles aim to help women lawyers understand personal and professional communication styles, and how to create opportunities for themselves. The circles are also designed to address challenges that face women lawyers as they work with employers, colleagues, and clients. Finally, the circles are meant to help women design their world and to assume responsibility in order to empower themselves and support other women.

Women can sign up for a circle, or organize their own circles of no more than 12; contact Dr. Secker at [sue@slsleadership.com](mailto:sue@slsleadership.com) or 206.937.2483 for information.

## Governmental Affairs Corner

By Cynthia Jones, WWL VP Governmental Affairs

Earlier this year, Washington Women Lawyers sent a letter to the Washington State Board of Pharmacy, which was considering new rules regulating pharmacists' ability to refuse to dispense medication based on their own personal and moral beliefs. WWL supported the position of the Washington State Human Rights Commission, which advocated that the rules require pharmacies to dispense lawful prescriptions, without discrimination and without delay.

*The update.* In April, the Pharmacy Board adopted the position urged by WWL and other women's advocates. The rules, adopted after a lengthy public rule-making process, require pharmacies to ensure that patients always have access to their lawful medications and that patients not be denied their medications based on individual pharmacists' personal feelings or moral objections to the medication or patient. But the day the new rules went into effect in July 2007, a pharmacy and two pharmacists filed suit to enjoin enforcement of the rules, claiming the rules infringed on their First Amendment religious free exercise rights.

In September, a federal court allowed seven concerned citizens from across the state to join the lawsuit, *Storman's, et al. v. Selecky, et al.*, in order to defend the rules. The interveners in the suit include a doctor, an HIV patient and several other women with an interest in using emergency contraception known as Plan B. They are jointly represented by the American Civil Liberties Union of Washington, the Northwest Women's Law Center, Planned Parenthood of Western Washington and the law firm Heller Ehrman.

In November, the court granted the plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary injunction. In doing so, the court rejected the Pharmacy Board's stated purpose of ensuring that all patients receive access to their medications, finding not only that lack of access was not a compelling state interest, but also that preventing discrimination on the basis of gender was, in this case, not a compelling state interest. The defendant-intervenors filed a notice of appeal of that decision to the 9th Circuit in December.



## MAMAS Takes Off Promoting Mother Attorneys

By Rachel S. Black, MAMAS President and Co-Founder

This fall, the Mother Attorneys Mentoring Association of Seattle (MAMAS) celebrated its first year. Only one year ago, starting an organization devoted to mother attorneys was merely an idea in my head. In a very short time, MAMAS has grown from an idea to an organization with over 300 members, who collectively have over 500 children. This past year alone, our members have given birth to over 55 children!

The rapid growth of MAMAS is not surprising. With half of law school graduates being women, it has become increasingly important to pay attention to the needs of attorney mothers. MAMAS aims to accomplish just that. It has become a source of inspiration and support for a population of women who are struggling to find balance between a successful professional career and a fulfilling family life. Equally important, it has become a foothold for those women who are seeking to re-enter the profession after taking time away for family reasons, and for those women who are doing everything they can to remain in the profession despite sometimes overwhelming family demands. MAMAS has also become a voice to support the promotion of mother attorneys within the profession so more

(Continued on page 6)

## Spokane Chapter Highlights Cancer Patients' Legal Issues, Provides Valuable Information

By Carlin Jude, WWL Spokane Chapter

The Spokane Chapter of Washington Women Lawyers offered a CLE seminar on cancer patients' legal issues October 11, 2007 at the Gonzaga University School of Law. The chapter event was presented with the cooperation of the American Cancer Society and Cancer Patient Care, who shared proceeds. The law school, Women's Law Caucus, and the Health Law group all assisted in organizing and attendance at the event. The seminar was open to the public without charge.

The schedule included presentations by Eric Steven on landlord-tenant issues; Christine Weaver on employment issues; Karen Sayre on estate planning and ethics; an excellent panel of survivors; and a panel of professionals involved in providing resources for cancer patients. WWL has received excellent coverage

for the service its Breast Cancer Legal Resources Guide has provided to the community. The advance publicity of the CLE included a detailed article in the *Spokesman-Review* newspaper, which included the access information for the guide. Avista Corporation donated the printing of so that every person who attended received a copy, as did the law school library. The remaining manuals are being distributed without charge by Spokane Regional Health District.

At the conclusion of the event, attendees concluded that the information was valuable and made inquiries about whether a similar seminar would be offered again. Some felt that now that they knew what it was about, attendance would be even higher if WWL does it again. It was great to be able to tie our chapter activity into this state-wide effort!

## MAMAS Takes Off

(Continued from page 5)

women become law firm partners, general counsel, judges, or advance to other positions of stature.

MAMAS has provided hundreds of women networking opportunities.. These events give mother attorneys a chance to network, socialize, and support each other while their children play. Hearing the stories of the many women who are successfully overcoming the same challenges that I face as a mother attorney has been invaluable. Together, we have spoken freely about these challenges in the supportive environment that MAMAS has provided, while celebrating our roles as mothers and attorneys. Additionally, through the MAMAS listserv and its monthly brown bag lunches, MAMAS has served the mother attorney community by tackling a variety of topics of particular interest to attorney mothers.



## Member in the Spotlight: Victoria Vreeland

Victoria Vreeland, a partner at Gordon Thomas Honeywell Malanca Peterson & Daheim LLP, was recently honored by the Gonzaga University Women's Law Caucus with the Myra Bradwell Award in May 2007. She joins other past recipients of the Bradwell Award, including Governor Christine Gregoire and Supreme Court Justices Barbara Madsen and Mary Fairhurst.

The Myra Bradwell Award honors a Gonzaga graduate who has advanced the causes of women in both her practice and community. Gonzaga recognized Vreeland for her many contributions in the law including her service as the first woman law clerk for the Washington Court of Appeals, Division III, her work as a litigator giving voice to victims of sexual assault, harassment and employment discrimination, and her dedication as a pioneer and role model for women trial lawyers – a once male-dominated arena. Ms. Vreeland is the first attorney in private practice to receive the award. Ms. Vreeland graduated from Gonzaga University School of

Law in 1976. She was the first honors intern in the U.S. Department of Justice from Washington State and served as an assistant attorney general for the State of Washington and as chief counsel for the crime victims' compensation section. Last year, she was honored as WSTLA's 2007 Trial Lawyer of the Year

She became a partner at Gordon Thomas Honeywell in 1985 in its Seattle office, is an annual recipient of the Washington Law and Politics "Super Lawyer" award, and has been recognized multiple times as one of Washington State's "Top 50 Women Lawyers."

Jemima McCullum, Co-President of WWL's Pierce County chapter, noted, "I am honored and proud to be a partner with Vicki Vreeland at Gordon Thomas Honeywell. She has not only changed the lives of her clients who are victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault and employment discrimination, but also changed stereotypes in the legal field. Vicki truly is an inspirational woman, a pioneer, leader and role model for other female attorneys in trial practice."

## FEATURED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

- The **Rural Development Institute (RDI)** works to provide women access to land rights, which empowers women, alleviates poverty, and improves communities. RDI is seeking Table Captains for its International Women's Day event. Contact [radhaf@rdilnd.org](mailto:radhaf@rdilnd.org) for more information.
- Serve on **WWL's Judicial Evaluations Committee** and make a difference in the judicial choices of Washington State:
  - Participate in exclusive meetings with judicial candidates
  - Investigate and report on lawyers' and non-lawyers' experiences about the candidates
  - Provide important input into what rating WWL will issue

Please contact [wwl@wwl.org](mailto:wwl@wwl.org) with the subject line "Judicial Evaluations Committee."

\* **Note:** You must have a minimum of 4 years of practice to serve on this committee. WWL seeks diversity of all types on this committee, including race, ethnic, sexual orientation, geographic, and practice area.

# Member Perspective: Surviving the Sophomore Slump

By Sara Amies, WWL King County Chapter  
Co-VP for CLEs

Several months ago, I came down with a bad case of LJS, Low Job Satisfaction. **I could have reported the following symptoms to my doctor: an overwhelming sense of responsibility for my clients' problems, fear of looking like an idiot, continual dread that I was messing up my clients' cases because I lacked knowledge of procedural rules, and feeling like a therapist instead of a lawyer.** I was starting to flinch whenever the phone rang.

I also felt naïvely shocked at the obstreperousness and nerve I saw in some opposing counsel. Did he really blame his secretary *again* for missing that deadline? Does she really believe that this case says what she's telling me it says? Are personal attacks against me and my client really the best defense my opponent can mount?

I felt trapped in my new career. With less than two years of practice under my belt, I was spending an unhealthy amount of time fantasizing about becoming a postal carrier (no one bothers you and you get lots of exercise) or a flower seller at the Pike Place Market (surrounded by beauty and people buying flowers are happy). I shared this with a friend from law school. She laughed and said that she was thinking of burning her bar card and becoming a baker.

Once I started talking to colleagues, I learned yet another thing they don't teach you in law school: **My symptoms were classic signs of the sophomore slump.** Realizing that it's a stage helped me to get through it. I started to compile a list of my colleagues' words of wisdom and secrets to survival.

**First Lesson: My client's problems are not my own problems.** To do my best, I have to leave work at the office. When I'm obsessing about a case at 2 a.m., I write down my thoughts and put the list away. I give myself permission to think about it for five minutes, then try to think about something that will help me sleep. Then, when I'm in the office, I can

think about my client's legal problems with a fresh perspective.

**Second Lesson: Check my ego at the door.** Cases are won or lost on their facts; my brilliant legal analysis will always be a distant second. Another friend told me that she has stopped worrying about appearing foolish and instead, asks honest questions. The simplest solution strikes again. She reminded me that everyone already knows that I'm a new lawyer because I have a high bar number. When confronted with procedures unfamiliar to her, she asks for clarification. Judges are often helpful when she is frank about her experience: they don't want to penalize clients for the inadvertent errors of newly-hatched counsel.

**Third Lesson: Become one with the Rules of Procedure.** I'm fairly confident I could independently note a motion with the correct number of days, etc. But I hereby solemnly swear to read CR 7 every time I do it. I only needed one federal judge saying, "Ms. Amies, if you want to practice in federal court, you need to know the rules," for me to realize that becoming one with the Rules of Procedure is the zen of trial practice.

**Fourth Lesson: Practice the art of client management.** In the course of representing clients, I learn a great deal about their lives and their struggles. They often need to talk to someone, and since we're already discussing their issues and I'm on contingency, it's a short step for them to see me as a free therapist. That doesn't work. The road to burn-out is littered with the bodies of lawyers who overburdened themselves with their clients' problems. To serve my clients well, they have to respect my time and my role. Our emails and phone calls should be succinct, and my clients have to know that my role is limited to advocating for their legal issues. The art of client management is to maintain open communication without becoming overly personal. This, for me, is the hardest lesson of all. I became a lawyer to help people, but I'm no superhero. I'm only a second-year lawyer. To

do a job that sometimes demands superhuman strength, I rely on a network of sympathetic colleagues and mentors who will help me become a third-year lawyer.

I think I know now why so many job postings for lawyers ask for a minimum of two years' experience. The ads might as well say, "post-slump only need apply."

Sara Amies practices employment law in Seattle with Teller & Associates, PLLC.



*I was spending an unhealthy amount of time fantasizing about becoming a postal carrier (no one bothers you and you get lots of exercise) ....*

## President's Letter

(Continued from page 2)

viding important information to the community based on extensive reference checks and analysis of specified criteria.

- We'll continue to work with minority and specialty bars to ensure that women's voices are not left out of diversity discussions – and also that WWL itself remains diverse in ways other than gender.
- WWL will identify and showcase volunteer opportunities, both legal and non-legal, that are particularly suited for lawyers and can provide career-building opportunities or opportunities for attorneys in their "second season of service."

These are some of the things that WWL hopes to do for its members.

So ... come join us! Your membership dues will go toward helping to support our infrastructure so we can provide these services state-wide. (See our website – [www.wwl.org](http://www.wwl.org) – for the form and details.)

## How can YOU help build a strong, supportive community that is welcoming to women in the legal profession ?

In honor of **National Mentoring Month** in January – commit to have lunch, or coffee, or a drink, or take a walk with a junior attorney, or a law student. If you are a junior attorney, or a law student – then take a college, high school, or middle school student. Or, invite someone who has mentored you.

### Pay it forward.

That's one New Year's resolution we all should be able to keep!



**WASHINGTON WOMEN LAWYERS**

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