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Dean's Desk: Past and present, women play key roles at IU Maurer

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November 15, 2017



DEAN'S DESK

Austen Parrish
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Under first lady Laurie Burns McRobbie's leadership, Indiana University founded Women's Philanthropy as one way to celebrate alumnae leadership and to make the achievements of our most talented and trailblazing women graduates more visible. As the IU Maurer School of Law's 175th year draws to a close, consistent with these larger University efforts, it's an opportune time to celebrate some of the law school's extraordinary women graduates. Their stories are powerful and inspiring, and I'm pleased to share just a few.

Tamar Althouse was a trailblazer. A high school graduate at 17, she enrolled in the law school at a time when many women didn't have the chance to pursue higher education at all, much less a legal career. In 1870, only eight state universities — including IU — allowed women to enroll. But Althouse wasn't intimidated. When she became our first woman graduate, she was one of 17 members of the class of 1892. She didn't stop there.

Althouse returned to southern Indiana to begin a law practice that would span the rest of her life. Her trailblazing resilience has become a central theme of our women graduates.

Harriet Bouslog Sawyer earned her LLB from the law school in 1936. She followed her husband to Hawaii, where she became the eighth woman admitted to the territory's bar on Dec. 23, 1941. Martial law was declared in the Hawaiian territory due to the outbreak of World War II, forcing Sawyer to move to Washington, D.C., to find legal work. After the war ended and martial law was lifted, Sawyer defended the "Hawaii Seven," a group of defendants charged with conspiracy to violate the Alien Registration Act. During the trial, Sawyer gave a speech to a union meeting, which resulted in her being found in contempt of court, and the Territorial Supreme Court suspended her license. The U.S. Supreme Court reversed, and *In Re Sawyer* is to this day considered a landmark precedent on the free-speech rights of attorneys.

Jean Stoffregen, '42, was clerking for Indiana Supreme Court Justice Frank Richman when he asked her to assist him in the second round of war-crimes trials in Nuremberg, Germany. She became one of the few women to work on the trials. Stoffregen traveled across Europe throughout 1947, assisting residents displaced by the war with emigration documentation and processing. When she returned to the United States, she networked with churches and other local organizations across the country to find homes and sponsors for those she had helped overseas. Stoffregen is personally credited with helping dozens of Europeans find permanent homes in the U.S. after World War II.

Jeanne Seidel Miller finished first in her class in 1948. Now 90, Miller recalled recently that she always wanted to be a lawyer. She met her late husband Mickey in law school, and the two formed a partnership that went beyond marriage. After graduating, the couple moved north and worked in a small New Haven firm. She ran her own small firm for a number of years. Miller is still learning to this day: She attends IU's MiniUniversity every summer on the Bloomington campus, enjoying lectures and classes from some of the university's best faculty.

Our alumnae have made history on the other side of the bench, too.

Miller's classmate, Juanita Kidd Stout, began college at the age of 16 in Missouri. World War II took her and her husband to Washington, D.C. She found work in legal dictation, but was so good she decided to pursue a legal education. Her husband enrolled in the PhD program at IU, creating the perfect opportunity for Stout to enroll at the law school. She earned her JD in 1948; her LLM in 1954. Two years later, Stout had been appointed to the District Attorney's office in Philadelphia. She received an interim appointment to the Philadelphia Municipal Court, and when the job came up for election after only two months, Stout became the first African-American woman in the United States to win an election to a court of record. Later, Justice Stout became the first African-American woman to sit on a state supreme court.

Flerida Ruth Pineda-Romero earned a degree from the University of the Philippines College of Law in 1952. She earned an LLM from Indiana Law and went back to her native country to serve. In 1986, she was chosen by then-President Corazon Aquino to oversee the creation of a new Philippine constitution, which established a democracy and ended the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos. Aquino appointed Pineda-Romero to the Supreme Court of the Philippines in 1991, where she served until retirement in 1999.

Juanita Kidd Stout and Pineda-Romero are but two of our many women graduates who have served behind the bench. Hon. Shirley Abrahamson, '56, became the first woman on the Wisconsin Supreme Court and its first chief justice; Hon. Loretta H. Rush, '83, presides as the first woman chief justice of the Indiana Supreme Court and its second female justice; and Hon. V. Sue Shields, '61, claims three "firsts": the first woman trial court judge in the state, the first woman on the Court of Appeals, and the first woman to serve as a federal magistrate judge in Indiana.

Alumnae of the law school have excelled in academia also. To name just three: Lauren Robel, '83, was the first woman to serve as dean, from 2003-2011; she is now provost of IU Bloomington and executive vice president of Indiana University. Kellye Testy, '91, served as dean of both Seattle University School of Law and the University of Washington School of Law before being named recently as president and CEO of the Law School Admission Council. And Alecia DeCoudreaux '78, recently finished a term as the 13th President of Mills College, after serving as vice president and general counsel for Lilly USA.

At the law school, we look to our Alumni Board and Board of Visitors for counsel on ways to build our alumni network and strengthen programs that will improve our national standing. This year, for the first time in the school's history, all five officers of the Alumni Board are women. They represent our profession in its many dimensions. Jeanne Picht, president, is director of professional development at Fenwick & West in the San Francisco Bay Area; Susan Lynch, president-elect, is a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice; Lisa Powell, vice president, is a partner at FisherBroyles, LLP in Houston; Elizabeth Baney, secretary, is a principal in FaegreBD Consulting, Washington, D.C.; and past president Courtney Tobin is senior vice president at Sycamore Advisors in Indianapolis and Atlanta. Elissa Preheim, vice chair of our Board of Visitors, is a partner at Arnold & Porter in Washington, D.C., and we have recently welcomed four new women onto the board: Betsy Greene, a partner in Greene & Schultz, Bloomington; Laurie Robinson Haden '98, senior vice president and assistant general counsel at CBS Corp. in New York; Laura O'Donnell, vice president and general counsel of GE Healthcare in Milwaukee; and Mary Tuuk, chief compliance officer of Meijer, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Indiana Law's distinguished roster of alumnae is a tremendous source of pride for the school. We look forward to seeing what the next generation of women will achieve. In 2016, 51 percent of our entering class were women and nearly half of the 2017 entering class were women. No doubt, as they begin their professional careers, their stories will be many, varied, and always inspiring. •

• **Austen L. Parrish** *is dean and James H. Rudy Professor at the Indiana University Maurer School of Law. Opinions expressed are the author's.*