

**Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.**  
**30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and Awards Ceremony**  
**November 13, 2002**

**PART I: 1971-1985**  
**Stirring it Up!**

**Gwen:** The Women's Law Center has a 30-year history of fighting for the legal rights of women. This evening, we want to share some of our milestones, challenges, and triumphs of those three decades.

Here to be our guide in this journey is former Women's Law Center Board member and a familiar broadcast voice on WJHU for many years, Lisa Simeone. Lisa is currently host of NPR's *World of Opera* and a weekly television show on foreign affairs called "Superpower." Please help me welcome Lisa.

**Lisa:** The year is 1971. The few practicing women attorneys and students at the University of Maryland Law School come face to face with blatant and demoralizing discrimination. Women law students are told that they were taking slots that belong to Vietnam Veterans who need to support their families. A sign is posted at the Law School asking professors to stop letting the women ask questions, because they're wasting men's time. These young women begin talking with each other about what they are experiencing. One of the law students was Mardie Walker.

**Mardie Walker:**

*It was the fall of 1968 when I arrived at the University of Maryland Law School. There were twelve of us in my class, ten percent. It was so amazing that there were so many of us, because the class behind us only had three women. Any of you who did go to the University of Maryland Law School, remember the basement women's bathroom. We had the lockers inside the bathroom, so it was like a private caucus down there. And that was where we could support each other.*

*When I got to law school I had never met a woman attorney, I had never seen a woman attorney, and, in fact, I had never seen a woman lawyer on television. So the first time that I got to go as a student to a meeting at the Women's Law Center and met women attorneys, it was an unbelievably big deal. The kind of support that I felt, and the others of us as students felt, with attorneys who were sitting around the table talking about women's issues, made all the difference surviving law school at that time.*

**Lisa:** Because of discrimination, many of the early members of the Women's Law Center went into public practice—at the Legal Aid Bureau, for example. Ads for private firms often read, "Men only need apply." One of the founding members was asked at a job interview what kind of contraception she was using. Another early member was told by a judge in chambers to "sit where I can see your legs." The resolve to create an organization to combat discrimination and support each other took form. The Vietnam War was raging and peace protests were ongoing. Women felt empowered to assert their rights. Phyllis Erlich had the idea of starting an organization.

**Phyllis Erlich:**

*It was very obvious that there was much discrimination happening both with the students getting into law school and people in the general population in terms of employment discrimination. I applied for a job with a small family law firm when I graduated from law school. I was interviewed by the associates, and the associates never told the partner that I was a woman. And they told me right before my interview with the partner that the partner would not have interviewed me if he had known I was a woman. I didn't have any chance of getting the job!*

*It was so blatant what women were facing that we decided we needed to start an organization to combat the effects of discrimination. I asked Susan Handwerger, now Tannenbaum, to look in the Lawyer's Manual and find all of the women who would be interested in starting an organization. It was very easy to find the women because there were maybe ten. There were three women in my class and in the class after me I think there was maybe one. Even in my interview, the Dean of the University of Maryland Law School said to me, 'Why did I want to take the place of a good man who wanted to go to law school?' Can you imagine someone saying that today? So all I can say is that we really have come a long way.*

**Lisa:** Once the core group came together it quickly went to work. There was a Mother's Day call-in from Emily Rody's office: Mothers could call about child support issues. The Hotline was established in the mid-1970s to help women with their legal issues. Volunteers sat in a bare room, with only a desk, chair and telephone, in a donated office at Maryland Avenue and 25<sup>th</sup> Street. Members also presented workshops on women's legal issues to groups like New Directions for Women, the Women's Union of Baltimore, and other organizations that thrived in this exciting period of women's movement activism.

In 1973, the Women's Law Center incorporated. This provided permanence for the organization and allowed it to begin raising money. Signers of the articles of incorporation were Kathleen O'Ferrall Friedman, Susan Tannenbaum, and Ann Hoffman.

What's amazing is that volunteers did all this work. They met regularly to support one another, do the work of the organization, and even have fun. Sometimes they had speakers at their meetings. Oprah Winfrey came to one and read her poetry. Many meetings were at the home of Judge Friedman.

**Judge Katy Friedman:**

*I have with me the original incorporators, Susan Tannenbaum, and Ann Hoffman. I was working with Legal Aid with Phyllis Erlich and Phyllis said to me, 'I've been talking to Susan Leviton and we want to put together an organization of women because there are so many laws that discriminate against women.'" We had our first meeting at the University of Maryland and I can see that room, that classroom, as if it was yesterday. I remember looking at Mardy Hoke, now Walker, and looking at Ellen Luff, who was the counsel of the Commission to study the implementation of the Equal Rights Amendment in a later life, and looking at Phyllis Erlich and looking at Susan Leviton and Bea Cowen, who became our first president, and thinking, 'This is really important! We are about to embark on something that was really going to bring about social change.' I can't tell you how exciting it was. We got involved in a lot of cases as the timeline shows, but as time went on it became more and more of a struggle.*

*Ann Hoffman and I used to go to her law firm every year for about three years, and we would call every woman in the Lawyer's Manual. Sometimes we would hit a Hilary Caplan, but we raised money every year - as much as we could drag out of people. I can remember one particular night, it was pouring outside, and I was giving Ann a ride home in my Volkswagen hatchback that cost about \$1200 at the time. Ann said to me "Katy, how much longer do you think we can do this? How much longer is this organization going to continue?" and I said "Lets just keep putting one foot in front of the other." And look at us thirty year later - we're an institution.*

**Lisa:** Another thing that the Women's Law Center did from its earliest days was file impact litigation. One of the Center's first cases involved Rosemary Orner, who was a harpist for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. She was pregnant when the BSO went on strike. The other musicians got unemployment, but Rosemary did not because she was considered unable to work since she was pregnant. The Women's Law Center assisted Legal Aid attorney Chris Brown challenge this policy and Rosemary won. She got unemployment and when the Symphony went back to work, Rosemary did too. And she played the harp through her 9th month of pregnancy!

Emily Rody and other Women's Law Center members kept up their advocacy and impact work in the area of sex discrimination. Emily remembers the discriminatory working conditions for women that prompted the Women's Law Center to file suits.

**Emily Rody:**

*The thing that was interesting was how obvert the discrimination was in those times. You all ca not possibly imagine what happened. At Lever Brothers, for instance, the men so resented the women coming into the work force that they would sabotage the workplace. They would put soap on the floor, so that the women slid into their machinery. In addition to that, they were always feeling people - it was common. Today you would be astounded that that would happen. They would steal their tools so the women couldn't do their work.*

*At Bethlehem Steel, the issue was that all of the women were siphoned into one particular area, which was called the tin mill. Which I think was supposed to be helpful and was supposed to protect them. They were in this little place called the Tin Mill, but there was no promotion from the Tin Mill and all the women were in this same area. We bought the case and the women were allowed to spread out. The other problem they had there was that you went up a seniority line. If you transferred to another division of Bethlehem Steel, you would have to go back to the bottom of the seniority line.*

*At Continental Can, one of the problems was money. They were paying women less than men and it was overt and everybody knew it. Another issue we had was that in one of the plants, I think it was probably Bethlehem Steel, was with the bathrooms. Now Bethlehem Steel is huge, and the women's bathrooms are like a mile away. You really had to walk a mile from the location where you were working to get to the bathroom! They kept clock on how long it took you to go to the bathroom and how many times you had gone. So people who were pregnant you know, had to run to the bathroom constantly. This was always a problem.*

*There was a seniority system at Lever Brothers that you were able to retire with full retirement if you had worked continuously, and of course continuously meant continuously. People who had taken off for pregnancy or to take care of children had not worked continuously. They had a problem with the seniority system and were not able to get all of their retirement.*

*The thing that we want to show was how overt the discrimination was. Today it is much more subtle. I think that anything you do today is much more subtle and has to be carefully looked out, but there was no problem when we were doing it because it was right there in the open.*

**Lisa:** We even had a case involving women prison guards. Dorothy Beatty, Mary Ellen Rinehardt, and other members fought for the right of female prison guards to advance within the system and work in any prison, even the men's facility.

The Women's Law Center lobbied for a state ERA law, which passed in 1972, and lobbied to have a State legislative commission delete the discriminatory language from the Annotated Code of Maryland. Center members served with distinction on this commission.

The Center also took on restrictive voting requirements for women. In 1972, the Women's Law Center filed an amicus brief in a case challenging the requirement that married women register under their married names. Gerry Kenny Sweeny, a founding member of the Women's Law Center, clerked for Judge Murphy, the presiding judge in the *Stuart v. Board of Elections* case. She researched his opinion that made it legal for women to vote using their birth names.

This victory helped establish women legally as full independent people. It paved the way for a woman's right to use her birth name on her driver's license or when she applied for a mortgage with her husband. In one memorable incident, Sally Gold and Dorothy Beatty, for whom the Center's Dorothy Beatty Award is named, took on a local bank.

**Sally Gold:**

*It was 1976; I was a third year law student. Now understand I had married my high school sweet heart and took his name because there really wasn't an option. But by the time I was in my third year of law school I realized that I wanted to take my own name back and certainly get my law degree in my own name. I realized that I had the right to do so I went to Ann Hoffman who was on the faculty of the law school as an adjunct professor. I knew Ann because I had signed up for Alice Soled's Estates and Trusts class, and I went one day and I decided I needed to find something else to do! I asked for a fellowship with the Women's Law Center and that's how I met Ann. I said to Ann "I want to get my name back, will you be my lawyer and I'll hire you to file a petition to get back my name?" She said, "Oh no Sally! You have the right be known by any name you choose and you have a common law right to do it. You don't have to file suit." Then I realized that Ann wanted me to be an element of social change.*

*I went about doing all of those things that you are supposed to do - telling people I had a right to be known by any name I choose, as long as I did it openly, consistently and non-fraudulently. I was meeting with some success until I hit Maryland National Bank where my husband and I had a joint account - it was Mr. and Mrs. Elliot Zulver. Well, I couldn't do that anymore - I wanted to get into the safe deposit box, and write checks! Dorothy Betty and I decided that we would go to Maryland National Bank and we would talk to them. So here we go. Dorothy, for those of you who don't know her, was this tall, majestic looking redhead with long hair - just a regal person. So we went trotting into Maryland National Bank and asked to talk to some one who was in charge. The bank sent us some poor little banker who didn't know what hit him. I very politely said that I wanted to change the name on my account. He explained that I*

*couldn't do that; we would have to close the account and open a new one. I said, "No, that really wasn't true." He said, "No, this would violate federal banking law." Dorothy said, "No, there really wasn't such thing, and it didn't violate federal banking law." The colloquy went on for some period of time until finally this man just capitulated. He realized that he wasn't going to win this battle. I left Maryland National Bank being able to access my joint account using my own name. I never did get a court order and I openly, consistently and non-fraudulently used Sally Gold since 1976.*

**Lisa:** In 1982, Women's Law Center member Mary Ellen Rinehardt was appointed to the District Court for Baltimore. She was part of a wave of women who were subsequently appointed to the bench, including Judge Friedman, Judge Charlotte Cooksey, Judge Carol Smith, and the historic appointment of Judge Mabel Hubbard as the first African-American female judge in Maryland. Judge Rinehardt's appointment had a profound effect on the Women's Law Center.

**Gwen Tromley:**

*The significance of a Women's Law Center member being appointed cannot be overlooked. She was only the 5<sup>th</sup> woman to be named to the City District Court. Baltimore City was in the forefront of judicial appointments for women... you could imagine what the rest of the state was. Only two other women in 1982 were sitting in the District Court of Maryland Baltimore City, the Honorable Mabel Hubbard and the Honorable Blanche Wahl. Having an active member appointed to the bench gave us such a true sense of legitimacy. Mary Ellen believed that her work for the Women's Law Center was a significant factor in her appointment. Her political base was comprised of women. At her investiture, women spoke for her and women robed her.*

*The significance of Mary Ellen's appointment to Judge Carol Smith and me cannot be understated. At the time of her appointment she had been our irreplaceable mentor and dear friend for many years, as she is now. So Judge Smith and I decided to get our dear friend a judicial robe to commemorate this event. Buoyed by the excitement of a somewhat historic appointment, Judge Smith and I strode into Franklin Uniform on Saratoga Street (where else would we go), and announced without hesitation that we would like to buy a judicial robe. Without missing a beat the clerk replied, "How tall is he?" Plunged into the reality of 1982, we paused, but only for a moment, before we said, "She is this tall."*

**Lisa:** In 1985, the Women's Law Center lost one of its founding members and spirited leaders when Dorothy Beatty suddenly died. To honor her contributions to the organization and to the community, the Women's Law Center in 1986 created the Dorothy Beatty Memorial Award. It is presented annually to a person who carries on Dorothy's commitment to improving the legal rights of women. The 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Dorothy Beatty Award is being presented tonight. To introduce this year's recipient is Susan Leviton, one of the founding members of the Women's Law Center and a professor at the University of Maryland School of Law.

[BREAK FOR PRESENTATION BY SUSAN LEVITON AND REMARKS BY DEAN KAREN ROTHENBERG]

## **PART II: 1985-Present Making It Stick!**

**Lisa:** By 1985, the organization was well established and had more structure. In 1982, Anne Sjoerdsma had been hired as first Executive Director. Kathleen Shemer, one of the quiet heroines of the Women's Law Center, began as an intern in 1983, then became its second Executive Director. Board members and Presidents, such as Cheryl Hystad, continued to work hard to support the organization.

### ***Cheryl Hystad:***

*I joined the Women's Law Center when I was in law school at the suggestion of one of my law professors, who is now Court of Appeals Judge Lynn Battaglia. I was in awe of the women who were involved with the Women's Law Center. They are wonderful people like Mary Ann Rinehardt and Katie O'Farrell Friedman.*

*It was great to have role models. I was really surprised a few years later when I joined the Board of the Women's Law Center that this organization that was doing all this wonderful work was really operating on a shoestring budget. At that time, Kathleen Shemer was the Executive Director. Kathleen was wonderful. We could only afford to pay her about fifteen hours a week. She worked a lot more than what we were able to afford to pay her. Every once in a while Kathleen would come to a Board meeting and say "We're running out of money, there isn't enough money to pay me." She would agree to cut her hours or take an unpaid vacation. I don't know what the Law Center would have done without Kathleen's willingness to be flexible about her pay and her hours during that time when we really had very little money.*

*We had no long range planning in those times. When we saw that we were running out of money we would have a five-dollar fundraiser. We would go to a bar or a restaurant that had a happy hour and we would sell tickets that were five dollars apiece, which included a free drink. We would round up as many people as we could to come to the fundraiser, and it was actually a lot of fun. We made a little bit of money, not enough, but it was great support for all the women attorneys who got to know each other, to support each other. And it was a way for the Women's Law Center to get a lot of new members.*

**Lisa:** During this second period, the Women's Law Center continued to take on controversial issues. One was the membership of judges in private clubs that discriminated against women. The Supreme Court had ruled in a New York case that clubs with hundreds of members were not private but fell under NY's public accommodations law. So, the Women's Law Center started looking into things here in Maryland and discovered that many judges belonged to clubs that did not admit women. Some clubs were actually proud of their membership restrictions, saying that members didn't want to sit at lunch next to a woman. The Women's Law Center sent out questionnaires to law firms about their club memberships and participated in public hearings. Judge Brooke Murdock remembers the controversy:

### ***Judge Brooke Murdock:***

*Fifteen years after Susan and Katie and Ann worried about getting funds, and ten years after Sally was barraging bank managers, the Women's Law Center was about to start questioning judicial applicants about their membership to discriminatory clubs and withholding*

*its endorsement for any judicial candidate who belonged to such clubs. Now, I happened to be a member of the Maryland State Bar Association's Judicial Selection Committee at that time. The Women's Law Center's position caused quite a stir. There were contentious discussions about whether we should ask this question; is it fair to ask this question; if you admit that you belong to a club that discriminated against minorities, should that be an automatic exclusion from being a judge? As result of the debate, some of the judicial candidates resigned from their clubs - only to join after they had been appointed judges. Eventually all Maryland bar associations followed the Women's Law Center's lead. Now, even the official questionnaire asks, "Do you belong to a club that discriminates?"*

**Lisa:** During this period, the Women's Law Center sponsored educational conferences and later began holding career breakfasts for girls. We also published groundbreaking pamphlets, including *Legal Rights in Marriage and Divorce* and the important piece, *Battered – What Can I Do?* which is currently available in several languages.

In fact, domestic violence became a major emphasis of the Center in the 1980s. Thirty years ago, there were no laws or legal services to assist victims of domestic violence. The Women's Law Center was at the forefront of advocating for such legislation and actually creating legal services for victims of domestic violence. In 1984, the House of Ruth opened a Domestic Violence Legal Clinic with the Women's Law Center's support and supervision of the clinic's attorneys. The Clinic now has 22 staff members providing expert services to victims. Marla Hollandsworth was the first Managing Attorney of the Legal Clinic and is a former Women's Law Center Board member.

**Marla Hollandsworth:**

*In 1983 I was a legal advocate at the House of Ruth. Now let's be clear - an advocate was not to act as an attorney. I was to advise women what their legal rights and options were. Actually it wasn't a very hard job because there were not a lot of rights or options. There was a brand new Ex Parte Order that had just been enacted. It allowed for a Protection Order for up to twenty days and a batterer could be ordered from the house. Other than that, divorce was the only option for a victim of domestic violence. At that time and until a couple of years ago, domestic violence was not a grounds for divorce in Maryland. You couldn't argue that you had been a victim of domestic violence and that was therefore the grounds for divorce. No, you had to argue constructive desertion. Inherent in the grounds for constructive desertion meant that you, as the victim, had to leave the family home, which meant you had to come to the shelter.*

*The shelter was really set up to provide social services and a place for women to live. It was not set up as a place for legal advocacy on behalf of battered women. Attorneys were not particularly anxious to represent battered women either. By definition, they had to be transient because they had to have left the family home. Typically, by definition, they really didn't have any money, and they were usually ambivalent on actually getting a divorce. This was not an area where you were making your career. Particularly if you were not only representing the women, but you were also making observations and advocating changes in the criminal justice system's response or failure to respond to victims of domestic violence.*

*In 1983, the IOLTA legislation was enacted and I saw the possibility of some funding. I went to talk to Art Murphy and he indicated that MLSC might be receptive to funding some legal representation at the House of Ruth. I was encouraged by their receptiveness! I went to my*

*Board and to my Executive Director and I said, "I think I can get some money and we can really represent battered women!" Well, she had come from a social work background and thought it was an interesting idea, but the Board was primarily composed of social workers, as was the staff, and lawyers - what lawyers do was a little intimidating. At that time the only other lawyer who was affiliated with the House of Ruth, besides myself, was Katie Friedman. I said "Katie, come help me out!" She tried to help me a little bit but the House of Ruth was still concerned. They were unfamiliar with what lawyers did. It seemed a politically safe thing to do to give shelter to battered women but to actually have lawyers and actually go out and advocate on their behalf seemed that possibly it could affect our funding.*

*So I needed some radicals. I called Ann Sjoerdsma and said, "What do you think of the idea" she said, "Great, but we have no administrative structure, we can't do this." I said, "Why don't you provide the political support for me?" I called Clair Smearman, I called Phyllis Erlich, I called Judy Shub. I rounded up the regular suspects. They all stood up and were counted and said, "Yes we will stand up and serve as an advisory committee, we will supervise these lawyers, we will be responsible for taking the political, the legal heat. The House of Ruth will be the nice little shelter for battered women that will facilitate this." Now, twenty years later, we have twenty-two attorneys. Now, representing battered women, having the credential of being an advocate for battered women, is actually a professional enhancement rather than a liability.*

**Lisa:** The Women's Law Center also collaborated with the House of Ruth to create programs to represent victims of domestic violence in Protective Order hearings. These continuing projects provide legal representation, safety planning, case preparation, and advocacy. The Women's Law Center now has attorneys and advocates located in the courthouses in Baltimore City, Montgomery County, and, most recently, Baltimore County.

In the mid 90s, the Hispanic Bar and the Women's Law Center partnered to produce a series of mock trials to teach members of the Hispanic community how to apply for protective orders and other remedies under the Domestic Violence Act. In the last few years, the Women's Law Center also began outreach to foreign-born victims of domestic violence, receiving funding for legal services and interpreters for foreign-born victims.

Judicial selections is another area in which the Women's Law Center has been active for a long time. In the early 1980s, the organization began interviewing candidates to determine whether they actually had demonstrated a commitment to women's issues. Members were surprised at how quickly it became important to candidates whether or not they got the Women's Law Center endorsement. This remains one of our most active committees.

In the last decade, especially, the Women's Law Center has been at the center of a great sea change in the area of judicial selection and discipline. It began in February 1993 when a very brave attorney named Judith Wolfer testified in Annapolis against the appointment of a state delegate to a judicial position during what was called the 10 days that shook Annapolis.

**Judy Wolfer:**

*Well, it seems fitting that I keep following Marla. She hired me at the House of Ruth. In 1992 I had the dubious responsibility of serving as the legislative advocate on behalf of the*

*House of Ruth and the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, to seek a total overhaul of the Protection Order statute. This law in 1992 had a 30 day order - the worst in the nation. Our moment of pride was in 1992. As most of you know from the legislative work that you have done, you have to work with the legislative committee members who are going to hear the bill you are going to submit. My job, along with a member of the governor's staff who was lobbying this issue, was to meet with the chairman of the committees who were responsible for this bill. We tried to get an appointment with the legislator who was responsible for the House side. He made it clear that he would not meet with us unless we would have dinner with him. Finally, we had dinner with him to move the bill along. At that dinner, he expressed to us his incredible feelings of denigration about women in the courtroom, especially victims of domestic violence, and used language, which was shocking. Oh, I might add that in order to pass the bill out of his committee, he required a judgeship. We ended the dinner rather quickly and were asked to go to the Kitty Kat Club. We declined. We went back to the Governors Office and conveyed the message up the chain.*

*I then left the House of Ruth after the success of the Protection Order overhaul that year. I started a private practice, happy that I had done something, and decided I was going to keep an eye out for the judicial selections that spring. That legislator did not appear on the first judicial selections list, so I breathed a sigh of relief, and worried about billable hours and getting clients and all that. In the fall, I received a phone call that this legislator had been appointed, and that I needed to appear before the Senate Judicial Nominations Committee. So I decided to go. There was no one in the room except me, my law partner, my regular partner, and two cameras from media. There was no one else in that room. I gave my testimony, and what was amazing was how deafening the silence was. The silence continued even days afterwards. The word in Annapolis was that this was going to go nowhere, the storm was going to blow over, and that the support of this legislator was growing stronger. There was, in fact, a real possibility that this would indeed blow over, and no one would know about it.*

*In the meantime, this legislator had been sitting on the bench. Dan Rodericks went and watched this legislator and wrote an article about that he had denied every Protective Order sought by a woman, while he was on the bench. It was an amazing feeling-like being on an itty bitty little island with the tide coming in. Luckily for me, the Women's Law Center came forward, bravely and boldly, and proclaimed publicly that this was a problem. They said that someone who could actually say these things and hold these views, has some prejudicial views and perhaps did not have fitness to sit on the bench. They actually said that in public - it was so amazing!*

*I am mindful of the seven habits of successful people. A dear friend of mind said that there are three habits of honorable people that apply to corporations. The first one is that you show up, the second one is that you are kind, and the third rule is that you speak the truth. The Women's Law Center spoke the truth about this not being what the people of Maryland want from our judiciary. When the legislators in Annapolis tried moving this through at a rapid pace, the Women's Law Center said no, you're going to slow this down, you're going to have an investigation. Within ten days, that legislator withdrew his nomination. The Women's Law Center has the three habits of honorable groups.*

**Lisa:** Following this, the Center learned that in cases where the victim was a woman, several Baltimore County Circuit Court judges had imposed utterly inappropriate criminal sentences. One judge, for example, remarked that a certain situation--an 18-year-old woman, passed out in

an apartment--was every man's dream, and imposed a light sentence in the rape case. Another judge said finding his wife in bed with another man would provoke any man, and sentenced the defendant in the murder case to 18 months work-release. The Women's Law Center filed complaints against both judges.

The Women's Law Center also collected stories about how women attorneys and litigants had been treated for the Select Committee on Gender Equality. That research was included in the Committee's Report on Gender Bias. Today there is a viable Commission on Judicial Disabilities chaired by Judge Sally Adkins.

**Lisa:** In the early 1990s, the Right to Choose became a major political issue in Maryland, and the Women's Law Center was part of that struggle, working closely with Planned Parenthood and others. In 1991, attorneys Susan Elgin and Chris Neff, representing the Women's Law Center, were in Annapolis lobbying legislators and explaining to them the legal implications of choice. They had set up a meeting with one of the state's most powerful legislators. Board member Susan Elgin was there:

**Susan Elgin:**

*This meeting was one of the first things I did as a Board member of the Women's Law Center. We decided that we really needed to go to Annapolis and work on this bill to ensure women's right to choose. So Chris Neff and I bravely went down. We were part of the Marylanders for the Right to Choose and we were offering legal advice about all these amendments that they were putting on bills. We called up the President of the Senate and asked if he would have a meeting with us. We went down and he met us for our ten minutes. He told us that this bill had always been a problem the past couple of years, and there were always filibusters and he was hoping that we would be a beneficial organization. Then he said, "I hope you aren't going to be one of those shit stirrers that we normally get down here." Chris and I walked out of that meeting and looked at each other and said, 'That's exactly what we are going to be!'*

**Lisa:** November 1992 brought "Question 6"—the famous statewide referendum on Choice. Women's Law Center attorneys researched legal issues, joined and formed strong coalitions, including Attorneys for Choice, and worked the polls. As you know, the referendum passed solidly.

But the public sector does not have the monopoly on generating threats to the right to choose. In 1998, the newspapers announced that GBMC and St. Joseph's Hospital were discussing a merger, which would have meant no more abortion services at GBMC. The Women's Law Center fought vigorously against this. Board members spoke at a large community forum, gathered over 100 letters from concerned members, and met several times with the GBMC Board. In response to the pressure, the hospitals dropped their merger plans.

**Lisa:** With the addition of more staff and increased programming, the fundraising role of the Board has taken on more significance. Lynne Durbin was President during the tremendous growth of the 1990's.

**Lynne Durbin:**

*I joined the Law Center in about 1989 after the Webster decision. After I came on the Board, we came to one meeting where no one wanted to be treasurer. We were supposed to have some fiduciary responsibilities, so finally (before I had learned to say no to things) I said, "Ok fine, I'll be treasurer." That was the time when we kept our financial records in the little check book like you have at home. That was the full extent of our financial records. We did pay Kathleen Shemer, occasionally when we had money. I remember receiving an urgent note from her saying, "We're having a fence installed, I need to be paid." I thought we needed to do something better!*

*Following that I became President of the organization. We did some significant work with For A Change, a group to help us learn how to run fundraisers on our own. As a Board, we commissioned a study to see what type of name recognition we had. We really tried to continue to work on ways to earn money.*

*I have stayed interested in the Women's Law Center all of these years. I happen to be a practitioner on the corporate side, so I happen to be a lot different than most people in this room. I have been very fortunate to have earned a very nice salary over the past few years, and I have tried to share that with the Law Center. Last year I came to the Annual Meeting and I looked at all money the people in this room and the people who really support the activities of the Law Center as individuals give - which was only \$20,000. That was a shame because I knew how much I had given, and so that meant there wasn't that much being given by everyone else. I contacted Tracy and Nancy Gregor and I said, "Look, it's been seven or eight years since I have been on the Board and we don't seem to be making any progress. We really need to think about this. We really have a lot of people who have been committed to this organization for many, many years, and the reason we are committed is because they believe in the mission of the organization." I said, "I am happy to go and talk to anyone. I believe in what this organization does, and I think all of you do too."*

*I remember something that I learned when I was a young attorney when I went to a presentation by Gloria Steinem over at the Law School. This was about fifteen years ago and I will never forget what she said, "Time is not money. Money is money." The only way that you can have a voice and see that things get done is to put your money into the projects that you think are important. The Law Center has been tremendously successful in winning grants and other things to support its self. We only had part time staff when I was President. We now have about ten people on staff. It's amazing that we have been able to do this, especially in the last ten years.*

*I would like to challenge all of you to open your programs to the last page and see the Thirty for Thirty campaign. This campaign is to raise \$30,000 this year - hopefully by 30, \$1,000 pledges - but we will take it any way we can. I have offered to throw in another thousand dollars this year if ten other people will give \$1,000 contributions. I would like to say that I think that you are all here because you believe in this organization. It's incredibly important to the issues out there now, and I hope that you all will sign up, choose a year, give a thousand dollars, or whatever you can give, and continue to do so in the future to keep up the good work of this organization.*

**Lisa:** Throughout the 1980's the Women's Law Center was flooded with calls from women who had lost custody of their children or were in dire financial straits after their divorce or both. The Family Law Hotline was born in 1990, and like the original hotline in a bare office, volunteers

provide essential information to people in crisis. In 2000, it expanded to 5 days a week in a partnership with the Legal Aid Bureau. The Legal Forms Helpline was added to the array of informational services. This hotline helps people filing a family law case without an attorney. The two hotlines serve over 4,600 people annually.

The huge impact of family law issues on women's lives is apparent, and the Women's Law Center is committed to making policy changes, in addition to providing direct services to individual women. Our current policy initiative is a research project to comb the files of nearly 3,000 family law cases in courthouses around the state to determine the factors that influence custody and property distribution decisions.

After the sudden death of Bruce Kaufman, a highly respected family law attorney and supporter of the Women's Law Center, an endowment was created allowing the Women's Law Center to fulfill another dream — the creation of the Bruce A. Kaufman Center for Family Law with sustained funding to effect policy changes in family law.

In recognition of the Women's Law Center's commitment to family law issues, in 1993, the Rosalyn B. Bell Award was created. It is presented to someone who, like Judge Bell, has demonstrated outstanding leadership on the area of family law. This year, the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Rosalyn B. Bell Award recipient will be introduced by Susan Elgin. Susan was Bruce Kaufman's law partner and was instrumental in the creation of the Family Law Center endowment. She is a current Women's Law Center Board member and family law practitioner.

[BREAK FOR PRESENTATION BY SUSAN ELGIN AND REMARKS BY JUDGE SCRIVENER]

### **PART III: Looking Forward**

*Lisa:* Today, the Women's Law Center is poised to embark on its second 30 years. Is there more work to do? Yes!

Just last year, 26 Maryland women were killed by their partners. Is there still work to do?

*Gwen and Audience:* Yes!

*Lisa:* Just last month, the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit ruled against the female complainant in a sexual harassment case. Even though the woman was the only female employee and she was subjected to her co-workers pretending to perform oral sex on a mannequin and showing her pictures of pierced male genitalia. Is there still more work to do?

*Gwen and Audience:* Yes!

*Lisa:* Just two months ago a woman with experience and prior work history applied for a financial planner position at a local investment firm. She was asked, "What makes you think you

can do this job? Don't you have small children at home?" Is there still work to do?

**Gwen and Audience:** Yes!

**Lisa:** The Women's Law Center mission, first articulated 30 years ago, is to end sex discrimination and to insure justice and fairness for women. This goal is as relevant today as it was 30 years ago. Leading us into the future is Gwen Tromley, the current Board President.

**Gwen:** Lisa, thank you for sharing your professional talents to help us with this program.

Riding home from one of the early fundraising efforts in Katy Friedman's green VW square back, Ann Hoffman asked how long the organization could be sustained.

We've been here now for 30 years. Are you convinced now Ann and Katy? All of you here are our community - our founders, members, former and current board members and our friends, women, and men. We have gotten help from so many of you in the "friend" category—judges, lawyers, public officials at all levels.

In the coming year, and beyond, we are going to reach out to everyone of you here, to work with us to free women of the threat of domestic abuse *and murder*, to create work environments that allow women to excel and have families, and to address the women's health issues that are *all too familiar* to this organization and all women.

Please help us by participating in our 30 for 30 Campaign tonight. As Lynne Durbin said "Money is Money." We need your help now!

Before we go, on behalf of the entire Board of Directors, I want to thank Executive Director Tracy Brown, and Jessica Morgan, Rebecca Bainum and Krista Smith for their spectacular effort in putting on this celebration. Please join me in thanking them.

Thanks also to Kaufman, Reis & Elgin for donating these mugs. Take a look at them—the fist is back!!

Oh yes - that influential state senator we told you about, who worried that we would be "shit stirrers" - you bet we will keep stirring. And we sure will keep making it stick!

Thank you all so much for celebrating with us. Good Night!

**END OF PROGRAM**