



WOMEN'S RIGHTS LAW REPORTER
30th ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM

**CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF
WOMEN'S RIGHTS LAW:
A Tribute to Women Lawyers and Activists**

March 6, 2002

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

On March 6, 2002, the *Women's Rights Law Reporter*, in commemoration of its thirtieth anniversary, held a symposium entitled "Celebrating 30 Years of Women's Rights Law: A Tribute to Women Lawyers and Activists." The purpose of the event was to reflect on the legal, cultural, and social achievements made in the past three decades on behalf of women and to acknowledge and thank the countless number of women who worked tirelessly and dedicated their lives to achieving these goals. In addition, we wanted to look to the future and the thirty years of work ahead for the next generation of women who want to preserve and enhance the victories of our predecessors. The symposium began with a keynote address by Sarah Waddington, and continued with two panel discussions featuring a variety of women lawyers representing a diverse background in women's rights activism. On the following pages is a reproduction of the presentations made by each speaker, as well as the discussions that followed.

Welcome and Introductions

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Welcome everybody. My name is Jessica Kitson and I am co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* along with Kamilla Sjödin. Thank you for joining us as we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the *Reporter* and the beginning of the first annual Rutgers' public interest month. We are excited that so many of you could come out for today's event.

Today's symposium is entitled "Celebrating 30 Years of Women's Rights Law: A Tribute to Women Lawyers and Activists." Our goal was to plan a day that did not simply look back on the past three decades of achievements in women's rights law. It was very important to us that we also recognize and thank the many women who have been and continue to be responsible for the many victories upon which the *Reporter* has reflected and also celebrated. We are very excited to present today's speakers, as they are among the leading voices in the women's rights movement. We are honored that Sarah Weddington is here with us today assisting us in celebrating such a momentous occasion.

As many of you know, the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* is a feminist legal journal whose mission is to provide a critique of law and society through the lens of gender. We seek to increase awareness of the ongoing struggle to expand women's rights by recognizing and celebrating the diversity of women's desires, needs, and experience. In 1970 the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* was founded by feminists, activists, legal workers, and law students. In 1972 the *Reporter* moved to Rutgers under the guidance and leadership of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, who was then a professor of law here at Rutgers.

Justice Ginsberg is one of the women that we would like to honor today in appreciation of all of her work on behalf of the women of this country. We wrote to Justice Ginsberg earlier this year explaining about the anniversary, the symposium, and our wish to present her with a plaque as a token of our appreciation. Although she cannot attend, she did send a letter, which in pertinent part reads:

Much as I would like to participate in the March 6th symposium, it is not possible to fit in a visit to Rutgers that day. I am pleased to be included among your honorees and will find a special place in the chambers for the plaque. The *Women's Rights Law Reporter* began in days when the idea that women are persons equal in stature to men was resisted in many places, from factories to faculties.

The *Reporter* has been a leading chronicle through changing times. Cheers on this thirty year anniversary and every good wish for the *Women's Rights Law Reporter's* continuing efforts to advance women's security and equality and to make the world a little better for our having lived.

Signed, Ruth Bader Ginsberg. We are honored to have such an amazing woman as part of this journal's history.

Before moving on, I would like to take a moment to thank others who have worked so hard to assist in the planning of this symposium. In particular, Dean Frances Bouchoux has gone above and beyond in working with us throughout every stage of the planning. I will not hesitate to say that we could not have done this without her. I would also like to thank Professors Twila Perry and Suzanne Goldberg for their enthusiasm and assistance from the very beginning. Finally, I want to thank the entire staff of the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* for their hard work and dedication. Finally, I want

to thank and introduce the members our editorial board who have been a pleasure to work with all year, and who have provided tremendous assistance in the planning and organizing of this event: Frances Almanzar, Kelly Espinal, Melissa Didato, Michele Higgins, Ryan Heffernan, Chanta Howard, Jessica Lyons, Yvonne Nix, Sarah Simberg, and Tara Sinhah. And of course, there's always my partner in crime, Kamilla Sjödin, who will now introduce our keynote speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF SARAH WEDDINGTON

Good afternoon and thank you all for coming. As Jessica said, my name is Kamilla Sjödin, and I am the other co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Reporter*. It is my privilege and pleasure to introduce today's keynote speaker, Dr. Sarah Weddington.

Growing up, I took certain things for granted. For instance, it was a given to me that women always had a choice. We had a choice to go to school and learn, a choice to work in any profession, a choice to serve in the government, and a choice to make certain decisions about our bodies. It was not until I began to study the history of women's rights law that I understood the extent of the struggles and sacrifices that helped establish some of the rights we enjoy today.

Sarah Weddington is one of the women who helped pave the way for all women in this country, and for the next generation of women lawyers and activists. Dr. Weddington is a nationally known attorney and spokesperson on public issues and leadership, and has been a longtime advocate for women. In 1972, she became the first woman elected from Austin to the Texas House of Representatives. Dr. Weddington served three terms, during which she helped to reform Texas rape statutes, passed an equal credit bill for women, passed a pregnancy leave bill for teachers, and led successful efforts to block all anti-abortion legislation. She was also instrumental in changing Texas law to provide equal consideration for mothers and fathers in custody disputes.

From 1978 to 1981, she served as Assistant to the President of the United States. While working with President Jimmy Carter, she assisted in the selection of women for the federal judiciary and other top appointments; co-chaired the 1980 U.S. Delegation to the United Nations Mid-Decade Conference on Women in Copenhagen; and established other programs to ensure the equal treatment of women in the military, in securing business loans, and in social programs.

Dr. Weddington is also a member of the Board of Foundation for Women's Resources, which launched the Leadership Texas and Leadership America programs and also created the Women's Museum, which opened September 29, 2000, in Dallas Texas. She is featured as one of the 39 women in the "Unforgettable Women" exhibit in the museum. Dr. Weddington has received numerous honors and awards. In 2001, she received the "Speaking Out for Justice" Award from the American Association of University Women. In 2000, *Texas Lawyer* named her as "one of the most influential lawyers of the 20th Century," and the *Houston Chronicle* named her as one of the "100 Tall Texans who left their mark on Texas and the rest of the world in the 20th Century." She was also named a "Face of the Century" by the San Antonio Express-News. In 1999, she was honored as a "Texas Woman of the Century" by the Women's Chamber of Commerce of Texas, and was featured for her courage to challenge in "Women of Courage: Inspiring Stories from the Women Who Lived Them," by Katherine Martin. *Time Magazine* named her one of the "Outstanding Young American Leaders." *Ladies Home Journal* presented her with its "Woman of the Future" award. She was selected as one of the ten "Outstanding Women in America." She has been featured in such publications as *Working Women*, *People Magazine*, and the *Washington Post*, and has been the guest on such programs as *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, and *CBS Morning News*.

Dr. Weddington holds honorary doctorates from McMurry University, Hamilton College, Austin College, Southwestern University, and Nova Southeastern University. She received the Distinguished Alumna award from McMurry University in 1992, and received her J.D. from the University of Texas School of Law in 1967. Dr. Weddington is currently an Adjunct Professor at the University of Texas in Austin, where she teaches a course called "Leadership in America."

In her first book, *A Question of Choice*, she detailed the landmark *Roe v. Wade* case which she successfully argued before the United States Supreme Court in 1973. She is thought to be the young-

est person ever to win a case in the Supreme Court. Dr. Weddington is particularly well-known for her work on issues affecting women and through her many roles, including attorney, legislator, Presidential Assistant, professor, and expert called upon by the national media.

We are thrilled to have her with us here today, and I am pleased to introduce Dr. Sarah Weddington.

Keynote Address

*Dr. Sarah Weddington**

Thank you.

(Applause.) (Standing ovation.)

Thank you. You all are so kind to give me such a warm welcome.

Standing in this courtroom, I see three places for judges behind the bench. Very seldom in Texas do we have a chance to see an all-female panel of judges. Today we have that opportunity. I want to invite three of the writers from the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* to come up here and sit.

(Applause as three students come forward and take seats behind the bench.)

Now some of you who are standing can fill in their seats.

(Laughter as students do that.)

(Looking toward the bench:) Doesn't that look good.

FROM BEHIND THE BENCH: I like the view from up here.

SARAH WEDDINGTON: May it please the court.

(Laughter.)

It is wonderful that so many of you have chosen to spend time attending this symposium that we have a standing-room-only crowd. To me, that speaks well for your respect for the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* and the issues it presents.

I am delighted to be part of this day. There are many reasons why it is an honor to be here. First, it is a chance to celebrate with the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* and all of you who

participate in its publication or are its readers. It is also a chance to look back and to look forward as we examine a variety of important legal issues. Thank you for the privilege of sharing my history and my thoughts for the future with you who comprise this audience.

By the way and by way of explanation, I am generally nervous when beginning a speech. To dissipate that nervous energy I like to move.

(Laughter.)

And I always liked to be close to the jury.

(Laughter.)

While preparing my remarks for today, I was reminded of an occasion a year or so ago when I was the speaker for a Planned Parenthood benefit. The young woman lawyer who was introducing me concluded her remarks with these words: "I now present to you Sarah Weddington. I had never met her before today, but I am her "daughter" - she paused - "in law."

Her words still ring in my ears. To be able to work with talented young law students and lawyers like you to pass on values and to encourage a will and a determination to change wrongs is work that is deeply satisfying for me. I am grateful for the chance to have lunch earlier today with many of you who are sons and daughters in law on the *Women's Rights Law Reporter* staff and now to have the chance to visit with all of you, a new generation of lawyers who, in the future, will fight very important battles.

*A nationally known attorney and spokesperson on public issues and leadership, and a long-time advocate for women. Ms. Weddington is particularly well known for her work on issues affecting women, through her many roles which include attorney, legislator, Presidential assistant, professor,

and expert called upon by the national media. Ms. Weddington is probably best-known for successfully arguing *Roe v. Wade* before the United States Supreme Court in 1973.

There was a time when I hoped some of the past victories regarding gender issues could be checked off as having been accomplished. For a very few that is true. For other issues, the work of today is a continuation of work in progress thirty years ago; issues relating to domestic violence and rape certainly fall in that category. For other issues, the conflict today is as sharp as it was thirty or more years ago. The abortion issue certainly would be included in that category.

It has now been 32 years since the fall of 1969 when I started working on the abortion issue and what became *Roe v. Wade*. January 22, 2003 marks the 30th anniversary of the decision. There have been brief moments when I thought the words of that 7-to-2 Supreme Court decision were etched in concrete. Today I know the words were written in sandstone and that shifting membership on the Supreme Court has resulted in protection for the constitutional right of privacy being diminished. Now I know that there are years left to work on those issues. I believe that you will be the faces and the names who will be front and center as those issues continue to be debated and litigated.

Because I believe that people like you are the key to what happens tomorrow, it creates for me a special joy when I have an opportunity to spend time with law students who are leaders. Jessica, Kelly, and Kamilla are leaders, and they did such a good job of putting this symposium together. Your presence is proof enough of that fact.

Leaders are often very thoughtful of others, and that is true of each of them in big ways and small ways. For example, the hotel where I'm staying had a shuttle I could have used last night, but Jessica was so thoughtful to ask, "Would you rather ride a shuttle or would you like someone to come pick you up?" I much preferred to be met by someone who could visit with me about Rutgers Law students and what the creators of this symposium wanted to accomplish. It was particularly nice to arrive and be met by Jessica and have an opportunity to visit. I know she had other demands on her time, but I appreciate that courtesy she extended on your behalf.

Visiting with your dean and some of the faculty members today I suddenly thought of the relationship we have all heard about called

blood brothers - people who have co-mingled blood. Today it occurred to me that another important relationship is what I will call protest sisters. Dean Deutsch is a good friend of Dean Nancy Rapoport of the University of Houston Law Center. Dean Rapoport invited me to speak at commencement last year for the Law Center. There were some who were adamantly opposed to my participation. They announced they would sponsor a protest and all kinds of activities. Dean Rapoport never blinked an eye. It was her first year as Dean in Houston and her first commencement. The opponents were doing a writing campaign against my presence. Dean Rapoport essentially said, "Sarah Weddington has been invited to speak. She has accepted. She will speak." I think of Nancy Rapoport as a protest sister. Because Dean Deutsch is her friend, I arrived knowing he would be a special person and someone I would like. Jessica and others have certainly confirmed that.

In this introductory period, I also want to acknowledge the presence of Professor Barbara Hoffman. I know Barbara in her capacity as one of the leading women attorneys working on issues pertinent to breast cancer. She was an important speaker at a national breast cancer conference last year. Because I've been going through breast cancer treatment this past year, I am especially grateful for her legal leadership on those issues.

By the way, I looked in my file at the letter inviting me to participate today. It is dated August 28th, 2001; I believe Kelly signed the letter. Little did she know that the invitation arrived within two weeks of my finishing chemotherapy cancer treatment. In fact, this is my first big trip out of Texas since completing surgery, chemotherapy and then radiation cancer treatments. This is obviously a time when, encouraged by the experience of a serious illness, I am beginning to think about what my life means, what I want to do more of, and what I have to contribute in the future.

One final introductory comment: I am looking forward to learning from each of the panelists so I am staying the whole afternoon. The fact that the panelists will be making presentations on a variety of subjects frees me from feeling that I must cover a wide variety of issues. I don't have to try to talk about every-

thing. I can split it with six other people. It is an honor for me to be part of the events of this day with the other panelists. And of course this afternoon I will be attending the reception which I think everyone is invited to attend. I'll look forward to visiting with many of you.

My remarks today will focus on three key themes. First, I want to tell you that actions often have consequences which you could never have foreseen. My life contains many illustrations of that principle. I believe a key to a satisfying life is doing the best you can with the talents you have and using those talents to meet the needs you see and of those you care about. Second, most of the key issues of today are really a continuum of issues that have been struggled with for a good many years. And, third, I think we are at the point where my generation is in the process of passing the torch of progress. I thought about that as I watched the Olympics and the passing of the torch that preceded its opening ceremony. It is now a time when we are ready to pass the torch to those of younger generations, and your presence says to me that you are interested in accepting that torch and that challenge. I am so glad.

When I was beginning the path that led to *Roe v. Wade* I never foresaw that it would put me at the center of the national abortion debate or that it would become "the" U.S. Supreme Court case on the issue. If anyone had said to me on January 22, 1973, the day I won *Roe* versus *Wade*, "You will still be talking about this in 30 years," I would never have believed it. In fact, that is what has happened. I was introduced recently as being "historic". (Laughter.) I don't really think of myself that way, yet I can understand why that comment was made. When Jessica picked me up, I asked, "Am I the oldest person speaking tomorrow?" She said, "Yes, I think so." So I have the perspective of history to bring today. Indira Gandhi is reported to have once said, "I have felt like a bird born in too small a cage." Those of us who grew up in the 50s and 60s, as I did, can identify with that image. Those were times when opportunities for women were limited.

I had a student not too long ago who wrote a paper about breaking boards. She had taken up judo, and she was working on how to break boards. She used that as an analogy for the

kind of attitudes and laws that women were trying to break, trying to change.

People have asked me, "How did you get involved in *Roe v. Wade*?" The direct answer is that I responded to a group of graduate students at The University of Texas in Austin who needed someone to answer a legal question for them. I'll describe that question is a moment. However, the deeper answer lies in the attitudes toward women and the impact of the 50s and 60s. It was a time when women were often told, "women can't, women don't, women shouldn't". But a critical mass of women began to challenge the stereotypes of the period.

For example, it was a time in Texas when most women played basketball, but we played half court. Our teams had six players on one end of the court and six on the other. More than two dribbles was considered traveling which was a technical violation. So, we would go two dribbles and throw the ball to somebody else on our team and they went two dribbles and they had to throw the ball to another of our players who went two dribbles and had to throw the ball. When we got to center court, we would throw it to somebody on our team waiting on the other half of the court, and those players would go two dribbles, two dribbles, two dribbles, trying to make it down to the basket. I was one of those women saying, "Why can't we keep running?" Officials would say, "Oh, no. All that jiggling and bouncing. It would be too strenuous." (Laughter.) Now we know women can run full court in basketball and win Olympic medals in a myriad of sporting events. Women were offered a limited number of careers, essentially teaching, nursing, and secretarial positions. If you had said to me during the last year of college, "What are you going to be?" I would have said, "I am going to teach eighth graders to love Beowulf." And I tried. (Laughter.)

That last year in college I had taken the required education classes where professors said, "Now, if you get pregnant, you will have to quit because pregnant women are not allowed in the classroom." That made no sense to me. I thought women could teach and be pregnant at the same time. It was in the 70s that we passed laws in Texas saying that a school could not fire a woman simply for being pregnant and later at

the national level saying that larger employers could not fire a woman based on pregnancy.

My experience in the classroom convinced me that I should go to graduate school. I didn't have enough chemistry to go to medical school and I was questioning whether education was a field I should pursue. (I have great respect for 8th grade teachers, but I have learned that teaching college seniors is a better place for me.) I went to the dean of McMurry College, a small liberal arts Methodist-affiliated institution in Abilene, Texas, and said, "I think I want to go to law school." He said, "You can't." I said, "Why not? I have very good grades." He said, "No woman from this college has ever gone to law school. It would be too tough." Now, you know that moment I decided I was going to law school. I became one of five women in the entering summer class of 1965 at the University of Texas School of Law.

I finished law school and could not get a job with a law firm. I understand that was also true for now-Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sandra Day O'Connor. I was finally offered employment by my evidence professor John Sutton, later Dean of the UT law school. Because I was a good writer and a good researcher I was invited to work with him drafting the Code of Professional Responsibility, the statement of ethical conduct for lawyers. But I could not get a job at a law firm. There I was, a recent law school graduate in a part of the law school known as Boys' Town. I don't know if Rutgers had a similar area, but at the University of Texas the area where the young law professors were officed was called Boys' Town. I was the first woman to have an office in Boys' Town.

A group of graduate students came to me and said, "Sarah, we need your help." "With what?" I asked. They replied, "In Texas, abortion is illegal except to save the life of the woman. We have lots of problems with illegal and self abortion. We would like to be able to tell people the best places to go for abortions, whether the places are illegal, as in Mexico, or whether they are legal places like New York and California. We are worried about being prosecuted as accomplices to the crime of abortion. Could you help us?" I said, "Sure, I know how to do the research. I will go look up the answer."

If they had said to me, "Sarah, would you mind trying a U. S. Supreme Court case?" I would have said no way can I do that. At that point my legal experience consisted of uncontested divorces, wills for people with no money, and one adoption for my uncle. Do you realize most of you have more litigation experience now than I had when I started *Roe v. Wade*?

When I was writing the book, *A Question of Choice*, I interviewed those who asked me to get involved and said to them, "Why did you come to me? Why didn't you go to someone with litigation experience." Their answer was, "Sarah, we just needed somebody who would do it for free." And that's how I got the case. I was willing to volunteer my time and do the case for free.

Put yourself in my place a few years later. I was 25 years old, getting ready to argue my first contested case before the U. S. Supreme Court. I was so nervous the night before — you know how you are when something big is going to happen the next day and your mind won't turn off. I would go to bed and think, "What if they ask such-and-such?" I would get up, check my notes, be sure I had it. I would go back to bed, but then I would think, "What if they ask such-and-such?" I would get up, check my notes, be sure I had it, go back to bed. I was so nervous and I wanted to be sure there was nothing the Justices could ask that I wouldn't know. Associate Justice Rehnquist, not chief justice then, asked one question I didn't know. The question was: When was Texas readmitted to the Union? (Laughter.)

It had never occurred to me I needed to know that for *Roe v. Wade*. I still don't know why he asked it, but if a lawyer appearing in the Supreme Court doesn't know an answer, the next line is, "I am sorry Your Honor, I don't know. I will go home and look it up and submit the answer in a supplemental brief."

The night before oral arguments I was so nervous. I had spent three years getting ready for this moment. I got to the court early the next morning. Picture in your mind's eye your approach to the U.S. Supreme Court. You have all seen those marble steps leading to the platform before you enter the building and those columns that seem to reach into the sky. You go in the doors of the U.S. Supreme Court building. Your steps echo as you walk down a

marble corridor with the marble busts of former Chief Justices in niches as you pass.

Now after security, you reach the doors to the courtroom. There are heavy red velvet curtains you must pass through, and then you see a room that holds about 150 or 175 people but has an intimate feeling. As you go through those curtains, what you see are three sections of what look like church pews with fancy padding. The one on the left is called the 3-minute section; it is for the tourists. For the entire time you are presenting oral argument, every 3 minutes a group comes in and a group goes out. Then the other two sections are first-come first-serve. Those people get to sit and hear as much of the oral arguments that day as they want.

Frank Askin was one of the people who was co-chair of the ACLU organization with Margie Pitt Haymes. Margie Haymes was the attorney who argued the plaintiffs' position in the Georgia abortion case which was argued the same day.

Generally a lawyer presenting argument is entitled to designate 6 seats in the audience portion of the courtroom. But in this case court personnel had allowed each side seats for 12 lawyers; I used mine for attorneys involved in work for reproductive rights.

Then there is a gold railing that separates laypersons from lawyers. If you are admitted to Supreme Court practice, there is a section of individual chairs for you to sit in. One thing to remember is you can be admitted to Supreme Court practice in front of open court. The first thing the Court does before they hear arguments is to recognize people who are there. You have to have someone who is admitted to Supreme Court practice move your admission, but you can actually stand before the Court as the Chief Justice announces the consideration of your request to be admitted. Then you can honestly later say, "Well, the day I was appearing before U.S. Supreme Court. . . ."

The layout past the gold railing includes chairs for those admitted to U.S. Supreme Court practice, the center aisle, and two tables on either side of that center aisle for those who will be arguing. Because *Roe* was the first case to be argued, plaintiffs' counsel were at the table on the left side closest to the Justices. The Georgia case was second so those attorneys were sitting right behind us ready to move up

when our case, the first one, was over. The courtroom has 18 kinds of marble, marble columns along the side, a very high ceiling with gold gilt, greens, blues, very vivid colors. The members of the U.S. Supreme Court were no further than from me to Jessica.

When you take your place, there is a hand-made goose quill pen there. It is a custom that dates back to the time of Thomas Jefferson, and it is for you to take as a souvenir for having argued in the U.S. Supreme Court because so few people ever get to that. Above the Chief Justice is a huge clock so you can watch the minutes of your oral argument tick by - 30 minutes per side, one hour per case, unless the Court extends those times, which it rarely does.

When you stand to argue, on the left will be the members of the press; the day of the oral arguments in *Roe* it was packed. On the right will be the section for family and friends of the justices. That too was absolutely packed. At the stroke of ten o'clock, the Marshall comes in with cut-away tails and striped pants and says essentially, "Oh yea, oh yea, oh yea, all ye please rise and face the court."

And the curtains behind the bench part, the judges are silhouetted in black robes, and they start marching out. I had a friend who said there was organ music playing. (Laughter.) That is not true. But it is an awesome moment. There is a pause, the Justices put their *amicus curiae* and other briefs in front of them - the stack of briefs was more than a foot high - then it is time for the court to begin.

(An excerpt of the oral argument in *Roe v. Wade* from "May It Please the Court" was played here.)

This recording is in your library so if you would like to hear the entire oral arguments or excerpts, you can do so. The three key arguments were: Is there a right of privacy in the U.S. Constitution? Is pregnancy fundamental? And does the State have a compelling reason to regulate?

When I left the courtroom, I did not know whether I had won or lost; I decided to run for the state legislature so I could change the law from there if I lost the case. In the spring of 1965, before starting law school in June, I was a clerk-typist for the Texas Legislature. When I wasn't working I was sitting in the gallery

watching the legislative activities. I thought, "I could do that and hopefully better." So I ran and became the first woman elected to the Texas House of Representatives from Austin, Travis County. I was sworn in on a day in early January, 1973. I had gone to my office at the legislature early the morning of January 22, 1973. Office activities were buzzing with preparation for the legislative demands of the day. Then the phone rang. A reporter from the New York Times said, "Does Ms. Weddington have a comment today about *Roe v. Wade*?" My assistant said, "Should she?"

(Laughter.)

The reporter said, "It was decided today." And I could hear her say, "How was it decided?" The voice came back, "She won it seven to two." It was such an exciting moment. A few minutes later I got a telegram from the U.S. Supreme Court. It reminds me that the decision happened before Lexus Nexus, it was before e-mail, it was before fax machines. I received a telegram from the U.S. Supreme Court telling me I had won and that a copy of the decision was being sent to me via the U.S. postal service. The telegram was collect.

(Laughter.)

I look back on that day and remember how exciting it was, but in a way it was a highpoint among many exciting days. I continued to work with all kinds of issues, including many issues of special interest to women. One of those was the equal credit issue. When I finished law school, I had gone down and applied for a credit card. The man behind the desk said, "You will have to get your husband's signature." I explained to that man that my husband had come back from military service and I was going to put him through law school. I hoped someday that he would have some money, but at that moment all the income was mine. I was the lawyer. And he said, "We don't care." So you see I had to run for office, pass the equal credit bill, and then go back and get my credit card.

(Laughter.)

We passed laws that had to do with rape reform. In Texas at that time, the law said that a woman had to resist to the maximum extent possible. Police officers would say don't resist, you will get hurt. But the law required resis-

tance and DAs were having a hard time prosecuting because if women didn't resist, they couldn't fulfill the statutory requirement. It was a time when the woman's character was very much on trial. We were able to change those and many other aspects of the law relating to rape. We were also able to make many other changes, and I loved being a legislator.

Then one day in 1977, I got a phone call from a man named John White, with whom I had worked in Texas and who had gone to D.C. to be the Number 2 person at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He asked, "Sarah, why don't you come to D.C. and be general counsel of the Department of Agriculture?" I said, "I don't think so, John. I like Texas. I am going to stay right here." He said, "Talk to your friends. This is a great opportunity and you should take it." So I talked to my friends on the floor of the Texas House. They said, "Sarah, Washington is a place with no country-and-western music, no barbecue, no Mexican food; it is not civilized." (Laughter.) But I ended up going and had a wonderful year as general counsel for the USDA. There was almost no diversity among USDA employees before I was there. We actively recruited minority and women attorneys and for the first time put an emphasis on hiring a diverse staff of lawyers. I enjoyed the legal issues I found there. For example, the forest service was one of our clients, so I got to work on litigation regarding wild and scenic rivers. There was also food safety, farm policy, and small town issues of all kinds.

I was working happily at the U.S. Department of Agriculture when I got a call from the White House saying, "Why don't you come work here?" And I said, "Oh, no. I have just done my first year's goals with the Secretary of Agriculture. For the second year I am staying right here. I am doing very important work." Then President Carter had someone call and invite me to meet with him at the White House. I went, he offered me a job, and I worked there for the rest of the Carter administration.

(Laughter.)

It was so much fun. Having an office just above the oval office, weekends at Camp David, flying Air Force One, dinner with Margaret Thatcher when she was in town. You know, the little things that make a job interesting.

(Laughter.)

I had two portfolios. First, I worked on issues of special interest to women and I recruited women to be considered for appointment to top government positions. Second, I worked with leaders from all the states and I put on a series of White House briefings for them regarding issues of special emphasis for the President. It was exciting, meaningful work.

Then my team lost an election; in 1980 the voters decided on a new president for the oval office. And everybody I knew, including me, had just lost their jobs. The day after the election we came to work. We were tired; we were dejected; and we were unemployed. Usually when we came to work there was a photo gallery on the left, and it would be the pictures of the President with the U.S. hockey team when they beat the Russians; it would be the President with the President of Egypt and the Prime Minister of Israel when they signed the Camp David accords; it would represent whatever big event happened that week. You would come to work and just feel so good. The morning after the election we came to work and there were no pictures in that gallery. Instead there was an article someone had posted that was entitled "Fifty things you can make for Christmas for less than \$5."

(Laughter.)

And it was appropriate. We had two-and-a-half months to move out. Every president does. Reagan sent his belongings to California. Father Bush sent his to Bryan-College Station. President Johnson sent his to Austin, to the University of Texas. And Carter sent his to Atlanta. The staff has two-and-a-half months to box up all the papers of the administration and send it to the site of the future library of that president. Of course, the last day of an administration is inauguration day. That morning the people who work for the departing president come to work, box up their stuff — by then you have only a rolodex and a few pieces of paper left on your desk.

At eleven o'clock on inauguration day, those who work for the departing president go out the back door for two reasons. One, the new people come in the front gate at eleven, and they don't want the two groups to meet or clash. Second, the departing president gets a final trip home on Air Force One, and they don't

want the president's plane to take off without people to wave. So those who are the departing president's former staff are sent to Andrews Air Force Base and stand out there waving as Air Force One takes off for that final trip.

In the residence it is slightly different. The departing president's final things are not sent to Andrews for the plane ride home until the oath of office is given. We always have a president in place ready to act at any moment. At that moment of transition, the departing president's things are sent to Andrews and the new president's things begin to be brought over from Blair House, which is half a block away from the White House.

Now you know why the inaugural parade has to be long— because they are moving the new president's personal items. You don't want the new First Family to get back to the White House until the bathrobes are on the back of the bathroom door, the pictures are on the piano, the clothes are in the closet, and there is a complete change of government.

I then ended up teaching law at the University of New Mexico and working in New York City to run foundation and civic activities for a man named Jim Wolfenson. I got to do lots of wonderful things in that regard. I was then asked to be head of the Office of Federal and State Relations for the State of Texas. So I went back to Washington to be the top lobbyist for the State working for a governor named Mark White. Mark White did not get reelected. I got a chance to seek new opportunities.

(Laughter.)

And I have had a great time writing and speaking and doing lots of other things. You see what I really want for you to know is that you cannot sit here today and predict what will happen to you. I believe that what happens to us in life is unpredictable— there is a saying I like, which states, "Accidents and inspiration often lead us to our destination." Now, part of the reason I ended up working on women's issues was an accident. An accident of the era when I was born and the things that affected me and my friends. I would look at them and say, "I want to change this." I'm sure the experience of cancer will also affect me in a similar way. I will become an advocate and a fundraiser for issues relating to breast cancer because of my experience.

But sometimes what happens to you is partly inspiration. See in your mind's eye that day when a group of women - there may have been some men, too - started the *Reporter*. They could not have known that there was a lawyer in Austin, Texas, who was reading the first issue of *The Women's Rights Law Reporter*. They could not have known that the woman who wrote the first comment, which was on *Reed v. Reed*, would become the second female member of the Supreme Court; of course, her name is Ruth Bader Ginsburg. They could not have known that the lawyer in Austin, Texas would later work for President Carter and would work to get Ruth Bader Ginsburg appointed as a district court judge which put her in position to later become a Supreme Court justice.

Mrs. Reed was a woman in Idaho. I have met her and I have met the attorney, Allen Derr, who handled her case. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the person doing the briefing in *Reed v. Reed*. And so it became the first case where the Supreme Court ever used the constitution to overturn, on the basis of sexual discrimination, a state statute. If you remember, at issue was an Idaho statute that said in the event of a group of people eligible for appointment, for example, as estate executor, if there was a man, prefer the man. And in that case involving an adopted son who had died, the adoptive mother and father were divorced, and the issue was who got to administer the deceased son's estate. The mother filed and had been granted the administration of the estate. Then the father came in and said, "No, under Idaho law, you must prefer the man. Therefore, I win." And the Court said, "Well, you are right. Under the statute you win." Mrs. Reed challenged the ruling. And the case went to the Supreme Court. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was doing the briefing.

What I am trying to say is, the people who worked on that issue could not have known how important their work would end up being to those who would be watching it from a national perspective. They also could not have known the woman writing the article, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, would hold one of the highest judicial posts in the country. I think today we cannot know, when Jessica and the others began to think about this day, what the panelists' impact will be, and how it will affect those who

sit in the audience. You can't know today where law will take you.

I believe that life is a series of course corrections. You aim generally in one direction — I thought I was going to teach eighth graders to love Beowulf; then I decided no, I don't want to do that. I thought I was going to practice law; that didn't work out. I thought I was going to have my own law practice, which I finally did with my husband, Weddington and Weddington. Then I discovered opportunities in Washington.

If you had said to me in 1980, "What are you going to do next?" I would have said, "I am going to be a cabinet officer." Well, you know what happened to that.

Life is a series of course corrections. But I am so glad that I had a law degree because it has given me so many options. I learned how to argue as part of moot court. I learned how to speak on my feet as part of class and so many other activities. I learned how to read, how to analyze, and how to make presentations. That knowledge has given me so many options.

I look back and I think about kaleidoscopic moments - those moments when we see things differently. I think law gives us the ability to make things different.

There was a story told in Texas when I was a younger lawyer about a little girl getting into bed late one night with her father at her bedside and saying to him, "Daddy, tell me that story again about Mary who had a little lamb, and who grew up to have the biggest sheep ranch in Texas."

(Laughter.)

What we saw ourselves as doing was trying to open opportunities so people - especially women - could be more, could do more, could participate more. The work I started in Austin through law and public service continued through my work in the White House. There I got to lead in addressing many issues. My time is drawing to a close and I don't have time to do more than mention a few efforts. We put a priority on including women in appointments to judicial positions and all presidential appointments. The first federal money for domestic violence shelters was appropriated under President Carter. It was a time when we worked to expand participation by women in the military.

Recently I gave a speech and a woman came up afterwards and said, "My daughter asked me to thank you." "For what?" I asked. The woman responded, "She is flying helicopters in the military and she loves it. She wanted me to say thank you because it was those beginning steps that happened under Carter that made it possible for her to fly."

The past holds many efforts on behalf of women that have truly changed the world and the opportunities you have. I am proud to have been a part of those efforts. I have enjoyed sharing with you today something of my life's journey.

One of my former students is putting together a website for me called *www.weddingtoncenter.com*. It will be another way for me to communicate much of what I've been involved with. In addition the website will include the primary items I have written about my experience with breast cancer, information about my work during the Carter administration, and some things about *Roe v. Wade*. One of my tasks before this year ends is to update and expand that website. I hope you will find an occasion to visit it.

When I think about the future, a number of things come to mind. I know that many problems and inequities remain to be solved. Speakers who follow will spotlight some of those. Pick up a paper any day and there are relevant issues covered, including international issues about women and their status, children and their status. I brought with me today this stack of recent clippings covering issues that impact women. One is about Wall Street and sexual harassment issues. Others talk about reproductive rights and variety ways in which those rights are being challenged. Some cover efforts to expand reproductive rights. My time is winding down, and it is time for the panels so I will not read the topics of all the clippings I brought, as I had planned to do.

I will continue to work on issues which I believe are important, but I know that you will play more important roles than I will. I have faith that you will play important and constructive roles in addressing those problems and inequities.

I love a story told about George Burns. You may remember that he died when he was about 100. When he was 96 he is reputed to

have said, "I can do anything today that I did when I was 18." And then he said, "It just goes to show how pathetic I was when I was 18."

(Laughter.)

Barbara Hoffman and I were talking earlier today about how we look at you, who are generally mid-twenties to early thirties or in that neighborhood, and you are so much stronger than we were at comparable ages. You know more than we did. You have the advantage of 35 years of improvement in legal education methods. You know computers; I don't. You know things in terms of world travel and world cultures that I did not know at your age. You have more energy than I do now. You will have many opportunities, and our future will depend in large part on you.

When Donna Shalala was Secretary of Health and Human Services, I saw a cartoon that featured a little boy and a little girl in a backyard. The boy was wearing the stethoscope and was holding the doctor's kit, and the girl was saying, "Okay, you can be the doctor. I will be the Secretary of Health and Human Services." We want you to apply that same expansive concept to your thoughts of your futures.

(Laughter.)

What am I going to say to close? First, I want to tell you that there will be things you do that you cannot see the outcome of, but they will often turn out to be significant. The best you can do is to help in whatever way you can wherever you are. I have always worked hard, but I was also very lucky that when some people needed help with a legal issue I had a law degree and, even more important, the skills of a lawyer. My male law school colleagues got the jobs with the big law firms and the big-dollar offers; I did not. Some of them became rich; I did not. However, while I am not rich in money, I am richer than almost everyone in terms of experiences and in terms of impact. Those pluses came because I chose to walk the road of public service.

Perhaps some of you will become elected officials. We need more women in elected positions. We need more people who respect diversity in elected positions. There are 13 women members of the U.S. Senate out of 100. There are few women in the U.S. House of Representatives out of 435 positions. We need more wo-

men who hold top positions, and especially leadership positions, of all kinds.

I've been able to walk the elective road. I've been able to walk the road of private practice. I never had the opportunity to practice in a big firm, although a lot of you will have that chance. I know some really wonderful people who went to a big firm and then later used the experience they gained there for the greater good. Others I know who have made fortunes practicing law have been generous in supporting good causes and worthy non-profit organizations.

The woman who is working on the Bartell Drug case in Seattle, Washington is a woman who went to a big firm and then left. Now she is litigating in a favor of the principle that insurance should cover contraceptive care when it covers equivalent issues for men. She is becoming the national leader on that subject.

One of my former students is a lawyer named Susan Hay; she is 31 years old. When Texas passed a law a few years ago that required anyone under 18 to either have parental involvement about abortion or to obtain a judicial bypass, she said, "There are lots of lawyers who would be willing to volunteer time for those young women to seek judicial bypasses, but they don't have the forms. They don't know what to do. I will start an organization that will give them that information and back-up." The organization is now vibrant and it is supporting those volunteer attorneys; it is called Jane's Due Process. I see many young attorneys beginning to do very important things. A law degree gives you so many ways to walk in public service.

Second, when I look back at issues we've worked on in the past, I see so many aspects of those issues that continue to be pertinent today and which need to be addressed. I know that you are the ones to whom we will hand the torches of enlightened improvement that we've run with. We have run a long way. We have brought the torches a long way, but the desired results have yet to be achieved. We will soon be stepping to the sidelines. We will never leave

the track, and soon we will be ones clapping for all of you as you continue the race.

I am delighted to have had this chance to come to a law school that is so well known for the ideal of public service and for training people who care about it. You may find your issue through an accident or through inspiration, but you are developing the skills you will need when you decide what you want to achieve. I think of leadership as the ability to leave your thumb print. It is my law degree that has allowed me to leave my thumb print.

Third, and in closing, I want to take you back to the morning when the Challenger space shuttle was lifting off. Do you remember that scene? It was that cylinder blasting off and ascending into the sky. We thought it would keep ascending; instead we saw white smoke and falling pieces.

I was mesmerized that day. I don't know what I was supposed to be doing, but I couldn't tear myself away from the television screen. I kept watching it. Somehow I hoped that if I watched long enough there would be a different ending, but there never was.

The first Black astronaut, Ronald E. McNair, the first teacher astronaut, Christa McAuliffe, and the first female selected to be an astronaut, Judith Resnik, were part of the Challenger crew. I remember the image of that day and I remember the words of the black astronaut's mother. She was asked the next day: "Are you sorry your son went into space?" As I remember her words she said — I can still remember watching her as she was talking — "I will miss my son terribly, but when my son was young he dreamed of going to space." She continued, "At that time there were no Black astronauts, there were no female astronauts." She ended by saying, "I will miss him terribly, but I am so glad that he died living his dream."

All of us have a role to play in allowing others a better chance to live their dreams. Thank you.

(Applause.) (Standing ovation.)