

The Annual List
of Top Attorneys

TED LEOPOLD and
a 'textbook case of
corporate greed'

Employment defense
lawyer MARILYN HOLIFIELD
on a career of 'firsts'

What HINDA KLEIN
really thinks
of Twitter

Super Lawyers®

FLORIDA 2016

SUPERLAWYERS.COM

ORAL HISTORY

PUMPED

for Success

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF FLORIDA'S
FIRST WAVE OF FEMALE LAWYERS

You're here to get your
Mrs. degree, right?

We already
hired a woman
at our firm.

We forgot to
invite you to
the meeting.

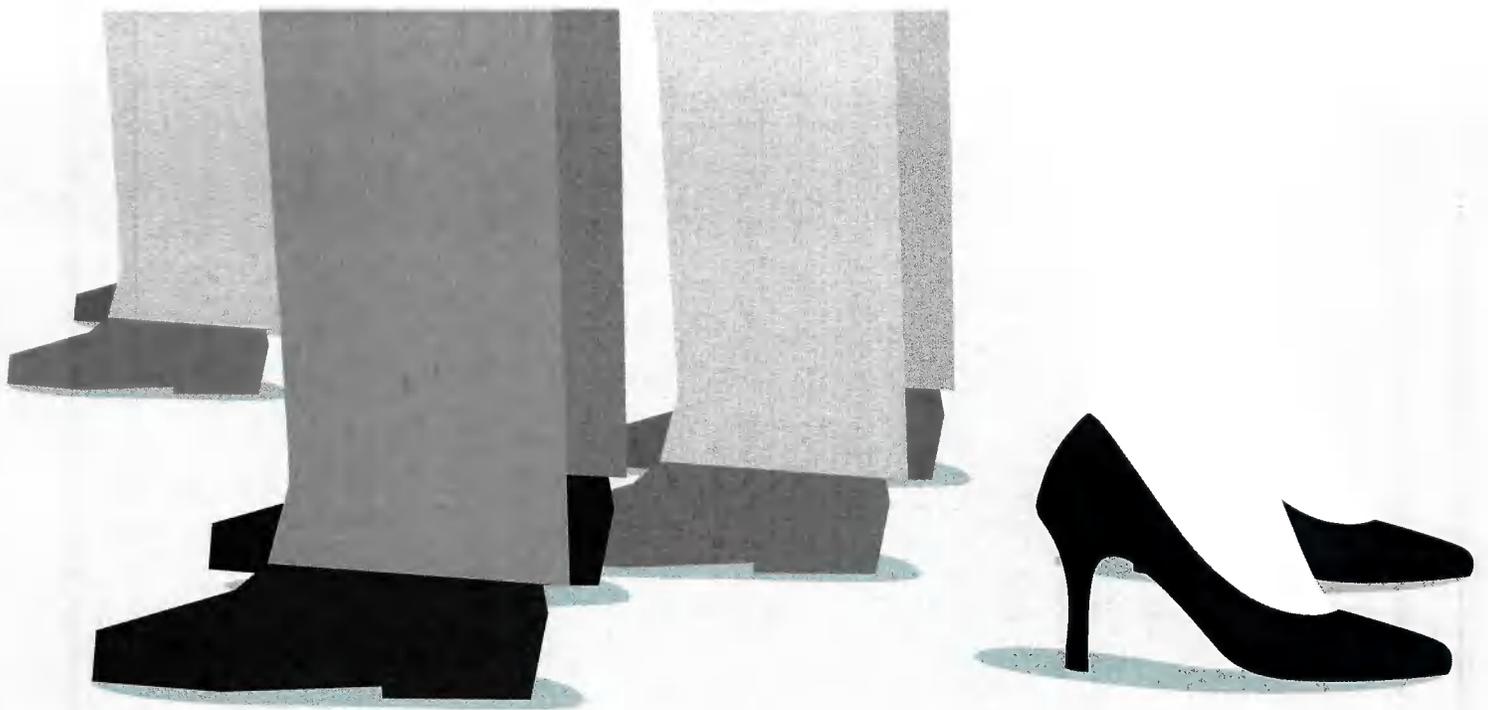
Is that how people
dress for court
where you're from?

Are you
the court
reporter?



the answer company™

THOMSON REUTERS®



'THEY HAD ALREADY HIRED *One Woman*'

The trials and tribulations of Florida's first big wave of female lawyers BY G.K. SHARMAN

Are you the court reporter?

Is that how they dress to go to court [where you're from]?

We already hired a woman at our firm.

The women who began practicing law in the Sunshine State in the 1970s and early '80s heard it all.

But the lawyers who talked to us about those experiences say they refused to let a little sexism get in their way. They put on their pumps, pantyhose and big-shouldered dress-for-success suits and set out to beat the boys at their own game.

And while many tell *Mad Men*-like tales, all 12 emerged with a sense of humor—and gratitude for the trail blazed by their female predecessors, the support of male peers, and the mentorship of the respected legal practitioners—nearly all male—who nurtured their careers.

Making it through law school and landing that first job posed some obstacles.

Leslie J. Lott (University of Florida College of Law, 1974): There were about five women in my entering class. But there was a real spirit of adventure, real excitement. We were scared and apprehensive, but we had a real sense that this was our shot and we were going to run with the big dogs.

Patricia Lebow (University of Miami School of Law, 1973): I did not experience sexism in law school. I did experience sexism when I applied for a clerkship. The large firms were not hiring women law students or lawyers, so a female could not even apply. How did we handle it? We ignored it. Those who went home crying every day are probably doing something else now.

Jane Kreusler-Walsh (Loyola University New Orleans College of Law, 1979): Most male classmates did not discriminate. There were, however, some exceptions. I vividly recall one man who thought women were only there to get a “Mrs. degree.” His attitude remained unchanged.

Ava Doppelt (New York University Law School, 1976): While I was in law school, I had an interview with a large Chicago firm and the guy said, “We had a woman once before, then she had a child and had the nerve to ask if she could work part time.” The attitude was, you can’t be a lawyer if you don’t work full time. They knew they weren’t supposed to ask what your plans were [for marriage or family], but people were more apt to say things then. I went back to the law school and reported them. They were banned from recruiting on campus for a period of time.

Linda Shelley (University of Florida College of Law, 1977): I’m blessed with a type of memory that doesn’t dwell on the negative. I was more focused on learning my trade than on obstacles.

Doppelt: We’ve told these stories for years until we’re tired of them. The unfortunate truth is, we still have to tell them.

Judith Korchin (University of Florida College of Law, 1974): I was Order of the Coif, had been an executive editor of the University of Florida *Law Review*, published a *Law Review* article on the waiver of sovereign tort immunity, won awards for being the top student in my remedies and evidence courses, and clerked in the summer for a Gainesville law firm. Despite this academic record, the top commercial law firms in Miami would not give me a job interview in 1974.

Kreusler-Walsh: After I graduated, I tried to get my first job with the law firm where I had clerked for two summers. One of the senior partners called me and said they had already hired one woman and did not want another. I told him that was pure discrimination and I could sue. His response was, “But you won’t.” And, of course, I didn’t.

As it turned out, I found a better fit clerking at the 4th District Court of Appeal.

Then there were the on-the-job problems.

Patricia Ann Redmond (University of Miami School of Law, 1979): This one judge would call women “sweetie” or “honey” or make comments about how we were dressed.

Patricia H. Thompson (Vanderbilt University School of Law, 1976): Opposing counsel called me “honey” once. I said, “I’m not your honey.” He later called to apologize. Also, the first trial I handled by myself, my male opponent said, “Oh, good, it’s a woman.” It was good, because we beat him.

Roberta “Robbie” Colton (William and Mary Law School, 1982): I once had a client who wanted me to counsel him on his sex life. I told him that I would be happy to do so at my regular hourly bill rate. That stopped the discussion quickly.

Thompson: One day, I was using the copier and something fell down behind it. I was bending over to get it and a male clerk walked by and swatted me on the butt with a legal pad. That kid did not get a job with the firm.

Jane Moscovitz (Harvard Law School, 1977): I was put on a really big case and the boss called a meeting of everyone involved and didn’t invite me to the meeting. I asked him about it afterward and he said, “We didn’t leave you out on purpose. We just didn’t think about you at all.”

That was a riot at the time. I still laugh about it.

Hala Sandridge (Florida State University College of Law, 1984): I had a hearing in Tampa in Circuit Court, and I was really pregnant. And the judge looks at me and says, “Would you like to lie down on the ground and present your argument? That might be easier for you.”

I wasn’t offended. Judges were just not used to pregnant attorneys in the ‘80s.

Lebow: This one judge had a spittoon by his desk. He only seemed to spit in it when I came in.

And the culprits weren’t always men.

Thompson: I had to go out of town on a case and the judge’s secretary commented on my outfit: “Is that how they dress to go to court in Miami?” She wouldn’t have said that to a man.

Lebow: There was sexism from both men and women in the ‘70s out of ignorance, fear and discomfort with the unknown. They were simply not accustomed to interacting with women in positions of power. I started clerking as a law student in 1972. Secretaries were helpful to the male clerks and male lawyers, but not too willing to assist me. I had to really work at finding a secretary who felt sorry for me in order to get my work done. It was attitudinal. There I was, 24 years old—who did I think I was ... asking someone to type for me?

Thankfully, things started to change.

Moscovitz: I benefited in my career by being a woman, and being at the right place at the right time. I was hired for my first job, as a computer programmer, because the department wanted to show diversity and commitment to a diversity program.



Hilarie Bass

- Business Litigation
- Greenberg Traurig, Miami



Roberta "Robbie" Colton

- Bankruptcy: Business
- Trenam Law, Tampa



Ava Doppelt

- Intellectual Property
- Allen Dyer Doppelt Milbrath & Gilchrist, Orlando



Judith Korchin

- Business Litigation;
- Construction Litigation
- Holland & Knight, Miami



Jane Kreuzler-Walsh

- Appellate
- Law Office of Kreuzler-Walsh, Compiani & Vargas, West Palm Beach



Patricia Lebow

- Civil Litigation: Plaintiff; Estate Planning & Probate
- Broad and Cassel, West Palm Beach



Leslie J. Lott

- Intellectual Property
- Lott & Fischer, Coral Gables



Jane Moscovitz

- Business Litigation; Criminal Defense: White Collar
- Moscovitz & Moscovitz, Coral Gables



Patricia Ann Redmond

- Bankruptcy: Business
- Stearns Weaver Miller Weissler Alhadeff & Sitterson, Miami



Hala Sandridge

- Appellate
- Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney, Tampa



Linda Shelley

- Land Use/Zoning; Environmental
- Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney, Tallahassee



Patricia H. Thompson

- Construction Litigation; Business Litigation; Employment Litigation: Defense
- Carlton Fields, Miami

Sandridge: Things started to change when women became leaders, sometime in the 1990s. As leaders, they could advocate for other women and dispel misimpressions. When women are not at the leadership table, that can't happen.

Colton: The acceptance of slacks for women and no nylons! Seriously, I think the biggest changes are the number of women who are judges and in-house legal counsel. Their presence really forced any sexist tendencies back into the closet.

Doppelt: [There's been] consciousness-raising on all sides. One of the biggest changes in consciousness I noticed was when [male] lawyers had daughters who became lawyers. They wanted their daughters to succeed, and suddenly they understood. That's what makes the change.

Moscowitz: I first realized how much things had changed one day when I went to court [in the mid-'80s] and realized that everyone in the courtroom was a woman—the judge, the court reporter, the defendant and both attorneys. I thought, "Wow, this is different."

Seeing more women defendants was a big change as well. Previously, prosecutors were reluctant to indict the little woman.

Sandridge: The biggest change has been women working from home. It helps men, too, but mostly women. And firms are way more accepting.

It's because of technology, which has helped women almost disproportionately. A

woman with children can work from home, or from wherever she is.

Which doesn't mean juggling family and career wasn't difficult.

Korchin: I consciously waited until I was a partner to have our son.

Jane Kreisler-Walsh: I worked part time until the youngest of our three children was 9 months old. At that time, I decided that, if I was going to go further with my career, I needed to work full time.

Redmond: My husband is one of the most supportive people on the face of the earth. He was raised by women who were in business.

Lott: We had a full-time nanny, and my husband was very involved in raising our children.

I know women who are single mothers and lawyers, and I don't know how they do it.

Shelley: You have to divide your time between your work and your kids. It means you have no time left for yourself. Trying to balance work and family was very hard. Younger women are better at it than my generation was, but I still see them juggling. You just do it.

Sandridge: Within five years of practicing law, I realized it would be very difficult to be at the beck and call of the court system (as a litigator) and have a home and family. I moved into appellate practice so I'd have a more manageable schedule. And now, with my laptop, I can bang out a brief at night.

Kreisler-Walsh: Your children have to come first. I learned this lesson the hard way, after finding out our nanny was hurting our baby. I was horrified and decided I needed to tell my story so others could learn from it. My story was chronicled in *Working Mother* magazine.

There's still work to be done.

Hilarie Bass (University of Miami School of Law, 1981): There is less explicit sexism now, but ... implicit bias is something that is being recognized throughout society. Most people are more comfortable with people who think, look and act like them. For minority groups, this can be a challenge when it comes to employment. There are also assumed perceptions and implicit bias. People think they're gender-neutral, but psychological tests have shown that we all have these biases. We need to try to make our workplaces more diverse, to reflect our communities.

[But] there is strength in numbers. People see you differently if you are the first or if you're one of 20. Studies have shown that, on a board of directors, you need three of any minority group—whether that's African-Americans, Latinos, women—for them to have a voice. Until there's a critical mass of any minority group, typically those people don't feel a hundred percent comfortable in actively advocating for a position for fear that they will be viewed as representing a diverse opinion rather than just having another good idea.

Women AND THE LAW

1870 Ada Kepley becomes the first woman in the U.S. to earn a formal law degree, from Union College of Law, now Northwestern.

1872 Susan B. Anthony is arrested in New York after trying to vote in the presidential election.

1920 The Nineteenth Amendment gives women the right to vote. The League of Women Voters is founded.

1923 The Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is introduced.

1963 The Equal Pay Act guarantees equal pay for the same work.

Sandridge: The rate of change [in career advancement] has been slow. We're still learning to be big rainmakers. For some people, it may come naturally, but for others it's not as comfortable. A lot of women haven't found mentors to teach them, so it sometimes takes longer to develop those skills.

Redmond: The thing that hasn't changed is women still have to fight really hard to be able to achieve senior positions in cases.

Bass: Most young women don't see any signs of bias when they're students or when they are entry-level or, typically, when they come up for shareholder. To the extent that there are issues, they come up as women become more senior in their careers—they [may] find it's more difficult to generate business—or when they come up for becoming equity partner.

Shelley: There's better upward mobility in government [legal jobs] for women. I never sensed that it was difficult to break [the glass ceiling] to get ahead. [Shelley was the first female chief of staff for a Florida governor—Lawton Chiles]. Pay issues for women are more of an issue in private practice. There are few women who are top litigators or in mergers and acquisitions doing multi-million-dollar partnerships.

These attorneys have some advice for the current crop of women lawyers.

Lott: Show up, work hard, put your client first. Focus on your own professionalism. It's not about who's going to let you do something, it's about who's going to stop you."

"It's not about who's going to let you do something, it's about who's going to stop you."

—LESLIE J. LOTT

Bass: The number one piece of advice I have is really not gender-specific. It's taking control of your career; thinking beyond simply getting through the next assignment. Set goals for yourself that can help draw a picture of what you want your career to look like. Always know what it is you're trying to achieve.

Leadership in community organizations helped prepare me for leadership in a law firm. [And] as a litigator, it was important for me to get involved in local Bar activities. I didn't think in terms of being ABA president, but I did think in terms of meeting lawyers and judges who do what I do.

Doppelt: Network with other women or join groups such as the Florida Association of Women Lawyers.

Work hard to learn how to be business people.

It's still about being able to get work done. You work long hours, pay attention to the details and concentrate on bettering your skills.

Shelley: Be very focused on being excellent at what you do. You can't take shortcuts. You can't surf the wave—you have to be immersed in your work.

Moscowitz: I always recommend that women start in government or nonprofit jobs. They get more responsibility, more time in court, more ability to develop judgment. And if they then go to a firm, those people never saw them when they didn't know anything, and treat them better.

Lebow: Speak up. Don't be a whiner, but stand up for yourself. Know your priorities and how to achieve your goals. Be realistic.

Redmond: Be visible. Be involved. Don't be intimidated to take the first seat on cases.

Colton: Younger women are accused of not appreciating what it took to get them where they are. That is not their fault. They just were not around to see the really bad stuff or to hear the stories. I actually think it is great that they expect equal consideration and pay.

I actually came along at a perfect time. I did not have to pave the way, but I also knew very well the women who did pave the way for me and, because of them, I have tried to pass it on. 

1964 The Federal Civil Rights Act guarantees equal employment opportunity.

1973 *Roe v. Wade* establishes a nationwide right to abortion.

1975 The Supreme Court rules that women cannot be excluded from juries.

1981 Sandra Day O'Connor becomes the first woman on the Supreme Court.

1995 Roberta Cooper Ramo becomes the ABA's first woman president.

2009 Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act expands workers' right to sue for pay discrimination.