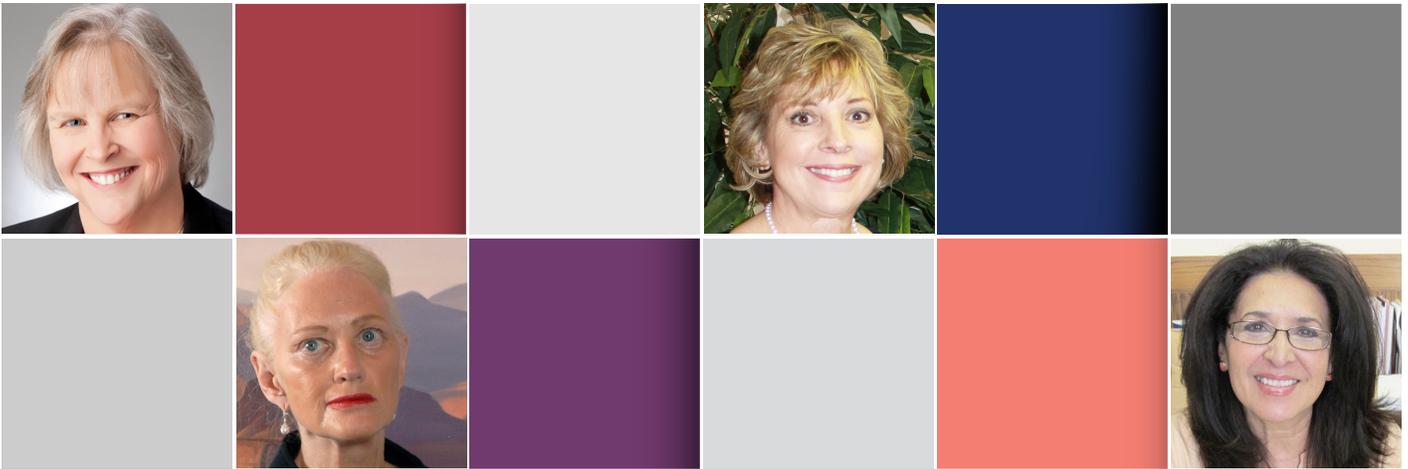


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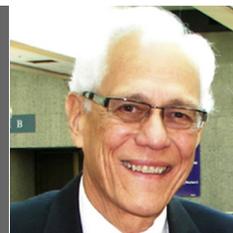


## *Trailblazers All*

On April 15, 1892, Henrietta Hume Pettijohn Buck was the first woman admitted to the Bar in the Territory of New Mexico. Today, there are 2,159 active female attorneys in the State Bar, comprising 39 percent of active practicing attorneys; women also make up 36 percent of the state's judiciary.

In this compendium of articles, one of the goals of the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession is to feature diverse individuals who lead by example and continually strive to advance the rights of women. I hope you find their paths to success to be compelling reading.

—Elizabeth Garcia, for the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession



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# Mary Torres

## First Hispanic Secretary of the ABA

By Elizabeth Garcia

**M**ary Torres is a trailblazer. In 2002, she became the first Hispanic woman in the nation elected to serve as president of a state bar association. This year, Mary became the first Hispanic woman elected to serve as secretary of the American Bar Association for 2014. Her legal career is defined by her commitment to the profession of law through public service.

### What inspired you to go to law school?

Teaching inspired me to go law school. I taught high school for six years in my hometown of Socorro. I loved interacting with the students and helping my students prepare their arguments. My mock trial students [who won two consecutive state titles] inspired me to become an attorney. The whole law school process was an education for me. No one in my family had ever gone to law school. I thought you could just go to law school and did not know you had to apply.

### Tell us how being a teacher made an impact on your career path to the legal profession.

Teaching has definitely helped me in my legal career, particularly in the courtroom. As a teacher, you have to have the ability to explain difficult concepts and break concepts down. I brought that ability and use it when trying cases before juries.

### What were your aspirations once you graduated from law school?

When I started law school, I thought I would teach. My dad said, "You are not going to teach, Mary, you are going to want to practice." He was so right! When I graduated from law school in 1992, the job market was difficult, much like the job market now. Eight people in my law school class had jobs. In law school, I was involved in Inn of Court, and in a group led by U.S. District Judge John Conway. Judge Conway sent a thank you note to everyone in the group. He wrote me a note that said he had a friend looking to hire in Las Cruces, which is how I got my first job with Tom Sandenaw.



*"When I graduated from law school in 1992, the job market was difficult, much like the job market now. Eight people in my law school class had jobs."*

### How did growing up in Socorro influence your legal career?

What I liked best about growing up in Socorro is the true sense of community that is still there and is pervasive. Folks genuinely wish you the best, and follow how its students fare. Many people still stop my mother (who turned 90 on May 29) in the grocery store and ask about me and ask how my practice is going. Neil Mertz, a judge who practiced in the Seventh Judicial District until his untimely death about 10 years ago, influenced me to go into law. He was my team's mock trial coach, and I worked with him. He was the first attorney I really knew. He was active in the Bar before he went on the Bench, and I just followed what he did.

### Tell us what it is like to be the first female Hispanic secretary of the American Bar Association.

For the first month after I won [the ABA election], I woke up crying. I am so proud to be in this position. I am really humbled by it. I want to do such a good job. I know that a lot of people are looking up to me. I

recognize the importance of this position and also realize that there are Hispanic women looking up to me and saying, "You go girl. We are so proud of you." I want to do right by them and I want to make them proud. But, even with this position, all my friends and family know that my feet remain firmly planted on the ground.

### When did you join the American Bar Association?

I joined the ABA in law school in 1989 because I wanted to be part of an organization that was the voice of my profession. The ABA helps you to be a better lawyer. I am a member of the following ABA practice sections: litigation, employment law, small firm, and government practice. From a Bar service perspective, I became active when I was a young lawyer. I would travel to ABA-YLD meetings. I have made lifelong friends who supported me in my bid for ABA secretary.

After I "aged out" of YLD, I became active in the State Bar of New Mexico. I became president of the State Bar, and you go to meetings that are put on by the ABA's National Conference of Bar Presidents, or NCBP. These meetings provided opportunities for bar presidents to take back important issues to their respective bars and opportunities to reach out to young lawyers. I got active in this organization, and served on some committees as president-elect and president of the State Bar. After that

service, I applied to be on the NCBP executive council, was selected, and served a three-year term. I then decided to run for secretary of NCBP, which puts you on the track to become its president. The first time I ran for NCBP secretary, I did not succeed, so I ran again and was elected in 2006. During that same time period, I served as the state delegate for the ABA representing New Mexico, and have served in that position for nine years.

### **When you first joined the ABA, were there very many women in leadership positions?**

Not many. As you know, Roberta Cooper Ramo was the first woman to become ABA president in 1996. When I became the president of the National Conference of Bar Presidents, I was the fourth woman president in its 60 years. I have noticed in the past 10 years an evolution of more women taking an active involvement in leadership positions. Women are much more visible in the ABA since we have Laurel G. Bellows as the current ABA president, followed by two male presidents, and then Paulette Brown, who likely will be the first female African-American ABA president. Women have served as chair of the House of Delegates, and that progression has followed into ABA president. More women have served as chairs of committees as well.

### **Who have been your mentors in your practice?**

The person who was my mentor in bar practice is Judge Elizabeth Whitefield. I remember when I was YLD chair, the relationship between the State Bar and YLD was not the same as it is now. It was very strained when I first came in as YLD chair. Elizabeth had a reception at her house where she invited the Board of Bar Commissioners, the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals and the YLD. She created this event so all of us could break bread together as colleagues. After the reception, Elizabeth said to me, "Mary, you need to be active in the State Bar." She encouraged me to run for secretary. She told me I would have her total support. That conversation is what gave me the courage to run for leadership positions. Elizabeth is like my big sister. I would not be in this position if it were not for Elizabeth and that conversation at her kitchen counter.

### **Has anyone been your mentor for the leadership roles you have pursued in the ABA?**

Yes. In the ABA, my mentors are Linda Klein, who was the first woman president of the Georgia State Bar. She also served as the chair of the ABA's House of Delegates, which is the policy-making body of the ABA. Linda will run for ABA president in January 2014, and will likely run unopposed. Roberta Cooper Ramo definitely has been a great mentor. Just as Linda and Roberta have done for me, I hope also to serve as a mentor to women and offer encouragement and support. I hope to use this role as secretary to serve as an ambassador for the ABA.

*"For the first month after I won [the ABA election], I woke up crying. I am so proud to be in this position. I am really humbled by it."*

### **What has been the most unexpected benefit of your participation in the ABA?**

Meeting wonderful friends, and becoming a better lawyer through the great materials that the ABA offers. I will also tell you that I have gotten a number of clients through my participation in the ABA. People will often call and say, "You are the state delegate from New Mexico, and I have a client who needs representation. My advice to big and large firms is to let your young lawyers be active in the ABA because it will reap benefits for your practice and help boost your firm's bottom line."

### **What role has public service played in your practice as an attorney?**

I cannot imagine being an attorney and not giving back. Public service is part of what I do and is an integral part of being an attorney. Giving back to the community, the Bar and the profession, in my opinion, all go hand in hand.

### **If you could interview one historical figure, who would it be?**

Eleanor Roosevelt, from a historical perspective, and Hillary Clinton, from a current perspective as a lawyer and on achieving balance.

### **What do you think have been some of the greatest advancements or achievements you have seen for women practicing in the law since you went to law school?**

There are more women in the legal profession, and more women are at the table. Women still have difficulties, and there is still bias, but, perhaps it is not as prevalent. I have a current case with a difficult opposing counsel, and I do not know if it is because I am a woman or that the attorney is simply difficult. When I first started practicing, I got called "little lady." I remember Tom calling up the male attorney, chastising him, and asking him, "Why are you calling Mary 'little lady'?" Tom was a supporter, and recognized the bias. I appreciated that.

### **What do you think are some of the biggest hurdles facing young students going into law school these days?**

Some of the difficulties facing law students today are student loan debt and getting a job. Current student loan debt, in some instances, can be the equivalent of a mortgage. You have students from New Mexico who believe that they should pursue a law school education out of state, and then they want to come back home to practice in New Mexico, but have a lot of law school debt. The salaries in New Mexico are not like the salaries back East, which often result in us losing talented local lawyers. I got a great education at UNM School of Law. The debt was manageable, and I was able to pay it off in 10 years. I think some students don't realize the debt they will have when they graduate. It is daunting.

### **What advice do you have for young lawyers?**

The ABA has an open-door policy. Join the ABA when you are a law student. Take advantage of the ABA once you are a young lawyer. The ABA offers you free membership for one year, and you can join sections inexpensively. Pay it forward and become active in the sections. I would recommend joining the following sections: general practice, litigation, and law practice management. Go to the section meetings and try to be their YLD representative. You are going to meet people, have a great network, and help your career because you will learn so much and be exposed to great people and great lawyers.

*continued on page 6*

# Margaret Branch

## A Genuine Role Model

By Erika E. Anderson

We met in Margaret Moses Branch's office at the Branch Law Firm in Albuquerque. Photographs of Branch and her husband, Turner, with U.S. presidents grace her office wall, an overwhelming number of them with Bill and Hillary Clinton. The Branches have collected valuable Navajo weavings and pottery over the years, and a weaving from their collection hangs on Branch's office wall, bringing color to the room. Underneath Navajo blankets are her four marathon medals. Sitting in her office, Branch shared stories about her life, and I learned why she is such an inspiration to women in the legal profession.

One of four children, she was born in Salzburg, Austria, to Tom and Penny Moses, who immigrated to the U.S. in 1955. Tom attended West Point and served in the military. His work ethic, personality, and moral character influenced Branch greatly, she said. However, it was Penny, an Army nurse, who influenced her even more. The Army would not assign spouses to the same unit, so Penny was unable to pursue her career. Branch learned from her mother the importance of being independent, having your own career, and choosing your destiny.

Branch was a trailblazer for women early in her life. Bored in high school, she said, Branch had the opportunity to participate in a work-study program. She was living in Alaska at the time and the "bag boys" at Safeway were making \$12 an hour. "That was a lot of money in 1971," she said. The manager agreed to give her a job and because she was ambitious and worked hard, she was very successful at this position. She was recognized by the Safeway board of directors for being the first "bag girl" and, ultimately, received an award from Safeway for starting this trend.

Branch attended Florida State University while living in Panama, and upon returning to the states, she finished her undergraduate degree at the University of New Mexico in 1976. Margaret graduated from the University of New Mexico Law School in 1978. She chose to be an attorney because of her uncle, Donald "Fuzzy" Moses, founder of the Moses

*Branch learned from her mother the importance of being independent, having your own career, and choosing your destiny.*

Firm. Branch said she always respected her uncle and has "tried to model myself in his steps." After law school, Branch first practiced at a law firm in Gallup. She then moved back to Albuquerque and served as general counsel for Carbon Coal Co. Shortly thereafter, she met Turner and, six weeks later, they were married. She joined the Branch Law Firm in 1984.

In her practice, Branch has focused on women's health issues, first becoming interested in 1989 when she was invited to a support group of about 100 women who had taken the drug L-tryptophan to treat symptoms of premenstrual syndrome. L-tryptophan caused women to develop Eosinophilia-Myalgia syndrome, a disease that affects the muscles—particularly pulmonary muscles—making it hard to breathe. It causes severe pain. The settlement amounts for these cases are confidential, but were substantial, Branch said.

Her next endeavor was to litigate silicone breast implant cases for her female clients. Branch was a zealous advocate in these cases and was appointed to a five-member committee that negotiated a \$2.4 billion settlement. Branch continues to work in the area of mass torts and women's health issues, and is the managing partner of the Branch Law Firm.

She talked about some of the unique experiences she has faced as a female attorney. For example, when she was negotiating a national settlement for breast implants, she was the only woman in the room with several sophisticated male attorneys whose wives did not work. She quickly learned that the men negotiating for the big companies knew about designers and clothing. They often talked about Chanel, Armani and Donna Karan, and she thought, "Well, that must be what their wives were wearing."



In Atlanta at the time, Branch thought she would buy her first Chanel suit at Neiman-Marcus "and just see if they say anything." She wore it the next day and, of course, the men recognized it as Chanel. It was only then they took her seriously, she said. Even if this was only her perception, it made her feel more confident about negotiating. In the years to come, she bought Chanel suits in every color and always made sure that when she was negotiating national settlements (including Phen Phen, Vioxx, Baycol, Norplan, and Avandia), she wore a Chanel suit.

*Despite her success and many accomplishments, including multiple awards and national recognition, Branch also has experienced difficult times.*

Branch was one of the founders of the New Mexico Women's Bar Association in 1989. She remembers having dinner with now Judges Elizabeth Whitefield and Carol Connor, and they decided something needed to be done for female attorneys in the state. At the time, there were no women in the judiciary or important government jobs, and New Mexico was one of only a few states that did not have a women's bar association. They drew straws to decide who was going to be president. Branch drew the short straw and became the first president.

The New Mexico Women's Bar Association initially held its meetings at the Albuquerque Country Club because it was perceived as a male bastion. Nearly 1,000 women attended the association's first dinner meeting there. It happened to be the same night that President George H.W. Bush ordered the invasion of Iraq, so it was pretty amazing that so many people attended. Eventually, the Women's Bar Association decided that the Albuquerque County Club discriminated against women because they could only get tee times after 2 p.m., so the association changed its meeting location. That decision became a very hot topic and was written about in *USA Today* and the *Albuquerque Journal*. The New Mexico Women's Bar Association ultimately played an important role in helping women in the state achieve leadership positions in the legal profession and it continues to be an organization committed to the advancement of women into leadership roles.

Despite her success and many accomplishments, including multiple awards and national recognition, Branch also has experienced difficult times. She had a stroke several years ago and was unable to talk for two years. During that time, Branch spent a lot of time reflecting and thinking about the important things in her life and what she wanted to accomplish. Today she can now talk, but is legally blind. However, she still practices law and even ran a half marathon after her stroke. Branch said that this experience required her to rely completely on other people and, as a result, she has lost some of her independence and has become very humble. She calls her recovery "a miracle," and her faith has played an important role. Her continuing recovery is something she never takes for granted.

Branch believes that the legal profession is one of the most honorable professions, and as an attorney "You have the opportunity

to help others at all times." As a female attorney, she says it is very important "not just to maintain the status quo, but to keep moving forward." She has seen women make it to the top and believes that the more women who make it in leadership positions, the better off all women will be. By not accepting the status quo, Branch has been a genuine role model and an inspiration for women in the legal profession. ■

*Erika E. Anderson is an attorney at French & Associates, PC, where she practices in the areas of governmental liability, civil rights, personal injury, general tort liability, and employment. She is president-elect of the State Bar, chair-elect for the American Bar Association Tort, Trial & Insurance Practice Section Trial Techniques Committee, and a past-president of the New Mexico Women's Bar Association.*

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## Mary Torres *continued from page 4*

### **What do you envision the role of women will be in the legal field 10 years from now?**

There will be more women in the legal field. With Sheryl Sandberg's book *Lean In*, I am anxious to see whether women will lean in, be more assertive, and ask for more opportunities. I envision that.

### **What are the biggest changes in the legal profession since you started practicing law?**

The practice of law has changed since I started practicing. Electronics and being available 24/7 to your clients are the biggest changes. Nobody writes letters anymore. Everything is electronic, even electronic filing. The research has immensely changed in 20 years. The smartphone has changed the practice, and it has enabled us to be available 24/7, but is that a good thing? I am not sure.

### **Tell us how you achieve balance in the workplace.**

The biggest change in my life since I have been president of the State Bar has been getting married, and the addition of my children and grandchildren, which has added a whole new dimension to my life. Friday nights are sacrosanct. The grandchildren spend Friday nights with us. My husband,

John Chavez, travels with me, and I spend quality time with him before and after ABA conferences. I work more on weekends to get my work done, which allows me the flexibility to meet my clients' business needs.

### **What is the one thing you would most want to be remembered for?**

That I am a good family person—a good daughter, a good sister, a good Auntie Mary, a good grandma Mary, a good wife, a good stepmom, and a good mother-in-law. That is what I want to be remembered for. At the end of the day, that is what matters the most.

### **What would you like to say to people reading this article?**

I am really grateful for this opportunity to be ABA secretary. My husband has been incredibly helpful. He has constantly been by my side, and is a true partner. My New Mexico contingency and the State Bar have helped me out. Lots of people supported me so very much to attain this achievement, including Roberta Cooper Ramo, Chuck Vigil, Peter Winograd, and Craig Orraj, to name a few. I have a lot of friends around the country that really helped me out. It is really humbling.

One final story. The election for secretary was held in Dallas during the ABA's Midyear

Meeting. One of my brothers, Tom, lives in Dallas. Another brother, Paul, drove from Socorro to Dallas to be there for the vote. Our kids and grandkids flew over and stayed in the suite next door. Win or lose, it was important for my brothers and my children and grandchildren to be there for me. We scheduled a "thrill of victory, agony of defeat" reception in our suite. It was a New Mexico-themed reception with New Mexican food and New Mexico flags. My mom made 20 dozen chili rellenos. Tom contributed the beverages for the event. John and I bought Gruet champagne and New Mexico wine, and Paul brought it all in his van. As a tribute to my mother, who is Cajun, we ordered a huge bowl of shrimp. Who could ask for a greater celebration: chili rellenos, shrimp, mariachi music, and a picture of my parents in honor of my family? It was a great reception, attended by my supporters, State Bar President Drew Cloutier, Erika Anderson, Joe Conte, ABA leadership, and my family!

I am very proud to represent New Mexico. I will do my best. I will not forget my roots, and from where I came. ■

*Elizabeth Garcia is a lawyer-advanced for the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions. She is a past co-chair of the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession.*

# Prof. Antoinette Sedillo Lopez

## A Multifaceted Achiever

By Louise K. Pocock

UNM Law School Professor Antoinette Sedillo Lopez is in the midst of a career that makes a young woman fresh from law school hopeful and slightly envious. I left my interview with her thinking she seems to have it all—law school accolades, a prestigious clerkship, a prolific academic career, extensive involvement in community organizations, a successful and supportive family, and time left over to invest in her own artistic and professional development. But I also left hopeful because for a woman who has dedicated her entire life to advocating for the rights of women and minorities in New Mexico, Sedillo Lopez still is incredibly excited, inspired, and always striving to improve things. Whether it is conditions facing women immigrants in our community, opportunities for academics and diversity at the law school, or improving her own artistic craft and expression, she still is learning and engaging.

*... she seems to have it all—law school accolades, a prestigious clerkship, a prolific academic career, extensive involvement in community organizations, a successful and supportive family, and time left over to invest in her own artistic and professional development.*

We began our discussion with her reflecting on the changes she has seen for women in the law since she began her schooling and career. She explained that the increasing number of women and minorities in law schools and practicing in the profession is very encouraging. Having different perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences to inform the conversation on how we teach and develop the law has been really important, she said,



although she acknowledges there is always more work to be done. Despite more women and minorities entering the legal profession, there still is a gap in representation compared to the population as a whole, and it is difficult finding resources to fund legal assistance and advocacy in these communities, she said.

Sedillo Lopez counts among her greatest accomplishments editing the six-book anthology *Latinos in the United States: History Law and Perspective*, editing the series *Latino Communities: Emerging Voices—Social, Cultural, Political and Legal Issues*, co-authoring with Barbara Shapiro *Family Law in New Mexico*, and directing UNM's Clinical Law Program from 2001-2009, to mention a few. Despite these and many other achievements, she said her most inspiring moments come from watching the careers of students she mentored or taught in law school and seeing how they have gone on to have impactful careers in the law. Sedillo Lopez counts among the bright stars Judge Geraldine Rivera in the Second Judicial Children's Court; Jennifer Rodgers, a local family law attorney and co-author of the Collaborative Divorce section of the *New Mexico Family Law Manual*, published in 2011; Elizabeth Rourke, staff attorney with Enlace Comunitario, an organization providing services to domestic violence victims; and Lynn Perls,

*Sedillo Lopez relishes her work with the staff and clients of Enlace and helped to develop a grow-your-own approach to community development ...*

a local family law expert who works with gay and lesbian rights organizations.

As for opportunities for minorities and women to work together, given the economic downturn's disproportionate impact on wealth and economic opportunities for both communities, Sedillo Lopez said she sees a lot of room for cooperation. Much of her work, whether in family law, domestic violence reform, or educational diversity and development, has an impact on those communities.

She noted that while it is important to develop collaborations and coalitions, it also is important to remember the unique needs of certain communities. Sedillo Lopez cited her work as a board member of Enlace Comunitario, a social justice organization led by Latina immigrants working to eliminate domestic violence in that community and promote healthy families. The group is almost completely staffed by women and, more importantly, mostly women who have come up through the organization, many of them as clients. Enlace has considered hiring men, and may have even had some male employees in the past, but its dynamics and efficacy are due in large part to having staff drawn from the same demographic as its clients, Sedillo Lopez said. It is important to cultivate a space where clients not only receive comprehensive services, but also work with mentors and staff who are culturally competent and empathetic, particularly given the complexity of issues facing immigrant women in domestic violence situations.

*continued on page 9*

# Bob St. John

## Fighter for Equality

By Laura Fashing

Robert (Bob) St. John received his undergraduate degree from Yale University in 1954, and his law degree from Yale in 1959. He practices commercial and civil litigation with the Rodey Law Firm. He has received numerous honors and awards during his more than 50 years of practice in Albuquerque.

### How did you end up in Albuquerque?

I was born in Michigan and raised in Memphis. I knew I had relatives in Hobbs and Lovington. When I graduated from Yale, most of my classmates took jobs at firms or with the government in big cities. I wanted to do something different. I moved to Albuquerque sight unseen.

### Have you always been with the Rodey Firm?

Yes. I was hired by the Rodey Firm straight out of law school. Bill Sloan hired me. He was supposed to interview me before he hired me, but his trip to the East Coast was cancelled. He offered me a job anyway. I was the last associate the firm hired without an interview. I was the 11th lawyer in the firm, which was pretty big back then. Now we have somewhere around 75 lawyers.

### How did you become the first co-chair of the State Bar's Committee on Women and the Legal Profession?

[First, a little history.] The State Bar created the task force because it realized that more and more women were becoming lawyers, and it was concerned with how they were being treated. The task force issued a comprehensive report in 1990 and identified six or eight specific areas that needed to be addressed. For example, it talked about the acceptance of women lawyers, how to get more women judges, and the treatment of women as litigants, court employees, and witnesses. The Bar then created a standing committee to carry out the recommendations of the task force, which became the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession.

I, however, was [at first] completely unaware of the task force and its report. [Then,] Amanda Ashford, who I think was the first female president of the State Bar, called me and told me she wanted a gray-haired man as a co-chair of the committee to give it credibility. I liked Amanda, and I agreed to do it.

### You served as chair of that committee for nearly 10 years—from 1991 to 2000. What do you think the committee accomplished while you were chair? How has the committee's focus changed over the years? What remains to be done?

During the first few years, we really focused on trying to implement the recommendations of the task force. When I first came to Albuquerque, there were maybe a dozen female lawyers, and very few senior female lawyers. Women lawyers were younger, and they were not accorded the same deference or respect that male lawyers received. We tried to make male lawyers, particularly older ones, aware of the need to treat people equally. As part of that effort, we issued the first *Handbook on Gender Equality*, a version of which is still in use.

We also addressed some domestic relations issues early on, but I can't remember the details of that. It's not an area in which I have ever practiced.

We wanted to make women not only accepted, but also comfortable. We started the "Ask Pat" column, which addressed issues women lawyers faced anecdotally, and offered advice on how to deal with those issues. The idea for the column arose from a "Saturday Night Live" skit that was popular at the time. And we chose the name "Pat" because it is gender neutral.

After the first few years, we prepared a report to the State Bar which outlined the progress we had made, but there still was more to do. Over time, the committee became less concerned with overt bias, and more concerned about managing issues that face women lawyers. The committee started to focus more on lifestyle



*"When I first came to Albuquerque, there were maybe a dozen female lawyers, and very few senior female lawyers. Women lawyers were younger, and they were not accorded the same deference or respect that male lawyers received."*

issues. Although I felt like this was an appropriate direction for the committee to take, I felt out of my element, and I stepped down from being a co-chair.

### Who was your first co-chair? Were you the only man on the Committee? Did that bother you?

I think my first co-chair was Marcia Wilson. I often was the only man who actively served on the Committee, but occasionally other men served on it. But the Committee has always been mostly women. That never bothered me.

### You have served on a lot of Bar committees. What's your main Bar activity now? What has been your favorite? Why have you devoted so much time to the Bar?

I very much enjoyed the time I spent on the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession. But I'm also very proud of the work I did as chair of the Advisory Opinions Committee. When I was made

chair of that committee, it was inactive, almost defunct. Its purpose is to provide advisory opinions on ethics issues. During my tenure, the committee became very active, and it's still a very productive committee. More recently, I was active in the Senior Lawyers Division. But in general, I'm trying to cut back so that I can spend more time traveling and being with my children and grandchildren.

I originally became active in the Bar to get to know people. When I first came to Albuquerque, there were about 300 lawyers in town. I knew most of them, at least by name, within my first year of practice. I've gotten great personal satisfaction out of my service to the Bar. I don't think it is as common now for young lawyers to become active in the Bar. I think that's just a lifestyle choice. But I've gotten to know

a lot of different lawyers throughout the state by being active in the Bar.

### Do you have any regrets—things you wish you would have done as a lawyer?

None. New Mexico is an enjoyable place to live and work. The Bar is very congenial. I've also liked the diversity of my practice. Young lawyers now tend to specialize early on. I grew up in an era when you took whatever came along. I liked that. I liked having a varied general practice in commercial litigation. And the firm has been great to me. I'm 80, and no one is pushing me out the door. I had planned to cut back on my practice more than a year ago, but then my wife died, and it didn't seem like a good idea to stay at home during that time. But now I'm ready to cut back.

### Do you have any advice for young lawyers, particularly women?

I'm not sure I am in a position to give advice. It seems to me that women are now comfortable in their profession as lawyers. Perhaps they may be in a position to advise male lawyers on how to combine active family and professional lives. ■

*Laura Fashing is the appellate chief at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Mexico. She has been a member of the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession since 1997.*

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## Antoinette Sedillo Lopez *continued from page 7*

The Enlace Comunitario model is well recognized for its success. In 2012, the State Bar' Committee on Women and the Legal Profession awarded its legal director Elizabeth Rourke the Justice Pamela B. Minzner Outstanding Advocacy for Women Award, and in 2013, the YWCA Middle Rio Grande Chapter honored Claudia Medina, Enlace's co-founder and executive director, with its Women To Be Reckoned With Award.

Sedillo Lopez relishes her work with the staff and clients of Enlace and helped to develop a grow-your-own approach to community development with an in-house day care for staff and several prevention initiatives. One such training is *promotoras*, where former Enlace clients move into leadership positions to help prevent domestic violence by working first with teens and now with men on this problem. Currently, Enlace is training staff to work with abusers to provide culturally appropriate counseling.

The UNM professor also is a member of several other community boards, including the Valley Improvement Association and the Southwest Women's Law Center, which also advocates on a variety of women's issues.

Sedillo Lopez is excited about her acceptance into UNM's Academic Leadership Academy, which promotes shared governance and academic leadership training. She is one of four fellows selected, and will have the opportunity to learn the day-to-day activities of the administration, participate in short- and long-term strategic discussions, and will be mentored by senior-level administration, including the president and provost. She looks forward to the training and opportunities the program will provide. Does this mean she wants to move into an administrative role at the law school? She smiled and said she wasn't sure, but added that the skills she will be learning are transferrable to all of her projects, inside and outside the law school.

We finished the interview by discussing something very different—the role art plays in her life. A native of Valencia County, Sedillo Lopez has had a lot of artists in her family, including her mother, but she never really considered herself to be an artist. That changed in her 40s when her artistic expression came bubbling to the surface, she said. Sedillo Lopez wrote her first poems while traveling through Mexico, and after those were published, she never looked back. While

she continues to write, she has moved on to explore other media, creating retablos and most recently bronze sculpture, which she loves. She is happy to have found her artistic presence and is excited by the opportunity to express herself in new ways.

I was impressed by Sedillo Lopez's career before I interviewed her, but afterward what struck me were her humility, her sense of collaboration and hope, and her constant desire to improve and learn. At one point during our interview, she wondered if her generation of women in the legal profession did not set expectations too high for women entering the profession now—expecting them to excel in all areas of life personally and professionally while still being pillars of their community. After leaving the interview, I wondered the same thing. Sedillo Lopez says that through supporting ourselves and each other, we can achieve personal success while still advancing the interests of those around us. She is a great example of how to make your passion your work and your work your passion, and women and minorities in New Mexico have benefited as a result. ■

*Louise K. Pocock is a native of Peñasco, N.M., and is a 2013 graduate of the University of New Mexico School of Law.*

# Janetta Hicks

First Female DA in Fifth Judicial District

By Dianna Luce

Janetta B. Hicks became the first female district attorney in the Fifth Judicial District on Jan. 1, 2009. A Roswell native, Hicks returned to Chaves County after leaving her position as a prosecutor in Las Cruces. She worked as children's court attorney for the state Children, Youth and Family Department until she ran for DA. Currently serving in her second term as DA, Hicks brought technology to the forefront of prosecutions in New Mexico.

## How would you describe the experience of running for office and becoming the first female district attorney in the Fifth Judicial District?

Anyone who is on the cusp of a history-making moment has to pause and think about what that means. I was told more than once that the people of southeastern New Mexico would not elect a female DA. They were wrong. The people of my district have proven that they are more interested in the abilities and qualifications of a candidate than her gender. That being said, I have to admit at times it has been challenging. Often when I attend work-related meetings, I am the only woman in the room.

*"I was told more than once that the people of southeastern New Mexico would not elect a female DA. They were wrong."*

## What were a few of your goals as DA?

The Fifth Judicial District is a very large, rural district. That fact presents a lot of challenges: management of four offices, distances between offices and courts, very limited resources, and difficulty recruiting and retaining attorneys. To meet those challenges, I implemented a number of innovations. These involved converting to a paperless prosecutor's office; standardizing forms with automatic document production; providing video conferencing for district-wide meetings, witness interviews and pre-prosecution diversion clients; moving attorneys and

secretaries into offices adjacent to one another; creating prosecution teams; and implementing a new domestic violence program.

## In your first term, your approach could be described as "doing more with less," which included the use of technology. What was your primary project?

The biggest project we undertook in my first term was becoming the first paperless DA's office in New Mexico. We were the first, but now the majority of DA offices around the state are paperless. I believe that becoming a paperless office is the future of all organizations, and attorneys are no exception. Paperless offered a number of advantages to our large, rural district. Because everything is electronic, we can leverage our resources. Employees can work on files simultaneously from anywhere that has network access. Files do not get misplaced! As a companion to our paperless office, we established a web-based disclosure. This made disclosure to defense counsel seamless, in near real-time, and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

## Your district faced budget cuts four years in a row, as did many others. What strategy did you implement to prevent the loss of employees and continue to prosecute crime effectively?

Due to the incredible downturn in the economy, we had a 12.5 percent cut within the first four years I took office. I had two budget cuts within the first 30 days. We quickly had to determine what we could do without. I went through all of our expenditures, line by line, and eliminated everything that I could. However, upwards of 95 percent of our budget is personnel. The amount you can cut from operating costs is limited. So, I pursued grants aggressively. Since I became DA, our office has received over a million dollars in grants. We still start each fiscal year in deficit. But the grant funds, specifically the Southwest Border Prosecution Initiative, have kept the lights on and the doors open during these difficult times. We still have a long way to recovery, but we are headed in the right direction.



## You partnered with law enforcement to begin a program that shared information regarding the location of registered sex offenders. What is OffenderWatch and how does it operate?

I partnered with the sheriffs of Eddy, Lea and Chaves counties to create the first district-wide OffenderWatch program in the nation. OffenderWatch is a sex offender notification and management program. My two favorite features are that you can register your home address and receive email notification if a sex offender moves into your neighborhood and that it ensures consistent management of sex offender registration. Before, if a sex offender moved from one county to another, law enforcement had no way of knowing to expect the offender to come in and register. Now, if a sex offender moves to another county, the database notifies the appropriate sheriff's office so they can do compliance checks and make sure the offender registers.

## The Bounce Back program is a statewide initiative operated by many district attorneys. Did you choose to continue this program in your district?

I continued the check enforcement program of my predecessor. During my term, we collected over a quarter of a million dollars in restitution for merchants in my district. When a merchant receives a bad check, they must notify the check writer and give them an opportunity to make it good. If that does not result in payment, we also attempt to collect. If those efforts fail, we prosecute the crime.

*continued on page 14*

# Dave Norvell

## Breaking New Ground in AG's Office

By Ann H. Washburn

Entering a courtroom today and finding a judge, the opposing counsel, or both to be female raises no eyebrows, though just a generation ago it would have. Women in the 1970s were just finding they not only could obtain the education to become licensed attorneys, but were finally being accepted into the workforce as attorneys, representing private clients and the government.

It took the elected officials' personal decisions to bring about changes in the face of New Mexico government legal representation. Before there was Patricia Madrid—elected the first woman to sit as a district court judge in New Mexico in 1978—and before the federal Equal Rights Amendment was ratified in New Mexico, one of the first elected officials to tackle workforce gender equality was David L. Norvell, state attorney general from 1971 to 1975.

Norvell hired four full-time female assistant attorneys general during his time in office: Anne K. Bingaman, Jane E. Pendleton, Jill Cooper, and Andrea Buzzard.

As the former Democratic representative in the state House from Clovis, and speaker of the House during his last term as representative, Norvell was used to working among female staff for legislators, but not a lot of legislators were female. "When I was in the Legislature, there were only one to two women in the House of 70 members. In the Senate, with 42 members, I don't recall any female members."

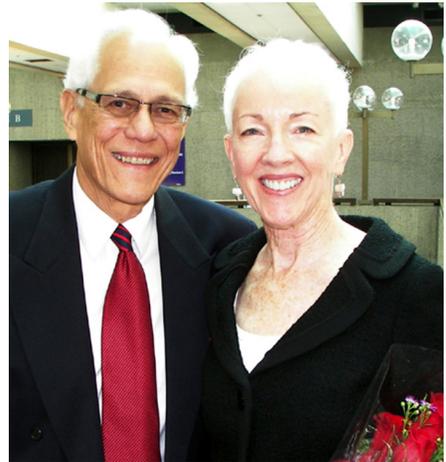
When Norvell took office as attorney general, it was not with a set plan to become a groundbreaking employer of women in the legal field. "I took office in 1971. I had no idea to do that. I really had no idea what kind of staff my predecessor had. I had worked with women at legislative counsel services when I was a legislator, but there was only one female lawyer in Clovis when I was a legislator. As an attorney, I had female staff, and the judges had female staff. The only females in our office were the secretaries at that time."

***Norvell hired four full-time female assistant attorneys general during his time in office: Anne K. Bingaman, Jane E. Pendleton, Jill Cooper, and Andrea Buzzard.***

Norvell quickly began to hire his legal team for the attorney general's office, but hiring women simply because of their gender was not his focus. "I don't think at that time I had any specific agenda to hire women, but [I intended] to hire the most qualified [attorneys] available, and they happened to be females."

Norvell recalls that he had a much smaller number of positions for attorneys on staff than are in the office now. "I looked at résumés for the most qualified attorney. We only had 12 staff attorneys when I was attorney general, so almost half the staff ended up female. Only having 12 attorneys for the staff, we did not have room for too many more, as some people stayed on from the previous administration. However, we did get a lot of applications and there were some men that applied that were not hired. The work schedules were the same for women as the men in my office. There may have been some random issues about child care that required them to take off, but in terms of adjusting their schedules, it did not happen."

Of the women hired by Norvell at the attorney general's office, Bingaman went into private practice before becoming an assistant law professor at the University of New Mexico in 1972. Cooper stayed with the office for eight years after she was hired in 1974, first as an assistant, and then as deputy attorney general. Later, she served as director of the Civil and Opinions Division. Buzzard began work as an assistant attorney general in 1973 and remained through six attorneys general until her retirement in 1998. She is again working at the attorney general's office. Pendleton was hired by Norvell and worked



*Dave Norvell with Rep. Gail Chasey*

as an assistant attorney general. She now lives in north Texas.

Hiring some of the first female assistant attorneys general was not the result of any political pressure. "To my knowledge, certainly not in my office; that was never an issue." There was not any change in culture inside the office when the female assistant attorneys general were hired, and that change in the workplace environment was not an issue. "When you considered our staff as a whole, we had a whole lot more women than we did men, about four to one women, and we had a lot more staff than we did lawyers."

He had no hesitation assigning cases to the female attorneys. "We generally rotated assignments as they came in. If there were any issues that related specifically to women, I don't remember them."

***"I don't think at that time I had any specific agenda to hire women, but [I intended] to hire the most qualified [attorneys] available, and they happened to be females."***

Pay for women in the office versus male attorneys was not an issue either, he said. "We did not set their salary; the personnel department had a schedule of what salaries would be. I was never involved in that process. I hired people, and based upon what personnel said they'd get paid, they got paid."

*continued on page 14*

# Roxanne Lara

## Championing Gender Equality

By Amber Baker

At first glance, one might discount Roxanne Lara, with her “Southern way” of practice and her seemingly slow-paced, small-town way of life. But when you get hit with her contagious enthusiasm, you can’t help but feel excited about the future of New Mexico. Lara’s zeal for New Mexico and its positive growth is extraordinary. Though she works with various organizations to promote change, an underlying theme resonates through her work: gender equality. Lara spends a significant amount of her time volunteering and advocating for gender equality, from mentoring local high school students, to actively participating in the national organization Vision 2020. And the real kicker: She loves it. Every minute she spends advocating for New Mexicans in local, statewide, and national arenas is described as “one more lucky day, hoping to make a difference.”

A graduate of New Mexico State University and Texas Tech’s law school, Lara has enjoyed her career as a New Mexico attorney. Initially an engineering major, Lara found that her real passion was in helping her community problem solve. She has found that her desire to advocate for others has only helped fuel her in community outreach.

Lara realized her goal of opening her own firm in 2005 in her hometown of Carlsbad. Her firm served the community as a general civil litigation practice. She enjoyed advocating for clients in various cases, including serving as the county’s Guardian ad Litem in abuse and neglect proceedings. Classifying this as her “legal profession stage” in her “trip around the sun,” she built a successful law practice.

Lara now exclusively provides services in family law, having recently limited her practice. “I found that through my community work, this was what was affecting people the most—from child custody to divorce to domestic violence—this is the place people need the most help. Yeah, people need help with reviewing contracts; it’s just that this [area of practice] gets to the heart of families. You can have a real impact on helping people in this area.”

Lara spreads her gusto over many causes and projects. She channels this enthusiasm and charm and serves on various boards in Carlsbad. She enjoys working on a local level as an American Association of University Women mentor and board member. She equally enjoys the time she spends as a delegate with Vision 2020: A National Women’s Project, which is a “national coalition of organizations and individuals united in their commitment to achieve women’s economic and social equality.”

As a former Eddy County Commissioner, Lara spent time working for community development and was honored as the Carlsbad Mayor’s Outstanding Citizen in 2012. She found that it was a natural progression for her to go from advocating for one case to advocating for many as a public servant. “I love doing this work more than anything. I far more enjoy this than anything else I have done. I am having the time of my life, meeting so many new people and working for the same goals. It’s fantastic.”

During the spring, Lara finished a heated campaign for New Mexico’s Democratic Party chair, coming in second to Sam Bregman. Politically, she is unsure of her next step. She says she is certainly looking and considering opportunities to have a greater impact on New Mexico. In the meantime, she will continue to work on issues that are important to her as a woman and as a New Mexican. Lara helped craft Carlsbad’s long-term plan, as co-chair of the committee dedicated to that project. Now she’s part of the implementation team. “That long-term plan was a citizen-based plan, and seeing its implementation is truly amazing. I am really honored to continue working with that project.”

Lara also plans to focus on her role with Vision 2020 and work to play a bigger role in the organization. She currently doesn’t have a specific project, but she is a national delegate. This means she works to advocate on a larger basis. “That is huge for me.” So many gender issues are addressed by Vision 2020 and Lara speaks enthusiastically about them all: voting issues, women in politics, and equal pay, to name a few. She will be planning and implementing Vision 2020’s Women in Politics and Leadership seminar this fall.



*Every minute she spends advocating for New Mexicans in local, statewide, and national arenas is described as “one more lucky day, hoping to make a difference.”*

“I really feel as though women attorneys are in such a strong, unique position to help women across the board,” she said. They can help not only those in the profession, but also those in the community. “We need more mentorship; we need to pave the way, turn around, and bring others with us. If we are going to get women in leadership positions, we need to help them, not cut them down for their dress color.” Lara finds that when we advocate for each other as women, we get the most positive results and outcomes. “This will make the difference about things that are happening at home—domestic violence, child abuse, financial independence—which I believe is going to help us change as a society. But we can’t empower if we don’t help,” she says.

Lara insists you call her by her nickname, Rocky, making it that much harder to say “no” to her. She has the uncanny knack for making the tough seem easy, and easily transitions you from non-believer to believer, to the worker bee, rolling up your sleeves and getting right to work with her. Rocky has her eye on the gender equality prize.

“There are some things that all of us agree on. Let’s work on those on a regular basis. We should be using our strengths to fight these causes,” she says. “And gender equality is one of these issues we can all agree needs our attention.” ■

*Amber Baker is an Albuquerque attorney who focuses her practice on children’s law and the issues that affect New Mexican families. She is an associate with Lopez Family Law.*

# Hon. Martha Vazquez

## N.M.'s First Female Federal District Court Judge

By Dayan M. Hochman

**You were born in California and studied law at the University of Notre Dame. How was it that you came to New Mexico?**

During my undergrad years, I had friends from New Mexico who always spoke so lovingly about it. One year, during our second-year summer of law school, my husband and I decided to come to New Mexico after hearing Gov. Apodaca speak at Notre Dame. The governor was a good friend of a priest we were very close to, and he introduced us after he was done speaking to our class. He told us to come see him when we got to New Mexico, but I was sure he would forget us.

When we arrived, we contacted every firm we could to find jobs. Not a single one responded to us. We rented a one-room apartment and went to go see the governor. He remembered us right away. He then picked up the phone and made a few calls ... and the rest is history! I ended up working for the Department of Human Services, and my husband got a job at the Jones Firm. It was that summer that I decided Santa Fe was home; I was never going back to California. When I graduated law school, I got a job at the public defender's office. I was assigned to Rio Arriba County. Everyone spoke Spanish, which was very welcoming for me. It was during those first few months that I knew that this is where I was meant to be.

**In 1993 you were chosen by President Clinton as the first female federal district court judge in New Mexico. How did it feel to break that barrier?**

Well, it was a long time ago. My life was so different then and my children were very young. So it was a huge change for me, one I could not even begin to imagine at the time! It was also a huge change in my children's lives, too. At first, when we judges had to spend long periods of time away from home, it was very hard on me and my kids.

I had come from private practice representing defendants or people that had been injured, so I was just awestruck [that I had been appointed]. I was incredibly aware of the power of the position and how it belongs to the position, and not me. I remember the first time I released someone. I asked the marshall, "What is going to happen now?" He looked at me with a quizzical look and said, "They're getting out. They're walking out and they get to go home." I was dumbfounded that this ordinary person could just sign this document and someone was uncuffed and set free.

**You are the mother of four and a federal judge. How do you achieve a work-life balance, and do you have any advice for other female attorneys trying to achieve the same thing?**

This is still the toughest thing for me. And I believe it is still a colossal challenge for all women who clearly want to have a very interesting and vibrant career, but still want to have children, too. Female attorneys who are mothers have to choose between having a social life and being involved with bar associations, such as the State Bar of New Mexico, the American Bar Association, or even going out to lunch with a girlfriend. It's very true what they say, women are extremely good at multitasking. I remember I used to spend my lunch hours running to the cleaners. Or I would have to run home to nurse my babies, or run errands and grocery shop. So, many of the choices you end up having to make end up culminating in a life that revolves only around your work and your children.

As a mother you are willing to make these choices, but they are not without repercussions on your career. You just hope that there will be other opportunities available when your children aren't so young. What I always end up telling my law clerks is that what's important is that we be respected as lawyers and as moms. I feel that flexibility in the workplace is crucial for parents. We live in an age now when we are always connected. I feel very strongly that if someone has a sick child at home, they need to stay at home where they are needed. It is this type of flexibility



*"... what's important is that we be respected as lawyers and as moms. I feel that flexibility in the workplace is crucial for parents."*

that allows all of us to be better parents and lawyers, just so that we are not so consumed by the stress of it all.

In sum, it was extremely difficult for me. And I can't say that I did it perfectly. We need our workplaces and firms to be more family-friendly. My clerks are very good at what they do. I have no concerns as to their productivity or if they are taking advantage of being able to work from home. We are all professionals. Who doesn't want to keep a job that allows you to work from home when your child needs you? Although I think that we are moving in the right direction, we still aren't getting there fast enough.

**You were chief judge of the New Mexico Federal District Court from 2003 until 2010. What was your experience, and would you ever like to do it again?**

It was extremely time-consuming, yet exhilarating. It is very difficult to do while handling your caseload because you have the responsibility of running the district—meaning you have to deal with financial matters and personnel matters, too. At the time when I was chief we had some serious budget constraints. Unlike now, we also had an exploding caseload and new border patrol initiatives that were impacting our jails by overcrowding

them. While we were building the new courthouse [in Las Cruces], we had significant problems finding places for all of the people taken into custody by immigration and customs agents.

Another significant issue we had was the lack of sufficient halfway housing availability in Indian country. ... When you have such a diverse district like New Mexico, you have to be responsive to many different types of needs. It requires a lot of travelling across the state because you want to get to know the different needs of the district. We ended up implementing a lot of specialized programs to address the special needs of prisoners. For instance, we would perform evaluations before

*“At first, when we judges had to spend long periods of time away from home, it was very hard on me and my kids.”*

they were released from jail so that we could connect them with resources and individuals that could help them cope with whatever problems or special needs they had, whether it was physical or mental illness, or even drug dependency.

Chief judges are responsible for taking care of the financial, resources[-related]

and “people” points of view, which is the part that I loved the most because I had previous experience as a public defender and defense attorney. I feel like my best contribution was the impact that I had on the treatment of prisoners and how we could become more proactive for them with the programs we had in place. Although I was sad to let it go, I was happy to hand the reins over to someone else, so that they could contribute their own creative juices to the position. ■

*Dayan M. Hochman is an associate attorney at Hinkle, Hensley, Shanor & Martin LLP in Santa Fe. She practices in the environmental law, employment and medical malpractice groups at her firm.*

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## Janetta Hicks *continued from page 10*

However, the vast majority of people settle the debt before we get to that stage.

**Domestic violence cases are often difficult to prosecute and you worked to develop a program without additional funding to help stop the cycle of violence. What is the Violence Prevention Program?**

Domestic violence is a significant and difficult problem to address. From a prosecutor’s standpoint, we often have an unwilling victim who was the only witness

to the crime. This makes these cases very difficult to prosecute. However, if we fail to prosecute and the violence continues, it can escalate to homicide. Our primary goal is to disrupt the cycle of abuse with intervention aimed at strengthening the family in the absence of violence. To that end, we implemented the Violence Prevention Program. A defendant is accepted into VPP when he or she is a first offender and the victim agrees [to allow the offender into VPP rather than being sent to jail]. The defendant undergoes

treatment for a minimum of a year, in addition to other conditions. If he or she successfully completes VPP, the charges are dismissed. Although the program is still in its early days, I am happy to report we have experienced success. ■

*Dianna Luce is the chief deputy district attorney for the Fifth Judicial District Attorney’s Office in Lea County. She is a 1996 graduate of UNM School of Law and has worked in private practice, served as a magistrate judge, and currently serves as a prosecutor.*

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## David Norvell *continued from page 11*

Although the news during the 1970s covered hot debates and political clashes about whether it was right to hire women in historically male positions, Norvell says he was not concerned that hiring female assistant attorneys general might affect his political support base.

As for the current status of gender equality in the legal field, “I think we are still working at it, but I think it’s increasing rapidly. There are sure a lot more women attorneys

in Albuquerque and New Mexico now than when I got here. And, the same in the legislative process. I was shocked at the time I was there (and still am shocked) that there were so few women in the Legislature. And it was not that they were getting beat, it is that they were not running. In the Legislature, there were about 30 to 35 percent women in the last session, more in the House than in the Senate.”

Practicing law in Albuquerque these days, Norvell looks back at his time as attorney general and hiring female attorneys: “They were excellent at what they did. They did an outstanding job. They were very bright, all of them were.” ■

*Ann H. Washburn is an attorney with the law firm of George “Dave” Giddens, P.C., in Albuquerque, and has been a member of the Committee on Women and the Legal Profession since 2002.*

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