

Celebrating Queen's Bench's 75th Anniversary

By Trudy Allen

Queen's Bench (QB) is the Multnomah County chapter of Oregon Women Lawyers (OWLS) but it predates OWLS by over forty years. We know that Queen's Bench started in 1948, but the actual date is lost in the mists of time. From the research I've done, I've narrowed it down pretty closely to March 1948. QB has been meeting regularly ever since. In March 2023, we started celebrating our 75th anniversary.

Predecessor Organizations:

To understand how Queen's Bench got started, it helps to know more of the background before 1948.

And this brings me to the fact that there was another significant anniversary to note in March 2003: a 100th anniversary! The first organization in Oregon that was open to all women lawyers was formed in March 1923: the "Women Lawyers Association of Oregon." Its first president was Nettie Mae Rankin. It had a constitution, and its mission was:

"the advancement of comradeship and good fellowship among women members of the legal profession."

By the late 1930s, dissension arose in this group. There was serious disagreement among the members over whether to join the National Association of Women Lawyers ("NAWL" – which is still in existence). Some said that uniting nationally would strengthen the position of women lawyers. Others argued that -- when, as in Oregon, women lawyers were accepted as members of bar associations (which was not the case in all states), it would be folly to affiliate with a *separate* women's bar organization. Unfortunately, in the late 1930s, the Women Lawyers Association of Oregon ended up disbanding over the dissension.

There were two other organizations for women lawyers – and women law students – but they were not open to all.

One was a chapter of Kappa Beta Pi, the first legal sorority in the US, founded in 1908.

The second one was Phi Delta Delta, a "women's international legal fraternity." (It was called a "fraternity" even though it was for women.) It was founded in 1911 at the University of Southern California's law school.

Chapters were based at law schools, but women graduates were also members. There were two chapters in Oregon:

the Delta Chapter, founded in 1914 at the U of O Law School, and

the Xi Chapter, founded in 1922 at what was then Northwestern College of Law and is now Lewis

& Clark Law School.

There were a number of women in Oregon who participated -- and some were active in Phi Delta Delta at the national level.

Founding of Queen's Bench:

By the late 1940s there had not been any association that was open to *all* women lawyers in Oregon for nearly ten years. So, it was very exciting in 1948 when Cecelia Gallagher Galey initiated the reinstatement of a women lawyers' association. She invited as many women lawyers as she could find to a dinner for Gladys Everett (admitted to practice law in 1923), to welcome her back to Oregon from China, where she had served in 1946 and '47 as a regional welfare officer for the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. Gladys was the keynote speaker at this dinner, which was held in the Crystal Ballroom at the Benson Hotel. Helen Althaus, one of the founding Queen's Bench members, described this first meeting:

"It was an exciting and stimulating evening. The consensus was to form an association and to continue meeting regularly – at least monthly. But the old controversy arose. The biggest problem appeared to be agreement on the name."

Those against affiliation with NAWL opposed any name that would suggest such affiliation, so that eliminated the words "women" and "lawyers". Helen knew of the women lawyers' group in San Francisco (formed in 1921) that was called Queen's Bench. When she mentioned that, the name was happily received. Initially, it was called "Queen's Bench of Oregon," and eventually "of Oregon" was dropped. The name "Queen's Bench" was inspired by the name of the court in England, which is called either "Queen's Bench" or "King's Bench", depending on the gender of the

current monarch. Our Queen's Bench was founded when England had a king, and it doesn't follow that protocol; *instead* it emphasizes the female gender.

There were at least 24 founding members of Queen's Bench. They adopted a constitution and had officers but did not incorporate.

Monthly Meetings:

In the first couple decades, QB had a variety of times and patterns for meeting. Initially, they usually had dinners. Then they had lunches. For a while, they met monthly on Fridays – and, for a little while, they even met weekly on Thursdays. It was in July 1972, that they decided to start meeting for lunch on the second Tuesday of each month, and that tradition has continued ever since.

Very luckily for me, in 1982 when I attended my first Queen's Bench meeting, Queen's Bench was in a transition period, when many of the early members were still attending – and my generation had started to attend in growing numbers.

Among the older women still attending QB in the 1980s were:

Helen Althaus, President in 1973. In 1947, Helen was the first woman to serve as a law clerk to a judge in Oregon, and in 1953, she was the first woman associate at what is now Miller Nash. She was the 1994 winner of OWLS' Betty Roberts Award. And there is a park named for her in Troutdale!

Neva Elliott, who was one of the very few women litigators in the '30s, '40s and 50s. She became a pro tem municipal judge in 1959, then a pro tem Multnomah County judge, from 1967 to the late '80s. She was still coming to Queen's Bench as late as 1999.

Dorothy Fones, President in 1964; Secretary in 1948, 1963 and for more than 10 years from the '70s through 1988. For many years, she used to call every woman on her phone list every month to remind them to come to the Queen's Bench meeting.

Gladys Everett. The other older women would point to Gladys and say, reverently: "She was Dorothy McCullough Lee's law partner!" Dorothy McCullough Lee became the first woman Mayor of Portland in 1949, a major "first" for women. As I learned later, both Dorothy and Gladys had achieved *major* accomplishments as far back as the '20s and '30's. Dorothy was the first woman lawyer elected to the Oregon Legislature (to the House in 1928 – and then to the Oregon Senate in 1932). Gladys was the first woman municipal judge (pro tem) in Portland in 1935. Dorothy and Gladys started the first all-women law firm in Oregon in 1931.

Our Mission:

Helen Althaus was the original historian of Queen's Bench. In 1991, she gave Queen's Bench a wealth of information and documents about our history, including a copy of our original constitution. The founding members had put a lot of thought into describing their purpose:

"THE PROMOTION OF PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT, COMRADESHIP, AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP AMONG WOMEN MEMBERS OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION."

I was on the Executive Committee when we incorporated Queen's Bench as a non-profit corporation in January, 1988, and we had not seen this early writing, but we carried the same understanding of the mission, which had been passed down through the Queen's Bench culture. We drafted our mission, coincidentally using some of the same words as the original:

"THE MISSION IS TO PROMOTE THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION."

The mission statement has been restated by the Board at least a couple times, to bring forward the original mission. Our current website states that the mission is to:

"PROMOTE THE PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN AND UNDER-REPRESENTED POPULATIONS, CAMARADERIE AND GOOD FELLOWSHIP IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND IN THE COMMUNITY."

Visibility of Women Lawyers:

Queen's Bench originally included all the women attorneys in the state as its members. It had an annual breakfast meeting at the Oregon State Bar Convention. For some years the men at the bar convention had put on a skit at what was called the "tent show." At the 1953 Bar convention, Queen's Bench put on a skit. It really opened peoples' eyes -- and a lot were surprised to find that there were at least *twelve* women lawyers on stage at one time! They would have been even more surprised if they had realized how many women had been admitted to the Oregon bar by that time: 180! 59 of those women had been active in Queen's Bench and/or its predecessor women lawyer organizations.

Statewide Outreach:

Queen's Bench continued this traditional annual get-together at the OSB convention, with Lane County Women Lawyers and the women lawyers from Salem -- after those groups were formed in the 1970s. At the joint breakfast at the 1988 bar convention, the decision was made to form Oregon Women Lawyers as a truly statewide organization. Thus, Queen's Bench was one of the sponsors of the first meeting of Oregon Women Lawyers.

OWLS was incorporated in 1989, and Queen's Bench became its first chapter in 1990. There was no requirement in 1990 for anyone coming to Queen's Bench to be a member of OWLS (and it's still true now). We're a valuable forum for lawyers -- including OWLS members -- and mainly women, but including men -- to meet frequently to network, to enjoy each other's company and to exchange ideas and learn from each other.

Monthly Luncheon Speakers and themes:

Prior to 1988, QB had speakers at its monthly luncheons only rarely. In one example, very early on in June 1948, the subject was "The uniform marriage & divorce laws." Since 1988, we've had a speaker at Queen's Bench meetings almost every month. We had a theme (for the first few years) of featuring successful women in leadership roles. We had such prominent women leaders as Norma Paulus (who had been the first woman Secretary of State of Oregon). -- She spoke in 1989 when she was a board member of NW Power Planning Council, -- and then in 1993, in her role as State Superintendent of Education, -- and later in 2001 and 2007.

After this, we had a variety of speakers for many years, with no particular theme. Then, beginning in 2014, we started having annual themes, such as:

- Authentic communication (2014);
- "WE CAN DO MORE" -- Coming together to help those who are struggling (2016);
- Made in Oregon: Home-grown Issues and Strategies for Success (2017);
- We are Oregon -- An Intersectional Lens (2018);
- Difficult Decisions (2020);
- Big Ideas (2022); and
- Practicing Inclusivity (2023) -- a particularly fitting theme for our anniversary celebration.

When I started coming to Queen's Bench in June 1982 (right after I graduated from Lewis & Clark Law), I was immediately welcomed -- as I believe all new attendees were. Anyone who attended was automatically deemed to be a member. Dues were collected, but they were optional. From my perspective, Queen's Bench has *always* practiced inclusivity.

In addition to Norma Paulus, we've had several recurring speakers:

Most notably: Kate Brown, who in 1991, as a lobbyist for the Women's Rights Coalition, gave a legislative update. She continued to give legislative updates in 1993, 1995 and 2001, when she was serving in the legislature. She also spoke in 2000 and 2006.

Hon. Ellen Rosenblum was a speaker in 1991, 2002 and 2012 -- and in 2009, as I'll mention below. Of course, you know her as our current Attorney General of Oregon, the first woman in that role.

Hon. Cheryl Albrecht, a former QB board member, has been a speaker 4 times.

We've had several other judges as speakers, including:

Hon. Susan Graber, in 1989 when she was on the Oregon Court of Appeals. Later she was the second woman on the Oregon Supreme Court and then the first woman judge from Oregon to serve on the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals;

Hon. Susan Leeson, in 1993 when she had just joined the Oregon Court of Appeals;
Hon. Janice Stewart, the first woman U.S. Magistrate in Oregon; and
-- of course, the many woman-judge keynote speakers at the annual holiday luncheons, -- including Hon. Ellen Rosenblum in 2009, when she was on the Oregon Court of Appeals. She has been a staunch supporter of Queen's Bench ever since she started coming to our meetings in the late '70s. (And before that, in 1976, she was a founding member of Lane County Women Lawyers.)

Venues:

We've met at a variety of locations over the years, including the International Club at the Hilton Hotel, the Georgian Room at what was the Meier & Frank department store, the auditorium at Standard Insurance Center, the Governor Hotel (now the Sentinel Hotel), the Hatfield (federal) courthouse, and now the new, beautiful Multnomah County Courthouse.

Holiday Luncheons:

QB's tradition of honoring women judges started about 1988 with a cocktail party near the holidays. The first holiday *luncheon* honoring judges was in December 1990. These luncheons have always been our biggest events and were held for years at the Embassy Suites Hotel, before moving to the Sentinel Hotel.

Welcoming New Admittees:

Welcoming new women lawyers has been a long-standing QB tradition. In the early 1970s, Helen Althaus was the chair of the QB committee on new members and she would send hand-written invitations to each new woman OSB admittee. In 1972 there were 11, and in 1973 there were 27! After that she stopped writing personal letters and had type-written invitations duplicated. By 1975, there were nearly 50, and in 1977, over 70 new women!

On and off in subsequent years, we sent notices to new admittees, inviting them to come to QB. From 2003 through 2016 and once again in 2021, we've had annual welcoming luncheons for new admittees. At the first one, in November 2003, the speaker was the Hon. Betty Roberts, the first woman on the Oregon Court of Appeals (1977) -- and then the first woman on the Oregon Supreme Court (1982).

Networking:

In addition to the monthly lunches, we've had other kinds of gatherings over the years. For instance, in the '90s, we had a number of networking events with other women's professional groups, such as accountants, doctors (in 1989 and 1990), architects (in 1991) and entrepreneurs (in 1995). And I've seen many instances where our networking among ourselves has paid off, with work referrals and other types of benefits -- both professional and social. The power of our support for one another grows exponentially!

We've had other gatherings, including summer picnics, informal social luncheons, and "Bridge of the Goddesses" runs. Starting in 2005, for most years (until COVID), we had annual mixers with law students, usually as afternoon receptions at Lewis & Clark. All of these are not only great networking opportunities -- but a powerful way to practice inclusivity, to bond with each other and to foster a strong sense of belonging.

History Projects -- and Members' Achievements:

The Calendar:

For Queen's Bench's 50th anniversary celebration, we published a commemorative 1998 calendar, featuring 16 of the early members of Queen's Bench. One of the things the calendar shows is how many of these QB members were pioneer women in the Oregon legal community -- with significant accomplishments. In addition to the women I've noted above, some of the Queen's Bench members featured in the calendar were:

Hon. Mary Jane Spurlin, the first woman appointed to serve as a judge in Oregon (Multnomah County District Court, in 1926);

Hon. Jean Lewis, the first woman circuit court judge in Oregon (Multnomah County, in 1961);

Marian Rushing, the first woman City Attorney in Portland (in 1968); and

Manche Langley, -- the much-loved “matriarch,” who had been admitted to practice in 1909 and was still vigorously practicing law when she died in 1963, one month short of her 80th birthday.

Scholarship:

A *lot* needs to be said about Manche Langley: She was the 17th woman to be admitted to practice in Oregon. From 1933 to 1963 she worked (on and off) as a deputy district attorney for Multnomah County, ending up as chief deputy of the domestic relations department. She was very charismatic, energetic and witty -- and was a revered mentor to many of the younger women lawyers. Helen Althaus said: “Perhaps most of all, Manche was a humanitarian. Despite her efforts at anonymity, Manche’s ever-impulsive, unselfish generosity to those in need became legendary in her lifetime.”

When Manche died, Queen’s Bench started a collection of money, with the goal of creating a scholarship in her memory. There were challenges, since the funding needed to be over \$50,000, in order to have a scholarship named for a person. It took over 30 years, but in the late 1990s – with the addition of significant donations from two Queen’s Bench members, Helen Althaus and Jean King, – a scholarship finally was established at Lewis & Clark Law School in Manche Langley’s name. It is still awarded there. I’ve met with several of the recipients, told them about Queen’s Bench and invited them to attend. It is Queen’s Bench’s scholarship, and I encourage all of you to donate to it to help enhance its endowment. We initially sold the 50th anniversary calendar as a fundraiser for the Manche Langley Scholarship, and if you’d like to buy a calendar for this purpose, please let me know.

Significant Achievements:

Moving ahead to more-recent times, there are many additional notable women who’ve been involved in Queen’s Bench -- who have had significant career achievements, including the following:

Hon. Merri Souther Wyatt, president of Queen’s Bench in 1989; she was a Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge from 1994 to 2017.

Kate Brown, secretary of Queen’s Bench in 1990; she was a Majority Leader of the Oregon Senate, then Secretary of State, and, of course, our recent Governor – the first woman lawyer Governor in Oregon.

Hon. Adrienne Nelson, president of Queen’s Bench in 2002; she became the second Black woman judge in Oregon, the first Black on an appellate court in Oregon – as a Justice on the Supreme Court, -- and most recently the first Black woman to serve on Oregon’s U.S. District Court. She was the recipient of OWLS’ Mercedes Deiz Award in 2003.

Hon. Jean Maurer, a QB board member in 2013. She was on the Multnomah County bench from 1996 – 2016 and in 2007 became the first woman presiding judge of the Multnomah County Circuit Court. In 2004, she was the president of the Oregon Circuit Court Judges Association.

Hon. Cheryl Albrecht, a QB board member for three years (2003 – 2005). She has been on the Multnomah County Circuit Court bench since 2006 and is now the Chief Criminal Judge.

Hon. Stacie Beckerman, president of Queen’s Bench in 2016. In 2015, she became a Magistrate Judge for Oregon’s U.S. District Court.

Hon. Kate von Ter Stegge, president of QB in 2017. She was an OSB Board of Governors member and since 2017 has been a Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge.

Hon. Rima Ghandour, president of Queen’s Bench in 2018. She was the President of the MBA in 2018-19 and has received several awards, including the MBA Professionalism Award in 2021 and the MBA Diversity Award in 2023. She assumed the Multnomah County Circuit Court bench in January 2023.

Hon. Beth Allen, president of QB in 2021. She became a Multnomah County Circuit Court judge in 2013.

Hon. Adrian Brown, who was on the QB board from 2018 through 2019 and was Secretary in 2019. She joined the Multnomah County Circuit Court in 2021.

And Hon. Morgan Wren Long has been on the QB board since 2021 and has graciously hosted our luncheons in her Multnomah County Circuit courtroom since the fall of 2022.

The History Wall:

In 2004, it was the QB 50th anniversary calendar that inspired Oregon State Bar Executive Director Karen Garst to invite Queen’s Bench to compile a set of photos of “several” women to frame and hang in what was originally going to be a women’s history room at the OSB center. We formed the Queen’s Bench Historical Perspectives Committee, consisting of me (as chair), Diane Rynerson, Nanci Klinger (2003 QB President), Nicole

Rhoades (a QB board member) and Kim Kaminski (2004 QB President). The project grew into something far beyond what was first envisioned, -- into the display that is now three panels totaling 24 feet long that hangs in the hallway of the OSB office just down from the main reception area. If you've seen it there, you'll have seen that it credits "Oregon Women Lawyers" for the work. It *specifically* was a Queen's Bench project.

It has a timeline of 101 items on both the state and national levels, -- plus 46 photos -- and much more. It tells an inspiring story of many women who have pioneered the way for women lawyers in Oregon, and of how women in Oregon have often been ahead of trends across the country to gain rights and expand opportunities for women.

The project to create the display was a great collaboration of energetic and enthusiastic women. It took three years. When we completed it in 2007, we had an event to launch it that was attended by many significant pioneers, such as Betty Roberts, Susan Graber, Norma Paulus and Noreen Saltveit McGraw, who in 1957 became the first woman judge in southern Oregon, as a municipal court judge for Medford. It's one of many things of which Queen's Bench can be proud!

The OWLS Foundation has a number of copies of a poster, showing the three panels of the wall display. If you'd like to purchase a poster, please let me know. It's a great way to support the Foundation! And by hanging it in your office, you can increase the visibility of our proud heritage!

We have a *rich heritage* that we have inherited from many remarkable women. It's worth celebrating that we have had the ability to pass it on to each new generation in a way that still has meaning for all of us.

I believe this year's theme of practicing inclusivity is at the heart of Queen's Bench. Our founding members had the wisdom and foresight to institute a strong foundation:

- of welcoming new members into the profession and to our meetings,
- of having a supportive and inclusive forum for networking -- and finding friends -- among women, and
- with a mission to advance the position of women and the under-represented in the legal profession.

These goals are as valid as ever -- 75 years later -- which shows how visionary our predecessors were! We're proud of our strong and enduring tradition. *Let's keep it going!*

Trudy Allen has been a member of Queen's Bench since 1982. She was president twice, in 1986 and 1991. She was on the board of Queen's Bench for 11 years, from 1988 through 1998. In the 1990s and 2000s, she chaired the Queen's Bench Historical Perspectives Committee. In the 1990s, she was the OWLS historian for five years. Since 1999, she has been on the board of the OWLS Foundation, as its historian, and since 2014 also as its secretary. She is retired from the practice of law.

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