



“There shall never be another season of silence until women have the same rights men have on this green earth.” Susan B. Anthony

One Hundred Years of Voting. One hundred years ago, women throughout this country sought to right a wrong. Half of the population of the United States had no say in the governance of this country. They sought the fundamental right to vote. And because they had the courage to defy the conventions of their day, we live in a very different world in 2020 than in 1920. The movement was not perfect, it did not include black women, who were in fact shunned from the movement. It did not correct the systemic barricades to voting that black Americans suffered. But it corrected a wrong for a large segment of the population. It was a start, it showed that it could be done. Change could happen.

Some of us were inspired by these brave women, and some of us were inspired by women closer to our hearts. Since the beginning of 2020, we have been collecting “**Who inspired you?**” essays from the women judges of Illinois. Although we could not gather together to celebrate this moment in history, we wanted to share the inspiration. The document attached provides a searchable index for the essays. Each and every one is inspirational. Enjoy!

Until we can gather again, be safe.

All the Best,

Eileen O’Neill Burke, 2d Vice-President, Illinois Judges Association

Judges Essays

(to jump to essay, click on Judges name)

	LAST	FIRST	CIRCUIT
1.	Burke	Anne M.	Il Supreme
2.	Theis	Mary Jane	Il Supreme
3.	Garman	Rita	Il Supreme
4.	Pucinski	Aurelia	Appellate – 1
5.	Burke	Eileen O’Neill	Appellate – 1

6.	Mikva	Mary Lane	Appellate - 1
7.	Cunningham	Joy	Appellate - 1
8.	Connors	Maureen	Appellate - 1
9.	McBride	Margaret Stanton	Appellate - 1
10.	Schostok	Mary S.	Appellate - 2
11.	Zenoff	Kathryn	Appellate - 2
12.	Jorgensen	Ann	Appellate - 2
13.	McDade	Mary	Appellate - 3
14.	O'Brien	Mary Kay	Appellate - 3
15.	Wright	Vicki	Appellate - 3
16.	Cates	Judy	Appellate - 5
17.	Gott	Amanda	1
18.	Weber	Jo Beth	2
19.	Fahey	Nancy	5
20.	Wall	Karen	5
21.	Ascher	Jennifer	7
22.	Troemper	April	7
23.	Wellborn	Debra	8
24.	Goodman	Carmen	12
25.	Senneff	Trish	14
26.	Thompson	Linnea	14
27.	Pentuic	Carol	14
28.	Friel-Draper	Theresa	15
29.	Ackert	Jacqueline	15
30.	O'Toole	Monique	18
31.	O'Malley	Veronica	19

32.	Christensen	Janelle	19
33.	Vorderstrasse	Donna Jo	19
34.	Winter	Diane	19
35.	Rochford	Liz	19
36.	Davis	Tiffany	22
37.	Johnson	Jennifer	22
38.	Dickler	Grace	Cook
39.	Gamrath	Celia	Cook
40.	Van Tine	Rena	Cook
41.	Brosnahan	Janet	Cook
42.	Marsalek	Diann	Cook
43.	Sheahan	Patricia O'Brien	Cook
44.	Atcherson	Sophia	Cook
45.	D'Souza	Geraldine	Cook
46.	Perkins	Marian	Cook
47.	Mojica	Lisette	Cook
48.	McWilliams	Clare	Cook
49.	Ross	Dominique	Cook
50.	Sutker-Dermer	Shelly	Cook
51.	Walsh	Neera	Cook
52.	Santiago	Beatriz	Cook
53.	Cerone-Marisie	Jill	Cook
54.	Rosenberg	Geri Pinzur	Cook
55.	Ball Reed	Patrice	Cook
56.	Daly	Colleen Reardon	Cook
57.	Hubbard	Arnette	Cook

58.	Schneider	Catherine	Cook
59.	Hannon	Maureen O'Donoghue	Cook
60.	Alonso	Amee	Cook
61.	Kipperman	Carol	Cook
62.	Hamilton	Carrie	Cook
63.	Steffen	Ketki	Cook
64.	Quish	Clare	Cook
65.	Payne	Jennifer	Cook
66.	Clay-Herron	LaGuina	Cook
67.	Ingram	Cheyrl	Cook
68.	Goldish	Megan	Cook
69.	Myerson	Pamela McLean	Cook
70.	Johnson	Sharon Oden	Cook
71.	Walker	Debra	Cook
72.	Mandeltort	Ellen Beth	Cook
73.	Durkin	Melissa	Cook
74.	Kubalanza	Joan	Cook
75.	Golden	Jean	Cook
76.	Miller	Stephanie	Cook
77.	O'Malley	Karen	Cook
78.	Maloney Laytin	Kerrie	Cook
79.	Edidin	Lauren	Cook
80.	Trew	Mary S.	Cook
81.	Ogarek	Margaret	Cook
82.	O'Brien	Joan	Cook
83.	Aguillar	Carmen	Cook

84.	Burke	Kathleen	Cook
85.	Lefstein	Lori	Retired (14)
86.	Eckert	Annette	Retired (20)
87.	Waites	Nancy	Retired (19)
88.	Crowder	Barb	Retired (3)
89.	Pope	M. Carol	Retired (App4)
90.	Shields	Karen	Retired (cook)
91.	Sheehan	Colleen	Retired (cook)
92.	Robb	Elizabeth	Retired (11)
93.	Waller	Jane	Retired (Lake)
94.	Devane	Sheila	Retired (Cook)
95.	Novak	Rita	Retired (Cook)

Essay Letters for 100th Anniversary

I have been fortunate to have had many mentors throughout my lifetime – both women and men – who, by sharing their time and wisdom, inspired and encouraged me to do more and be more than I thought I could. My first mentor was my high school guidance counselor, Sister Henrietta. I have never forgotten her advice: “Follow your heart. Do what you love.” It has always steered me in choosing the right pathway. What I have learned over the years – and what I tell others when mentoring them – can be summed up this way: ‘If it is to be, it is up to me.’

Anne M. Burke, IL Supreme Court

How fortunate we all are to have so many heroines who came before us... mothers, aunts, teachers, colleagues. And then sometimes, a younger woman comes along. Judge Jean Prendergast was someone like that in my life.

Jean’s intelligence was clear to everyone who worked with her including law partners, opposing counsel, judges and peers. I saw her remarkable legal ability first-hand during the years she was my clerk on the Appellate Court. When Justice Mary Ann McMorrow told me that she was thinking about hiring Jean, she asked if Jean Prendergast was ready for the Supreme Court. I knew she meant as a clerk, but my first reaction was “not quite, she’s only 26 years old.”

After Jean left Justice McMorrow's chambers, she quickly became one of the top appellate lawyers in Illinois. Young, petite, she was a powerhouse arguing many times before the Illinois Supreme Court. Her colleagues elevated her to President of the Appellate Lawyers Association. She joined the judiciary in 2010 and very quickly became a superstar on the bench.

She loved the law, but she loved her family even more. When she told me she was expecting her first child, she was very concerned how she could balance her high-pressure practice with a new baby. Then less than a year later she called again and said, "Oh, Judge, this time it's twins!" I knew that if anyone could balance three children under three years old and a law practice, it was Jean Prendergast. When she told the managing partner of her firm that she needed to take an extended leave, he recommended the firm make her a partner. He said she was just too irreplaceable.

When the terrifying diagnosis of acute myoid leukemia came, she handled it with the same grace and dignity – and yes humor – she brought to her work and her family. Knowledgeable about the disease, laughing at the absurdities of the treatments, courageous until the end.

On my desk, I keep a picture of Jeanne D'Arc, the warrior saint. Jean Prendergast's spirit continues to inspire me.



Justice Mary Jane Theis, IL Supreme Court

In thinking of women who have inspired me, I would be hard-pressed to come up with a greater inspiration than Mary Ann McMorrow. She was a member of the Sandra Day O'Connor generation—women who overcame barriers to gain admission to law school and who broke glass ceilings every step of the way. Beginning her career as the only woman in her law school graduating class, her career was a series of firsts—the first woman felony prosecutor in Cook County, the first woman chair of the Executive Committee of the Appellate Court, and the first woman Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court. When I was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 2001, after a career of always being the “first woman” in my part of the state, I was finally greeted by a female colleague. I recall feeling a sense of great relief—that neither of us was any longer an oddity. I was proud to be a member of the court when, in 2002, Justice McMorrow became the first woman to head a branch of state government.

Justice McMorrow was not only a wise and thoughtful jurist, she was a gracious and kind human being. She proved to be an inspiration not only to young women in the profession, but to all lawyers who admired her for her wisdom and character. One of the great honors of my life was that I not only served with one of my heroes as a colleague, but I also had the great honor of becoming her friend.

Rita B. Garman Justice, Illinois Supreme Court

Justice Garman was appointed Associate Circuit Judge for the Fifth Judicial Circuit in 1974. After twelve years in that position, she was elected Circuit Judge, and from 1987 to 1995, she was the Presiding Judge of Vermilion County. She was assigned in 1995 and elected in 1996 to the Fourth District Appellate Court. She was appointed to the Illinois Supreme Court in 2001 and elected in 2002. In 2012, she was retained for a second term. She served as Chief Justice from 2013 to 2016. She is presently the second-longest-serving judge and the longest-serving female judge in Illinois.

MY INSPIRATION, MY MOTHER

My hard work ethic, my desire to excel and my desire for success is due to my mother, Carmela Seminara.

My mother was 1st generation Italian, born in Hillsville, PA a small town which was made up of Italian immigrants. Her first language was Italian, and learning English was done in grade school. She was from a large family, and the love of family was deeply engrained in her, and in me by her.

When she was in the 10th grade her father became very ill, and my mother was required to stay home and care for him. Her formal education ended then and there. My mother was extremely bright, and this story always brought me sadness. I always said, "My mother would have been a successful woman in today's society." Unfortunately, she was born in a different era, and in an extremely underprivileged family.

During my childhood and teen years I always pitied my mother for not having the opportunities that were provided to so many others. Her married life was extremely difficult as well, raising 6 children (I am number 5), always cooking, cleaning and was married to an Italian Immigrant, a shoemaker, who had certain expectations from a wife. Yet, she never complained. What she did most was brag – brag about her children and how wonderful they were. We would always hear her on the phone, bragging, and we would say, "Mom, stop bragging!" She would laugh. (She never had a driver's license, so the phone was her only method of communication with the outside world).

My mother loved to read, and at night after everyone was down she would read books, usually one book every few days. She loved to learn, and had the personality of someone who achieved great educational goals. She had a fantastic personality, a wonderful sense of humor and people were drawn to her. *I wanted to become that which she could not.*

I went to college (the first in my family to do so) and then to Law school. My father thought I should get married and raise a family, but my mother encouraged and continued to brag! I think she saw in me that which she could not become. She, unknowingly, encouraged me and pushed me to become a successful, independent woman. She is the main reason for my success.

Not a day goes by when I do not think of my mother. Not a day goes by when I don't think about how proud she would be of me today. She never had the opportunity to see me become a judge, so I have dedicated my career to her since day one!

So, a role model, an inspiration comes in all different shapes and sizes, in all different walks of life. She is one whose actions speak louder than her words. She is one who knows just how to motivate, without knowing that she is doing so.

If my mother were born under different circumstances and in a different era I think she would have been . . . well, me.

Grazia, mom!

Mary S. Schostok, 2nd Appellate District

As I entered the legal world, first as a paralegal and then as a law student, all of my mentors were men. There were a number of them and they were awesome. But there were just so few women out there at that time that I didn't even think of women as role models. Then, that changed somewhat suddenly, when late into law school, through the Federal Defender Program, I met Carol Brook and Nan Nolan—my first female mentors. It was not until several years later that I realized they were both about my age and had only been practicing law for a relatively short period of time. I thought of them as all-knowing and worldly. They taught me through example and by including me in almost everything they did. I learned that being a lawyer could be challenging and stressful and fun all at the same time. I learned how to navigate tough ethical issues in representing criminal defendants. I came to appreciate the value of collective thinking about hard questions. I watched them being tough and empathetic with clients and with adversaries. I came to appreciate how meaningful it can be to guide someone, especially someone charged with a serious crime, through the landmines of the legal system. Later Nan and I practiced criminal defense law together at Pat Tuite's firm for several years. I watched Carol become a leader and then the leader at the Federal Defender office. They both went on to have outstanding legal careers. Carol became the Federal Defender for the Northern District. Nan became a federal magistrate. They both helped guide many grateful clients through the legal system. I still see them from time to time although not as much as I wish I did. I am forever grateful for their guidance.

Justice Mary Lane Mikva, 1st Appellate District

The woman who inspired me most in this life - is, was, and will always be my mother, Ethel Bridget Stanton. She was born and raised in Chicago and married my father in 1943. When my father died at a young age, my mother took on the role of both father and mother. While raising seven children, all still at home, she returned to work to help us out financially. And, despite suffering her own deep personal loss, my mother remained optimistic, full of hope and helped us navigate through a sad and difficult time. One of her favorite sayings was "Hope springs eternal."

My mother had a saying for everything. It was her way of helping each one of us deal with any hurt, obstacle or disappointment that came our way. At the time, I was not always certain that her words of wisdom would transform what seemed like a loss

into a victory. However, over time her wisdom helped shape me into the positive person that I am. My mother was good, kind, and loving. She thought of everyone else and never herself. She never gave up and never complained about anything. My mother lived to be 90 years old and was healthy for almost all of those years. I was so fortunate to have her love, inspiration and guidance for so many years. She was my first and best friend!

Margaret Stanton McBride, 1st Appellate District

Barbara Charlene Jordan was born in 1936 in Houston, Texas. Her father was a Baptist preacher and her mother was a teacher at their church. When in high school, she was inspired to become an attorney, after hearing a speech by Edith Sampson, an attorney, judge and first black U.S. delegate to the United Nations. Unable to attend the University of Texas, because of segregation, Ms. Jordan attended Texas Southern University and graduated magna cum laude. She then was accepted at and graduated from Boston University School of Law.

Ms. Jordan was elected to the state senate of Texas and subsequently in 1973 was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, where she was appointed to the Judiciary Committee. It was during her tenure on the Judiciary Committee that the impeachment of President Richard Nixon took place. On July 25, 1974, Rep. Jordan gave one of the greatest speeches of twentieth century American history, when she presented the opening oratory at the Nixon impeachment hearing. “My faith in the Constitution is whole,” she intoned, her voice strong and filled with emotion. She continued “it is complete, it is total, and I am not going to sit here and be an idle spectator to the diminution, the subversion, the destruction of the Constitution.” Her words were an inspiration to me as Edith Sampson’s may have been to her. I will never forget my feeling of pride for this amazing woman whose words stirred the hearts and minds of so many Americans. I was truly moved by her words of commitment to our Constitution. As a young woman applying to law school at the time, she inspired me to continue my quest to become an attorney.

Maureen Connors, II Appellate Court, 1st District

The Woman Who Most Influenced My Professional Life

Many women influenced my life, especially my grandmother, Lidia Pucinska, in terms of my personal optimistic outlook on life in general and my commitment to public service. But no professional mentor comes close to the effect Idris Rossell had on me as a woman in a “man’s profession” or as a manager of other people. Idris was my first boss, and I was lucky to be under her wing. She was a total professional, a kind and generous boss, and a wonderful mentor and tutor. She was never a screamer, always said please and thank you, and used every assignment, and, every mistake, as a teachable moment. She taught me not to panic in a crisis, to make sure that I measured the problem realistically (“Is this happening one in ten times? One in a hundred? One in a thousand?”) and to discuss solutions with colleagues to make a good decision. I could never be an effective judge without her examples of compassion and practicality, or have

been the manager of almost 2000 employees as Clerk of the Court without Idris's example. She set the bar at the top, all the while working in what was, in 1964-68, a man's work world. I admire her to this day for her generosity to all who worked with her, bosses and employees alike; for her patience; for her sense of fairness as a moral imperative; and for her great sense of humor. Idris Rossell: I am grateful to her every day!

Aurelia Pucinski, Illinois Appellate Court, 1st District

YES WE DID! The woman who inspired me.

For those of us who grew up in the 70's, we had to look no further than our living room couch to find a multitude of women role models. Mary Tyler Moore, Angie Dickinsen, Nurse Julie, Lieutenant Ohura, even the Patridge family's mom was a working single mother. We grew up seeing women in roles that were foreclosed to us even a decade before. We grew up with wider horizons than any generation before us.

I had a living breathing example of that no limit attitude right in front of me. My mom showed me what it takes to achieve whatever goal you set for yourself. I grew up in a predominantly Irish Catholic neighborhood which was not the hotbed of progressive ideas and acceptance. Our church and community shunned my mother because being divorced was not acceptable. My mom taught me from an early age, that you cannot live your life worried about what other people think. Undeterred by the ostracism, my mom went back to school and got her undergraduate and master's degree. She worked full-time, went to school full-time and raised my brother and I by herself. She taught me that you can achieve anything if you are willing to work hard enough for it and that the only limits are the ones that you put on yourself. Anything that I have achieved in my life is directly attributable to my mom, Carroll Barron O'Neill.

Eileen O'Neill Burke, 1st District Appellate Court

**ILLINOIS JUDGES ASSOCIATION
100TH ANNIVERSARY OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE
"YES WE DID"
ONE WOMAN'S TALE OF INSPIRATION**

In my family, all the women were inspired by "Great Aunt Lily." She was a woman ahead of her time - born into a family of educators in a third world country, she went on to be educated at two of Europe's most prestigious universities, earning advanced degrees in the 1950s. She was fluent in several languages and rose to prominence as a respected educator; all at a time when women, especially women of color, often didn't finish high school. She inspired generations of young women within and outside of our family, to aspire to higher goals. One of those inspired was my older sister, Sonia, who took the torch of female inspiration from "Great Aunt Lily" and is now passing it on to future generations of our family and beyond.

In 2004 through an inexplicable act of fate, my eldest nephew, Sonia's son, Keith Ferguson, died in the line of duty while he was a young sergeant for the New York City Police Department. Our family was devastated. Sonia turned that tragedy into a triumph for legions of NYPD families. She established a 5K race in Keith's name to

endow a chair in Criminal Justice at the University where she taught and to provide scholarships to the children of NYPD officers. In the years since she established the Keith A. Ferguson Memorial 5K, she has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the endowment and a distinguished scholar has been named to the chair. The surplus funds raised by her efforts now provide college scholarships to the children of NYPD officers. The 5K event which was always held on the first Sunday of August, became a New York favorite and a time of celebration for our family and the NYPD.

Oh, and did I mention, that this was and is the *only* race in New York City allowed on the Brooklyn Bridge! An awesome honor, for a good cause; all put together by one woman who wanted her son to be remembered as the hero that he was while creating an opportunity to help others. And, so a wonderful living tribute endures as a symbol of hope, respect, support and celebration. Although she had no experience with organizing a race of this magnitude, she was determined to turn lemons into lemonade, and she did. She is my heroine and the epitome of a strong, smart woman. So, I dedicate this vignette to Sonia Cunningham, my sister, our family's matriarch, who turned a tragedy into a triumph!

Joy Cunningham, 1st District Appellate District

WOMEN WHO HAVE INSPIRED ME

My becoming a lawyer was a foregone conclusion for my aunt, Esther Rothstein, from the time I was a young girl. She was so positive, committed and sure of the value of a career in law, and gently but surely nudged me in that direction. She made it seem like an easy and natural path, even for a woman and even many years ago before women were attending law schools in any noticeable numbers. As I got older, I could see and even feel her personal fulfillment, but I learned that the path was anything but easy and anything but natural, especially for a woman in those years. And that is even coming from a family of lawyers that included my cousin, the first woman law professor at George Washington Law School in Washington, D.C. and my father and brother with a private law practice in Chicago and my uncle, who was a Chief Justice of the Nevada Supreme Court.

Esther started her career as a legal secretary for attorney, John McCarthy, and at his urging went to law school at night at Chicago-Kent College of Law. She eventually became his law partner and practiced with him for many years.

My aunt saw a lawyer's obligation not only to represent clients well, but to take the time to make a significant contribution and commitment to civic and community affairs. I watched Essie, as I fondly called her, volunteer for many Chicago Bar Association committees, city-wide projects and serve on corporate boards, most of the time as the only woman. Eventually she was elected as the CBA's first woman president. Our family felt so proud of her and her accomplishments!

She knew that networking and supporting other women was absolutely essential to breaking barriers and glass ceilings. She strongly supported her dear friend, Mary Ann McMorrow, in her two bids to become a justice on the Illinois Supreme Court. She also made sure to arrange a private dinner for the three of us when I finally became a judge in 1995 so that I could benefit from Justice McMorrow's advice and counsel!

Tom Johnson, a noted Rockford attorney, described Esther at the time she was named to a position in the inaugural class of Laureates of the Academy of Illinois Lawyers, an honor which I accepted for her posthumously: “Esther Rothstein was an unfailing, unflinching exemplar of civic virtue and moral courage, and those who had the good fortune to have been associated with her in the cause of justice, carry away the memory of a devoted servant of the law – patient and considerate, courteous and kindly, yet magnificently strong.”

Esther’s example has been a shining light for me as has my own mother’s. My mother was not a lawyer, and in fact did not even complete college, but she had the same determination and love of learning as Essie. She also dedicated herself to serving her community. She did not abide in glass ceilings and was not daunted by them. My mother instilled in me the confidence to believe that I could achieve whatever I set out to do with hard work and dedication to high ideals and values.

I am eternally grateful for their examples and guidance in my life. Together they inspired me and gave me the strength to continue to pursue my dream of becoming a judge even when I faced many obstacles. Because of them I have been blessed with personal fulfillment and the opportunity to do meaningful work for the betterment of the justice system and the lives of people in my own community and our state.

Justice Kathryn Zenoff, 2nd Appellate District

Many influenced the path of my life and the course of my career, but none more than my grandmother.

Bridget Agnes Byron was an Irish born Catholic immigrant, who arrived at Ellis Island with two of her sisters, the contents of one trunk and an indomitable spirit. But it was a time when “Irish need not apply” was all too common. She was smart and determined – and found work with a well to do Jewish family in upstate New York. She later married and started a family and life was good. Then the Great Depression hit. It took every bit of sacrifice and ingenuity she to bring her family (my mother included) through the hardest of times and survive the bleak years that broke the spirit of so many others. They did recover as the U. S. involvement in World War II resurged the economy. I remember the Purple Heart proudly displayed beside the faded photo of a young man in his naval uniform. Much later I realized the depth of her grief; her youngest son, my uncle, age 19, lost at sea during the bombing of the U.S.S. Franklin. With quiet faith and resolve, she remembered, honored, and overcame a mother’s worst grief. That history resonated with me more than I could have realized at the time.

In my young years, she was well into her sixties and still tended a huge garden, canned enough food to feed an army, made her own clothes and many of mine too, yet still found time to give me her full attention. I knew her as a grateful, joyful woman – who gave unconditional love. Thought little was store-bought, she lavished homemade, simple pleasures and made little things special. She gave me the most precious gifts, her time, her patience, and her wisdom.

She schooled me with a lifetime of experience, and knowledge and taught me this: what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong, that I can do better and that there is no obstacle that cannot be overcome with ingenuity, sacrifice, and hard work. This

strong, woman also reminded me to find joy in everyday events; to be generous and grateful for everything I have – especially for those I love. She taught me to treat e

everyone with kindness and respect regardless of their station in life – and regardless of mine. Those life lessons have served me well.

She died as I was starting college. She never saw me graduate, go to law school, or become a judge. She would have been proud, but I do not think that she would believe that so much of who I am and what I have achieved was crafted by her example. But I know it and I still thank her for it.

Ann Jorgensen, 2nd Appellate District

When they were 9 and 10 years old, my mother and my Aunt Rebecca stumbled upon a lynching in progress in the woods near their house in Columbia, South Carolina. They were, of course, terrified but more than terror, they were filled with a transformative outrage. In the wake of that experience they made a vow that they would never allow anything to impede their future efforts to ensure such things could not continue to happen in this country.

Many years later, the long-term resolve of the proud recipient of a master's degree in public health, the mother of three little girls, and the wife of the first black faculty member at the University of Michigan Schools of Medicine and Public Health was put to its greatest test. Administrators of the university and the medical school advised my dad that his civil rights activism was an embarrassment to the university and he would not receive promotions or salary increases until he withdrew from those activities. Together they decided the fight for racial equality was too important for their children, themselves, and their various communities to give up on. They were determined to make it all work somehow.

My mom tucked her hard-won master's degree away in a drawer and, shrugging off the material benefits she could normally expect as the wife of a professor at a prestigious university, she: dug up the backyard to plant the biggest garden she could configure; bought baby chicks, built coops, and raised chickens in the garage for three years until the health department shut her operation down; pulled out her sewing machine and sewed everything she and her daughters wore except underwear, socks, and shoes. They shared large cans of pork and beans over several days to make sure their girls had milk and (ugh) cod liver oil, and they gratefully accepted the generous care packages from Mom's family in South Carolina.

And they fought and negotiated: for equal employment, equal housing, equal education, the unfettered right to vote, the right to be viewed and treated as human beings and not the "strange fruit" hanging from lynching trees. Mom took us to the meetings, the protests, the marches, the rallies—and my sisters and I learned to organize volunteers, get out the vote, hammer in yard signs, and ignore taunts. More importantly we learned by living with her and living in their shared commitment on a daily basis that if you truly believe in something, you give it more than lip service. You live and breathe it; you work your fingers to the bone; you prioritize the things in your life and sacrifice those you can do without; you inhabit the night because all of this is in addition to your total dedication to your day job; you weather all the ugliness people throw at you and

smile at them because they don't recognize your strength and tenacity; and you sing while you sew, while you cook, while you garden, while you march, while you strategize because staying on what you believe to be the right course, no matter how stressful, creates joy. (And helped create two judges and one bicameral state legislative warrior—three apples that did not fall far from their tree.)

Justice Mary W. McDade - Third District Appellate Court

Writing this essay made me recognize, perhaps for the first time, just how influential my mother, Norma O'Brien, has been in my life. As was common in rural America in the mid-1950's, my parents married less than a year after mom graduated from high school. Mom went from "farmer's daughter" to "farmer's wife" and began a successful career in "family management" garnering vast experience in child-rearing, homemaking, gardening, farm work, errand running and volunteering. She worked hard to make things look easy....and her pie baking, housekeeping and church fundraising skills are legendary in our small community. Mom passed on her strong work ethic and values to her 5 children, although at the time I was a less than enthusiastic student! As the most rebellious of my siblings, my mother must have certainly spent many hours being exasperated and angry with me as I challenged every rule, had a ready retort for every request and rejected nearly all her advice. Luckily, my rebellious streak was no match for my mother's deep reserve of patience or her iron clad will. She didn't make excuses for me or allow me to do anything less than my best. She never demanded perfection, only that I give my best effort, whether it was in school or athletics or work. She believed I had talent and potential and would not let me squander either. As a parent, she felt it was her duty to make sure I lived up to my potential.

As an adult, I can now appreciate how important it was for my development to have a parent that believed in me. At the time, I thought all of her rules and expectations were holding me back, but in fact she was giving me wings. My mother showed me that success takes preparation, discipline and hard work. Once I put together a solid foundation, Mom encouraged me to take risks and try new things, because, as she would say, "The only guarantee you have is the guarantee that you cannot succeed unless you try." So, thank you Mom for believing in me, for making me work hard and for helping me to be brave in the face of challenge. Because of you I am constantly inspired to learn new things and accept new roles as a wife, mother, friend and judge.

Justice Mary Kay O'Brien - 3rd District Appellate Court

I began my judicial career in January of 1991. During that same year, I observed the televised senate confirmation hearing for Clarence Thomas. This hearing introduced me to the person I would use as my role model for the next 30 years of my judicial career. My role model today remains a petite and soft-spoken young attorney who stepped into history on October 11, 1991, while wearing a turquoise suit.

Anita Hill responded to each Senator's inquiry or accusation with a deliberately respectful tone, endless composure, and remarkable grace. Surely, Anita Hill recognized

her presence could result in workplace retaliation and attacks on her professional reputation. She testified regardless of the potential consequences to her career.

Anita Hill's testimony had little impact on the outcome of the Senate hearing but her voice changed history in an unexpected fashion. One year later, a peaceful shift took place at the ballot box when forty-seven women were elected or reelected to the House of Representatives. Four additional female senators joined the Senate in 1992. This historic election year would not have taken place without the public outrage over the tenor of senatorial response to Anita Hill's testimony.

I cannot imagine a better role model for a young judge beginning her own judicial career. Silence carries no risk and protects the *status quo*. I have reflected on Anita Hill's fearless voice when facing difficult choices in my career.

Thank you, Anita Hill.

Justice Vicki R. Wright - 3rd District Appellate Court

When asked to describe a woman who truly made a difference in my life, Jan Moldenhauer immediately came to mind. I was only 12 years old and sent off to camp in northern Wisconsin. All of the girls in camp were under Jan's supervision. She was the toughest woman I had ever met, literally employing a "sink or swim" philosophy. Jan taught us to persist when facing what then seemed like insurmountable obstacles. Jan continually challenged us, and "giving up" was not an option. We were taught to rely upon our inner strengths to resolve problems. While commanding respect, she instilled life skills that have proven invaluable in my private and professional endeavors. In particular, Jan instilled in me the belief that I could do anything as a young woman. All I needed was the strength and desire to meet the challenge that presented itself. At that time, the challenge may have been portaging a canoe over my head for a mile or swimming across a lake without a life preserver.

Later, as a trial lawyer, I was ridiculed by my peers for being a strong woman. Rather than being intimidated by the mockery, I called upon my own strengths to fight on behalf of the people I represented. When met with obstacles in my profession, I relied upon the Moldenhauer strengths to persevere. Today, as an appellate judge, I have the privilege of helping to shape the law. Remembering those lessons by the lake gives me the confidence and determination necessary to make tough calls, regardless of privilege or politics. The strength to survive in a divisive world, and to do what is right is simply an extension of the Moldenhauer training; training that can be summarized by persistence and integrity.

Justice Judy Cates - Fifth District Appellate Court

The most inspirational woman in my life has always been my late mother, Carol Koehler. Mom was one of thirteen children, so she had to fight early on to be noticed. After graduating high school, she left her small hometown and enrolled in x-ray training in Chicago. In 1957, she married my father and celebrated having three children in three years (two daughters and one son). Dad had a job that required him to be on the road all week, leaving Mom to work full-time at the local clinic, manage the house, and parent us kids. When she learned that she was being paid less than a male co-worker

with less seniority, she complained to her supervisor and was told that he earned more because “he had a family to support”. Mom immediately quit her job and enrolled in nursing school, becoming an R.N. She never accepted another job where a male in the same position would earn more than a female.

During her nursing career, Mom worked in I.C.U. and the emergency room and taught paramedic classes. In the 1990s, Mom organized a group called “Caring Friends” at KSB Hospital in Dixon, Illinois, a program that is still in existence today. Caring Friends provides financial assistance from employee donations to those KSB employees struggling to make ends meet. Mom raised us to believe that to lead a successful life we should not question who was going to allow us to do so but, rather, who had the resources to try to stop us.

Trish Senneff, 14th Judicial Circuit Judge, Whiteside County.

I served as the first female President of the Whiteside County Bar Association and the first female Whiteside County State’s Attorney. I am the first female Circuit Judge in Whiteside County and the first female County Presiding Judge in our circuit.

What a wonderful way to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of women winning the right to vote by reflecting on women who inspire us! My list includes my grandmother, mother, sister and teenage daughter, who is wise beyond her years. It also includes countless judicial powerhouses that came before me, guided and mentored me, such as Mary Ann McMorro, Anne Burke, Mary Jane Theis, Rita Garman, Sheila O’Brien, Ilana Rovner and Rebecca Pallmeyer, to name just a few. Yet, Laura Liu is the woman who inspired me most during my first few years as a judge.

Laura Liu was the first Chinese-American judge in Illinois’ history and the first Asian-American to serve on the Illinois Appellate Court. She was a woman with a great sense of justice, passion, compassion, grace and dignity. She was a daughter of immigrants, a wife, mother, sister and true friend. Despite health challenges that resulted in her death at age 49, Laura Liu worked tirelessly to do more, give back, improve the world, and provide a wonderful life for her family, exemplar for her daughter, opportunities for others and access to justice for non-English-speaking litigants. She left a flawless legacy – one I try to emulate in honor of our friendship.

Laura Liu inspired me to be prepared, patient, courteous, respectful and kind, both on and off the bench. She motivated me to pursue my passion with confidence and face adversity with faith and courage. She led by example and was a role model of integrity, strength and hope, even through life’s hardships and most heartrending of circumstances.

Laura Liu’s bravery, wisdom, optimism, perseverance, grace and gratitude inspired me then and continues to inspire me now. Chances are YOU have inspired me too and do not even know it. For this, I thank you.

**Celia Gamrath, Circuit Court of Cook County Chancery Division
(Judge (since 2010), wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend,
and proud member of IJA)**

My name is Jo Beth Weber, and I am the Resident Circuit Judge of Jefferson County, which is located in my hometown of Mt. Vernon, Illinois, where I was born. I attended Mt. Vernon Township High School and obtained my undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Illinois. My husband, Scott, and I have been married for 36 years, and we have two wonderful adult children—Hannah (27 years old), who is a dentist, and Thomas (24 years old), who is almost a dentist. All three of them are my pride and joy, along with Hannah’s husband, Clay, a pediatric dentist, and Thomas’ girlfriend, Olivia, a registered nurse. More than anything, I love spending time with my family.

The woman who most inspired me is my mother, Frances Staley. Because education is extremely important to me, it might surprise you to know that my mother never graduated from high school. She married my father when she was 17-years-old, and he was drafted into the Army. While he was in training in Kansas, my mother discovered she was pregnant. Due to her pregnancy, my mother was not allowed to attend high school.

My mother worked very hard in the home and as a cook at a nearby grade school. Additionally, she and my father were foster parents for many years. I fondly recall living on our farm, raising pigs and cattle, and having a very large garden. All meals were homemade, from scratch, because it was less expensive, and every evening meal included a homemade dessert. I remember the constant mounds of laundry, her canning and freezing all types of vegetables and fruits, and her amazing work ethic. I also remember her sewing my foster sisters and me beautiful dresses for Easter Sunday. They were all exactly the same except for the color. I hardly recall her sitting down to relax. My mother’s example taught me to work hard.

The most important and inspiring thing my mother instilled in me was how to treat people. She taught me to put other people first. She taught me to really listen to what people say and then act on what I hear. She taught me to be kind to others and share what I have. She taught me to make my home welcoming and inviting to others. She taught me to say “please” and “thank you” and to write a hand-written thank you when someone does something nice. She taught me to apologize when I am wrong. She taught me to be fair and treat all people the same. She taught me to be honest. She taught me to worry less about cleaning my house and more about spending time with my children so they would grow up to be kind and responsible human beings.

As judges, we are faced with daunting responsibilities. However, my job is made a bit easier due to my mother teaching me by words and example what is most important: to treat others how I wish to be treated. She is an inspiring example of the golden rule.

Jo Beth Weber, Resident Circuit Judge, Jefferson County

Judge Sandra Reiko Otaka passed away more than 10 years ago. I still think of her almost every day as she had a huge impact on me in life and in death. As my friend, mentor and colleague, she was incredibly special not only to me, but also to the hundreds if not thousands of people who were fortunate enough to reap the benefits of her hands on assistance in their lives. While she loved the Asian American community and had a special place in her heart for all of our underserved communities, she was

wholly devoted to her son Jeffrey. She made tireless efforts to help empower underrepresented communities and leaders who were sensitive to community issues. She held many productive meetings with community leaders, community groups, judges, bar groups and politicians. She took a genuine interest in people's concerns, and she would make extraordinary efforts to get the optimal outcome on all the diverse array of projects that she committed to taking on. Sandra had the uncanny knack of thinking ten steps ahead on any project or endeavor she committed to. She was the kind of person who could not bear to give anything less than her very best in advancing her dream of giving underrepresented communities a voice and place at the table.

Whenever I encounter something problematic in my professional or personal life, I ask myself -- "What would Sandra advise me to do?" Judge Otaka is the first Asian American to have been appointed to the bench by the Illinois Supreme Court. She had a big presence and an even bigger heart. She was brutally honest with me and simultaneously endlessly supportive. She was never afraid of speaking her mind. Throughout the years, she raised the bar higher and higher for me with her relentless admonishments for me to "do more for our community." I miss her dry sense of humor and acerbic wit. She is a tremendous, irreplaceable role model who will always be remembered by the diverse groups of individuals who got to know her. The love, respect, loyalty and admiration she commanded was amazing. She made her family, friends, community members and colleagues feel special because they genuinely were special to her.

Judge Otaka passed away suddenly. I hadn't expected her to go so soon, and the void she has left in my life as those of many others will never be fulfilled. Yet, I am thankful for her full life – a life of beauty and service. She will always be an inspiration and a blessing for me.

Rena M. Van Tine, Cook County, Law Jury section of the Law Division

I am the first female South Asian to become a judge in the United States. It would not have happened without the unending support of my good friend Judge Sandra Otaka. I have been a judge for almost 19 years. Most of my career was in serving the families in Cook County in the Child Protection Division of Juvenile Court. I now preside over a variety of civil jury trials in the Law Division.

This year, as we commemorate 100 years of voting rights, I will also celebrate my 18th year as a Circuit Court Judge in Cook County. I am privileged to serve in the Law Division, Jury Trial Section, at the Daley Center in downtown Chicago. In 2020, I will also mark 28 years of marriage to my husband, Jim. Together, we have raised four children.

While there are many women who have inspired me professionally, as mentors and models of professionalism and service, I take this opportunity to acknowledge my late grandmother, Alice Beranek, who surely possessed the same dogged resolve as the suffragists. She had no formal education past 8th grade; never learned to drive a car; and struggled with mental health issues. Still, she was for me, an incredible role model. Her parents emigrated from Italy and never mastered the English language. Her formative years were characterized by sacrifice. Forced to forgo her own desire for an education, instead she helped raise her siblings. She suffered poverty, hunger and cold

during the Great Depression. In her early twenties, she became both a widow and a single mother. Through all of life's disappointments and set-backs, she exemplified stoicism and unwavering commitment to her faith and her family. Well into her eighties, her work ethic, energy and tenacity were remarkable. She clearly passed these traits on to her daughter, my mom. Because of them, I have not faced the same challenges and hardships; but in my life, I strive to emulate and impart the same values of hard work, perseverance and unfailing devotion.

Janet Adams Brosnahan, Cook County, Law Division, Jury Trial Section

Justice Mary Ann McMorrow was a great mentor and influence on many female lawyers. She was one of the few women to attend law school. She then became a successful attorney. After years of practice she was elected a Judge. She then was elected to the Illinois Supreme Court as the first female Justice. She regularly attended bar association functions and encouraged women to exceed in the law profession. She was a true trailblazer for many female lawyers and the inspiration to many females in the legal profession.

**Diann Marsalek, Cook County, Supervising Judge
Municipal Department, Traffic Section**

There is an unmistakable aura about Sister Rosemary Connelly. She is the visionary powerhouse at the helm of Misericordia, a residential community for more than 600 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Sister Rosemary, who recently celebrated her 50th anniversary as the Executive Director of Misericordia, is an inspiration to me. I first met her when I volunteered at Misericordia in high school. Over the years, our paths fortunately continued to cross. In 2014, I was elected a Cook County Circuit Court Judge, and am currently assigned to Law Division, Motions Section. Throughout these past decades, I have watched Sister Rosemary successfully navigate difficult situations, people and politics to achieve her goals in a way that is an inspiration to me as a woman and as a judge.

Sister Rosemary leads by example, with grace, humor and focused fortitude. Like those who fought for women to secure the right to vote, Sister Rosemary fights to ensure that the lives of those most marginalized are afforded the best life possible.

**Patricia O'Brien Sheahan, Circuit Court of Cook County
Law Division, Motions Section, Calendar D**

The woman who inspired me the most was my mother, Esther Atcherson. My mother studied social work and worked full time while raising her children. Being one of her younger children, I mostly heard stories about her early work as a juvenile probation officer, and how she stood up to her boss and was fired, sued, and won as a whistleblower. My mother continued her studies, earned her master's degree, and became the director of affirmative action for a public university. Throughout our lives, I watched my mother work to protect the rights of others and she impressed upon us how important it was to ensure the equal and fair treatment of all people in all places.

A large part of that lesson was the importance of being an active participant in the political process. My mother would often bring my younger brother and me to the polls with her, not because she had no one to watch us, but because she wanted us to witness her exercising her right to vote. This trip was always accompanied by an unsolicited lecture on the candidates, but it also included a reminder of the sacrifices people had made to simply gain the right to vote. We did not fully understand or appreciate the candidate lecture, but her message on the importance of voting could not be misunderstood. When I turned 18, my mother escorted me to the polls to cast my first ballot, and she made sure I came home from college to vote in every election. I have continued this tradition by bringing my daughter to the polls with me when I can, and proudly showing her my “I voted today” sticker or paper bracelet. In honor of my mother, I always include a little lecture.

Sophia Atcherson, Cook County

I am a Cook County Associate Judge assigned to a Felony courtroom in the 6th District Markham Courthouse. I have been a judge for almost 4 years, but spent my previous 22 years also working for the people of Cook County as an Assistant State’s Attorney. Both as an ASA and now as an Associate Judge, I have always admired and modeled myself after one particular person; Judge Michelle Pitman.

When I was a young ASA, Judge Pitman was a supervisor in the State’s Attorney’s Office and always impressed me by the dignified way she carried herself, got her point across and appeared in court. She would win her cases, but was always pleasant and helpful to all.

When I was also fortunate enough to become an Associate Judge, I was quickly assigned to the Markham Courthouse, where Judge Pitman has been a well-regarded jurist for over a decade. I started out in the Domestic Violence call, where Judge Pitman was still remembered as one of the best judges to ever preside over that call in Markham. I decided early on that I would do well to follow in her footsteps. Now as a Felony judge, Judge Pitman serves as my Supervising Judge. Every time I see her on the bench or go to her for help with a legal issue, I am impressed by her command of the law and the guidance she is able to give me. Her mastery of search and seizure is astounding. She is always helpful and takes the time to impart her knowledge and help me work out the legal issues that I bring to her attention. As a minority female judge, I am so lucky to have a mentor such as Judge Pitman in my courthouse, where I can see how she has garnered the respect of all whom work with her and before her by her sharp intellect and her strong sense of justice.

Geraldine D’Souza, Associate Judge, Cook County, 6th District Markham Courthouse

Sandra Day O’Connor: An Inspiration

My role model and inspiration has been Sandra Day O’Connor, the first woman appointed to serve as a United States Supreme Court Justice. At the age of only 51, in 1981, she was appointed and sworn in as the first female justice. Contrast that to where I was then. In 1981, I was just an awkward 12 year old preteen girl wearing a prairie skirt with cowboy boots trying to make my way through 7th grade in Texas. Sandra Day also

hailed from the South having grown up on a family ranch in Arizona. She was much more sophisticated and wore a suit, pearls and high heels. She was an intelligent, articulate, well dressed woman whom had been unanimously confirmed by the Senate. She would have a distinguished judicial career which would end with her retirement from the U.S. Supreme Court at the age of 76. Her road had not been an easy one. Despite all she achieved at Stanford after achieving her law degree in 1952, similar to the recent movie portrayal of our second female U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg whom took her oath 12 years later in 1993, Sandra Day O'Connor found herself unable to find employment in a law firm dominated by males. One firm reportedly wanted to hire her as a secretary, just as had happened to Justice Bader Ginsburg according to the movie. Rather than settle for a position wherein she would not be utilizing her law degree, Sandra Day O'Connor became a prosecutor in California, the State where I was born, and would later serve as an assistant attorney general in Arizona until 1969, the year I was born. During law school, my father wrote to Justice O'Connor and told her of my dream to become a Judge. To our amazement, she wrote back to me with words of encouragement. I was ecstatic to receive her letter. I chose to follow in her footsteps somewhat by becoming a prosecutor upon law school graduation in 1994. She and other female lawyers and judges certainly blazed the trail for those like myself whom would seek legal careers after law school graduation. I also respected and noticed that she had kept her maiden name and had not dropped it once she married. Her husband, like mine, was in the U.S. Army. After retiring, she authored several books, including some for children. Perhaps I will, too, one day upon retiring. As for now, I am just getting started in my new judicial career having been recently appointed in 2017 by the Illinois Supreme Court as a Circuit Judge at the age of 48. I am grateful to have the privilege of serving the people of Illinois in this role and look forward to doing so for many more years.

Tiffany Davis, 22nd Judicial Circuit, McHenry County, Criminal Law Division

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The XIX Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that gave women the right to vote in 1920 fueled the recognition of women in our country. I have been inspired by the outstanding contributions of many women, in our nation, particularly, the late Honorable Barbara Jordan, U.S. Congresswoman. She was a trailblazer as the first African-American woman from the south to be elected to serve as a member of the U.S. Congress. As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives Judiciary Committee, U.S. Congresswoman Jordan made words of lasting impression about democracy that ring true, today. Like many women during that time, U.S. Congresswoman Jordan defied the odds and expectations.

I thank the women and men in the U.S. suffrage movement for their courage. I stand on their shoulders and appreciate their vision and sacrifices. As a former Cook County prosecutor, private attorney, past president of the Cook County Bar Association, and mentor to other lawyers, particularly, female lawyers, I understand the importance of helping women to navigate our legal profession. I give back to the community, in part,

to uphold the legacy of U.S. Congresswoman Jordan and those who fought for the women's right to vote in the United States.

**Marian E. Perkins, Circuit Court of Cook County
Chancery Division/ Mortgage Foreclosure Section**

My name is Lisette Mojica, and I have served as an Associate Judge since 2018. I currently sit in the Sixth Municipal District in Markham, Illinois, where I have a floating assignment and hear cases regarding traffic matters, parentage matters, domestic violence matters, misdemeanor cases and felony cases. Prior to joining the bench, I served the public as a prosecutor and Assistant State's Attorney at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office for 19 years, where I handled felony cases including crimes ranging from narcotics offenses, sexual assaults and murders. For two years prior to my appointment, I served the citizens of Chicago by working at the Law Department, where I was a Deputy Supervisor and the City Prosecutor.

Associate Judge Neera Walsh is a woman who has truly inspired me. I met Judge Walsh while I was in law school, when I worked as a law clerk at the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. At that time, Judge Walsh was an Assistant State's Attorney assigned to the Gang Crimes Prosecutions Unit. She was one of a small group of female prosecutors, in a highly specialized unit that mostly consisted of male prosecutors. Judge Walsh immediately impressed me with her ability to sharply address the legal issues on each of her cases and with her litigation skills. I was in awe each time I watched her in court, where she passionately advocated for victims of all genders, races, ethnicities and walks of life. Under Judge Walsh's supervision, I learned to stand firm in articulating the right position, but to temper justice with compassion.

In large part due to her supervision and mentoring, I went on to become an Assistant State's Attorney. I kept in touch with Judge Walsh as she rose through the Cook County State's Attorney's Office to become a supervisor and when she eventually earned an appointment as an Associate Judge. On the bench, Judge Walsh was assigned to the Supplemental Call in the Criminal Division. During her tenure there, I was honored to try two murder juries before Judge Walsh simultaneously. That experience proved Judge Walsh to be true to her judicial reputation for being fully knowledgeable about the law, fair to the parties and impartial no matter how egregious the facts. After the trials concluded, Judge Walsh asked me if I had yet considered applying for an Associate Judge position. I was flattered and humbled by the fact that someone I so deeply admired and respected thought I was ready to attempt such a monumental feat. In true mentor and pay-it-forward fashion, Judge Walsh took the time to advise me about the application process, the bar evaluation process and ultimately about how to campaign if and when I earned the privilege of being chosen for the short list. Because of Judge Walsh's guidance and support, I realized my dream goal of becoming an Associate Judge. Each day, on the bench and in life, I try to emulate Judge Walsh in the way she treats everyone with dignity and respect and the tireless efforts she makes to promote other women attorneys and their career goals.

**Lisette Mojica, Associate Judge, Cook County, Sixth Municipal District,
Markham**

My name is Monique O'Toole. I am a Circuit Court Judge in the 18th Judicial District of DuPage County. I currently serve in traffic court. I was a lawyer for 27 years in both the public and private sector before being appointed a Circuit Court Judge in October of 2019. I am the only attorney and judge on both sides of my parents' families. I love to read and started a book club in my community that is still active after 17 years. My other favorite activities are knitting, running, playing tennis and doing yoga. Most importantly, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and giving back to the community.

Mother Theresa is the woman who has inspired me the most in my personal and professional life. She was selfless, kind and humble. She provided hope and guidance to people from all walks of life. There are three quotes of hers that have always resonated with me. The first is "if you are humble nothing will touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know what you are." She taught me that it is better to do something because it is right and not to expect praise about it. Living humbly is to know what is important to value and what is not and to act accordingly. The second quote is "do not wait for leaders, do it alone, person to person." All of us have a responsibility to ourselves and to others. I have been blessed with so much in my life that I strive to help even one person who needs it, whether it is a neighbor struggling with cancer who needs a meal or a litigant in traffic court who needs a chance to correct their driver's license suspension. Third, "peace begins with a smile." Try it. You will be amazed at how many people smile back!

Monique O'Toole, Circuit Judge
18th Judicial District of DuPage County

As the fifth out of seven children in a tumultuous family upbringing, I discovered a place of refuge at my father's law office at the age of eight. This is where I met Lillian Abbey Heck, a/k/a Miss Abbey. She was my Dad's office manager, administrator, and client liaison. She was fiercely loyal to my father, his associates, the clients, and, to my pleasure, me. Miss Abbey was thought of as a "tough old bird." Our friendship (or, moreover, her mentorship) developed over a decade's time until I went off to college, and she retired. As a young, unsure teenage girl, she instilled confidence in me and became my role model.

In an extremely busy suburban law practice with a heavy concentration in criminal law, Miss Abbey demonstrated, through her words and actions, how to get along, and thrive in a male-dominated environment. Simply put, she commanded – not demanded – respect, and earned it through dedication to her work, exceptional intelligence and, mostly, giving respect to all she encountered. Miss Abbey was remarkable in another exceptional way. She walked with a cane, had a crippling limp, and was in constant pain every day of her life. Her hips had been shattered in a car accident as a young woman – a horrific accident that she never mentioned. Through this discovery, I learned one of life's most important lessons: never underestimate the pain and heartache others may be experiencing; everyone is going through some unseen battle in their life. You will never regret being kind.

Clare E. McWilliams, Cook County Law Division, Jury Trial Section

ESSAY LETTER-100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY-MY INSPIRATION

One of the very first positive affirmations I recall hearing as a child was, "Dominique, you can do or be anything you want if you set your mind to it." Those words came from my mother, Dorothy. She had many sayings that have stayed with me throughout my life. In fact, I found myself saying many of the same things to my own children while they were growing up. Although she didn't graduate from college, there was never a question in her mind that I would go, do well and graduate. I can remember the night before the first day of kindergarten, she and my grandmother were telling me how great my first day of school would be and then I'd go to college! Perhaps they mentioned grammar school and high school, but it was the going to college that I remember. *(smile)*

After my college graduation, I was already married and started my family. Law school was an aspiration of mine. However, I was unsure if I could juggle a husband, two children and law school. I heard the inspiring words of my mother as I contemplated taking on such a huge task. Nevertheless, I was a little apprehensive. In 1988, I met Dr. Anne B. Ward. Over the course of our many visits, she delivered my children, she told me about how medicine was her second career. She was originally a school teacher but later decided to follow her dream of becoming a doctor. She was married with small children at the time she left teaching and began medical school. Her ability to transition from one career to the next while raising a family was amazing to me. It seemed she never missed a beat. Thinking back, I'm sure it was a more difficult undertaking than what she made it seem. However, she was aware that I had dreams of pursuing a career in law so she said the words she believed would inspire me to take the next step.

These two women, my mother and Dr. Ward are my foundation and my inspiration.

Judge Dominique C. Ross, Cook County, Domestic Relations Division

Although many women have inspired me in my life and my career, the woman who influenced me the most is my mother, Phyllis Sutker, who passed away in 2006. At a time when few women got advanced degrees, my mother got a master's degree in social work, graduating summa cum laude. Before she had her own children, she worked to place child survivors of the Holocaust in foster homes. Some of those relationships lasted a lifetime.

As a volunteer, she rose to become national president of Pioneer Women/NA'AMAT, a Jewish women's organization, and a member of the World Zionist Executive. In those roles, she had the opportunity to meet women throughout the country as well as international leaders such as the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Israel. She was known as a mentor to other women. Years after her death, women have told me how much they loved and admired my mother for her intelligence, warmth and generosity of spirit.

Her relationship with my father was my first example of an equal partnership between a husband and wife. She supported him in his political career and he supported her work on behalf of women and children in Israel. A mother of five children, one of whom died in childhood, she modeled both resilience and the importance of family. She encouraged each of us to develop at our own pace and achieve our own goals. She was close to her adult children, and talked to each of them nearly every day. She played an active role in the lives of her grandchildren, who adored her.

I followed in my father's career path, becoming a lawyer. It was my mother who taught me how to be a leader, parent, wife, friend, colleague and mentor. I am proud to be her daughter and carry on her legacy.

Shelley Sutker-Dermer, Cook County

When I thought about a woman who had most inspired me, I thought this going to be easy. However, I soon realized that I could not select just one. So forgive me but I have two. I met these two women when I was a new attorney and they were more seasoned attorneys in our office. I met them independently of one another but soon realized they were good friends. What most inspired me about them was (and is) how they conducted themselves. They could explain a complex legal issue with the same ease they could recommend the perfect handbag for some one. They celebrated everyone's good fortune as if it were their own. And when life handed someone lemons, they were there to help make the proverbial "lemonade". They were always prepared professionally and approachable. If you don't know these two women that I have admired since I met them, you should. They are Judges Mary Margaret Brosnahan and Colleen Hyland.

Neera Lall Walsh

Neera Walsh, Associate Judge, Cook County Criminal Division at the Criminal Courts in Cook County

My Inspiration (s)

Nancy Drew, Trixie Belden and Cherry Ames RN served as my childhood inspirations and fascinations. All three were characters in the popular "girl fiction" books of my youth. These young women were resourceful, intelligent and fearless. Nancy drove a roadster; Trixie's hair was a "bob;" Cherry Ames tended to her patients while she solved a mystery in every volume. I desperately wanted to "be" each of them when I grew up.

My obsession to read these and hundreds of other books was encouraged by my truest inspiration, my grandmother, Frances Burns Holmes. Despite her lack of any formal education she loved to read. Her favorites were detective novels. Grandma liked quirky characters and interesting plot twists. She taught me that reading was fun. I miss her everyday.

As for Nancy, Trixie and Cherry I like to think that I have lived a life and had a career any of them would envy.

Judge Nancy Waites, Retired, Lake County

In the fall of 1977 I was in my first year of law school at DePaul. While it was recommended that full time students not work, I needed to work. When I was asked if I would be interested in working part time for Dawn Clark Netsch, a state senator at the time, I said yes joyously. I already knew well who she was and admired her. My job was to be the administrative aid in her legislative office. I spoke to Dawn almost every day. When I finished law school I continued to work in her office while taking the bar and waiting for the results and then waiting for the job of my dreams (as an Assistant Public Defender.)

I was always awed by Dawn. This meant that at first I was not sure how to act around her. Dawn either did not notice or was so used to that reaction, she had treated me no differently than she treated everyone else. She was always herself and let others (me included) be ourselves. And she was always there for me to ask questions, to support me, to ask my opinion (which always blew me away—after all, this was THE Dawn Clark Netsch), and to be available to so many of us pulling at her time.

Learning from Dawn meant learning that you can never bargain with your integrity, you stand by your friends, you can make friends of old enemies by being yourself and not too judgmental. Her companionship was, for me, such a joy. Dawn was mothering but not like the mothers we think of.

I am not sure if I even know all that I learned from her but she taught me so much. And I never had any doubt about her being proud of me which says more about her than about me. I miss her very much.

Judge Karen Shields, Retired, Cook County

I was inspired by my mother Esther Lefstein. She taught second grade from 1955 through 1958 and then stayed home to raise a family.

My mother had a warm personality, a quick mind, and was very devoted to her children and grandchildren – She never missed her granddaughters' tennis meets or dance recitals.

My mother was also was one of the most “take charge” people I have ever known. Whether organizing a carpool, wedding celebration or my judicial campaign, she always knew exactly what to do. If my mother had been born a generation later, she may have used her problem solving skills to hold elected office or run a major corporation.

My mother faced many health challenges including breast cancer and three open heart surgeries. She handled her illnesses with strength and dignity.

I will always remember my mother for her courage, love of family and beautiful smile.

Judge Lori Lefstein, Retired, Rock Island County

The most inspirational woman in my life was and continues to be my Mother, Carolyn Brown Samaras. I grew up in a Greek-American patriarchal family with three older brothers. My Mother, who was very much in love with my Father and happy to be a homemaker, always encouraged me to follow my dream and to be independent. Growing up, she always said “when you go to college” pick a profession that you enjoy and a profession that will financially support you. As I graduated from college, became a teacher, attended and graduated from law school, became a lawyer and then ran and was elected a Circuit Court Judge, she was my biggest cheerleader and support system. Her overwhelming pride in me and love for me is, by far, my greatest achievement.

**Judge Nancy S. Fahey, Circuit Court Judge
5th Judicial Circuit**

MY REASON FOR BEING, MY MOTHER

Since day 1, my mom has been a calming and loving force in my life. There is not a single time I can remember that my mom hasn't been there for me. So in loving devotion to my mother.....

My mother was born in the countryside of San Lorenzo, Puerto Rico in 1950. She was from a large family of 11 children and her parents didn't have much. She was unable to go beyond a primary education in Puerto Rico, which is 6th grade. She migrated to Chicago when she was 18 in search of a better life and met my father and was married at 19.

She is a stay at home mother who worked hard to raise me, my 3 biological siblings and 3 adopted siblings. Though her upbringing was vastly different than mine, primarily in that she was from the generation that believed a woman's place is in the kitchen, she was supportive of my goals, dreams, and ambitions. Whenever I lose perspective on things and start complaining about a situation, she gently eases me back onto a positive track. She helps me tap into strength that I didn't know I had.

My mother is the epitome of love. She is full of love, every day. Whether she's making us dinner, helping me clean house, or calling to see how my day is going, she does all of these things with great love. She is a giving, helpful and kind woman to all who are fortunate to meet her. She has a heart of gold.

With her nurturing love and support, I became the first to go beyond high school to attend college. Then complete law school. She was there for me physically and emotionally when I started campaigning to become a judge. Her unwavering belief in me helped me become successful in my career. She is the primary reason for my success. She is my role model.

**Beatriz Santiago, Circuit judge, Circuit Court of Cook County
Third Municipal District**

My mom, Betty Lou Thompson, never lived long enough to see her daughter become only the third female Circuit Court Judge in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.

Born the year after the passage of the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, my mom had all the qualities that would have made her an outstanding jurist.

My mom was strong physically and mentally. She had a strong sense of right and wrong. She was wise and practical. She was creative. She was a born leader and organizer.

My mom always worked outside the home by day and volunteered in many organizations at night, her young daughter in hand. She didn't just volunteer. She actively participated in and lead these groups.

In addition to my mom being involved in organizations that impacted her children, P.T.A., Demolay, and Rainbow Girls, my mom also embraced organizations that preserved my dad's Swedish heritage, V.A.S.A. and Vikings. My mom was also particularly active in patriotic and veterans' groups, Disabled American Veterans, American Legion Auxiliary and 8/40. She was at ease as a public speaker.

For countless years, my mom was a regular presenter at our local U.S. Citizenship Naturalization Ceremony. She handed out American Flags to local schools. She decorated our home inside and out with red, white and blue for all patriotic holidays. She created the 5 foot wide wreath that stood at the base of the American Flag Pole at the National Cemetery on the Rock Island Arsenal.

My mom instilled in me a love of country, faith in the American Dream that I could become anything I wanted, the value of hard work and the importance of charity toward others. She experienced great joy in lifting others up.

Even as my mom's body failed her, she maintained her sharp mind, spunk and positive attitude.

Thank you, mom, for all the ways you influenced me to do my best and to serve others.

**Linnea E. Thompson, Circuit Court Judge 14th Judicial Circuit
Rock Island County**

Many women have been an inspiration to me throughout my lifetime; however, the one I strive to emulate is my Mother. Judy Spidale Cerone continues to be a daily inspiration.

I grew up in an Italian-American patriarchal family, with three sisters and a younger brother. My mother was best friends and 18 years younger than her mother, with three younger brothers, a high school graduate, who married the love of her life at 20 years old. By the time she was 25 she had four daughters and my father was out of law school a year.

My mom loved being a wife and "domestic engineer" and did so with unconditional love for everyone. She treats all of her children as if each one of us is her favorite. She is the Matriarch of our entire family. She's made sacrifices in order to keep her family together and always acts with class, grace and dignity.

She has always recognized and encouraged my independence. She has never wavered in her support of anything I have set out to accomplish. She has always verbalized her love for me and pride in me. My Mother is the most beautiful, kind and patient person I know and I am blessed to have her as my biggest cheerleader and the best inspiration I can share with my two daughters.

**Jill Cerone-Marisie, Circuit Court of Cook County
Presiding Judge Third Municipal District**

INSPIRATION

My mother, *Margaret Jonscher*, died at the age of 74 after a courageous battle with ovarian cancer, the silent killer of women. She was born in an era where women's professional aspirations were discouraged as women were expected to stay home, raise children and be homemakers. Despite society's pressures and against her parents' wishes, she was one of two women in 1957 to graduate from DePaul University with a bachelor's degree in business administration. Unfortunately, she had limited career opportunities upon graduation because employers did not want to hire a woman for a "man's job." Companies only wanted to hire women to be secretaries or typists.

Undeterred, she decided to pursue a career in education hoping to make an impact on young people's lives. Though married and raising 4 children, she attended night school and obtained her master's in education. She taught 8th grade reading and math for many years at the school that served the Cabrini Green housing projects. Jesse White (our Secretary of State) was the gym teacher and a trusted colleague at that time. She had many fascinating experiences and stories from working in the inner city and was recognized as a pioneer in teaching sexual education to 8th grade female students. She always sought the most difficult teaching assignments in the most impoverished areas in hopes of making a difference.

When I was honored with being sworn in as an Associate Judge in 2007, my mother who was never at a loss for words, stood in stone silence with tears streaming down her cheeks. She was overwhelmed by the moment and the opportunity that was available to me but was rarely afforded to women of her generation. She passed away from cancer the following year.

There is not a day that goes by that I don't fondly remember my mother; her struggles, her perseverance and tenacity, and her beautiful fiery red hair...

**Veronica O'Malley, Associate Judge Lake County
Family Law Division/Self Represented Litigants' Courtroom**

MY INSPIRATION, MY GRANDMOTHER

My grandmother was born in 1920 in Perrysville, Indiana to a poverty-stricken family. In high school she met and married a 1st generation German immigrant. Together they raised two boys and two girls. She was the devoted homemaker from the start. My grandfather owned and operated a large local trucking company, which frequently required that he travel away from home for periods of time. She did it all: caring for the children and maintaining the home.

My grandmother was the one who negotiated the purchase of their first home. They had no extra money for a down payment. She negotiated the financing of the down payment with the homeowner. The remaining was financed from a local bank. When her youngest child started school, she began working for a local bank. Over the years she advanced to become an officer for bank. My grandmother was extremely bright and resourceful. Her formal education ended with high school. If she were born during different era, I know she would have been a successful woman. However, she was born during the depression, and in poverty.

Her married life was extremely difficult as well, raising four children with a spouse who was not present much of the time due to work related travel. She kept house, shopped, cooked, cleaned, disciplined, and never complained. My grandmother was active at church and loved to knit and crochet. She was always busy and loved to learn. However, she was never too busy for me. We had a fantastic relationship. She truly listened and made me feel important. She took the time to explain and to teach.

When I went to college (the first in my family to do so) and then to Law school, it was my grandmother that convinced me to keep trying and going farther. I think she saw in me that which she could not become. She, unknowingly, encouraged me and pushed me to become a successful, independent woman. She is the main reason for my success.

My grandmother is still living and will turn 100 in October. We still visit and she loves to hear about my job and family successes. My hard work ethic, my desire to excel and my desire for success is due to my grandmother, Florence Nimz.

**Karen E. Wall, Associate Circuit Judge, 5th Judicial Circuit,
Danville, Vermilion County**

As a young girl, I remember what an inspiration it was to learn about Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor becoming the first woman on the United States Supreme Court. I was 6 years old when she was confirmed in 1981, but I remember this as a defining event during my childhood. It was discussed greatly during my childhood education and mentioned often in the media, particularly as she remained the lone female on the Court until 1993 (the year I graduated high school). Thus, she truly was the leading lady lawyer and justice during my formative years. She was a trailblazing pioneer in not only the legal profession, but also as one of the first female State Senators in her home state of Arizona. She was brilliant, highly educated, was a wife and mother of three. As a young girl who always had an interest in the law, government and politics, she served as a great inspiration to me, that my dreams to become a lawyer, politician or judge were possible, and that I could have a family as well. A few years ago I was able to go for the first time to the US Supreme Court, it was an awe inspiring and humbling experience, to be there, read information about her and see her statue. It is truly amazing how far we have come as women in American and in the legal profession. I am beyond honored to be writing this essay, as a Judge myself, (3 female judges out of 21 positions in my circuit) hoping to serve as a role model and inspiration to other young women as we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of women having the right to vote.

Amanda Byassee Gott, Circuit Judge, First Judicial Circuit of Illinois

I am Theresa Friel-Draper an Associate Judge for the Fifteenth Circuit in Lee County Illinois. I was appointed to this position on July 30, 2019. These past few months have presented me with new challenges and opportunities both for professional and personal growth. Since being asked to submit this essay, I have had an opportunity to reflect on how I got here.

I have been fortunate to have had many strong, inspiring women in my life who have guided, influenced, and shaped me into who I am today. I am grateful for having such role-models in so many varied areas. Each of these women had attributes that I was proud to emulate when I could, but the most inspirational woman in my life is my mother. She instilled many a life lesson in me as I grew up without me realizing it.

"Mom" demonstrated so many qualities everyday that did not seem anything special at the time, but now as I think back, they were extraordinary lessons and impactful on my life. Here are just a few of many that she demonstrated every day:

- be kind to everyone no matter their color, age or gender. As a young child in the 60's I remember my family inviting African-Americans to dinner. We often had less than others, but what we had would be shared with anyone in need.

- always tell the truth even if it is hard. Be truthful to yourself about yourself. Be authentic. People can see right through you when you try to be someone else.

- you have the strength and courage to deal with whatever comes your way in life. Adversity brings out that strength. Recognize it and use it.

- you have the power to change- yourself and your situation. No one makes you stay in a bad situation or work a job you do not like. It is not their fault if you if you are unhappy, it is entirely yours.

- be optimistic, positive, hopeful and spiritual, but remember if you claim those characteristics, live them openly in your life. People are watching. Handle negative situations, people and words with grace.

- Life is worth living on its worst day, but not easy to live even on its best. It requires work and you must bear responsibility for yours.

I hope that my mother would be proud of the differences I have tried to make using the lessons she taught. Not all of those differences have been successful, and some outcomes will always be a mystery, but I will continue to try. That really is all any of us can do.

**Theresa Friel-Draper, Associate Circuit Judge
Fifteenth Judicial Circuit, Lee County**

“You are in control of your life. There are four things you can control every day of your life: attitude, work ethic, how you treat others and how you treat yourself.” Pat Summitt.

When asked to write a short essay about a woman who has inspired me in a personal or professional manner, the author of the above quote immediately came to

mind (as well as my mother and maternal grandmother.) In the year that we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage, it seems appropriate to honor Coach Pat Summitt, who is arguably the matriarch of modern women's sports. CBS Sports writer Jon Solomon, in an article written about Coach Summitt on June 28th, 2016, the date of her death, stated "Summitt, perhaps more than anybody else in the past 40 years, embodied the vision of what women could achieve in sports by setting incredibly high personal standards...Every female athlete today with an athletic scholarship or a pro career owes a debt of gratitude to Summitt. She helped make women's basketball credible by pushing for more TV exposure and creating a brand for Lady Vols basketball that helped grow the sport." Not only did she push her athletes to achieve success on the basketball court, she encouraged them to be successful students. All 122 Lady Vols under Summitt who completed their eligibility at University of Tennessee earned degrees. At the time of her retirement, 78 of her former players occupied basketball coaching or administrative positions.

Pat grew up in Clarksville, Tennessee. Her parents moved to Henrietta, TN, when she was starting high school so she could play basketball because Clarksville didn't have a girls' team. After high school, she attended University of Tennessee – Martin and won All-American honors playing basketball for the university. She wasn't awarded a basketball scholarship to attend UT-Martin as she began her college career two years prior to the passage of Title IX and there were no athletic scholarships for women. In 1974, at the age of 22, she was named head coach of the University of Tennessee women's basketball program. Women's college basketball was not yet an NCAA-sanctioned sport. Pat earned a salary of \$8,900 her first year as head coach. She washed the players' uniforms –uniforms purchased the previous year with proceeds from a doughnut sale—and drove the team van. One time, for a road game, she and the team slept in the other team's gym the night before. Pat's salary for her last year coaching, the 2011-12 season, was \$1.5 million. You could say she shattered the glass ceiling. 😊

In his 2016 article, Jon Solomon wrote "How much did the times change overlapping Summitt's career? Title IX – the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in education, including athletics – was enacted in 1972. The NCAA appealed the legality of Title IX in 1976. Today, the NCAA headquarters have a Summitt-Wooden room. She was that influential. She was that good."

As I was growing up, focusing on my academics and playing sports, Pat Summitt was the gold standard. I loved watching her coach and her icy stare. I loved hearing her give a motivational speech. She worked hard and expected her players to work equally as hard. She treated others with respect and earned their respect in return. She was a great example for any young girl on how to be successful. In my everyday life, both personal and professional, I strive to be a positive example for others by trying to maintain a positive attitude, working hard, treating others with respect and respecting myself.

Jacquelyn D. Ackert, Presiding Circuit Judge 15th Judicial Circuit, Lee County

Gruff. Unwell. Irresponsible. Functioning alcoholic. From my childhood eyes, my grandmother was impatient, harsh, and quick to criticize. When my immediate family went to visit her, she was often in a new apartment, having left the rent unpaid at her

prior residence. If she gave a present at holidays, it was something pulled from whatever was on the shelf of the local drugstore. Her homemade chili came from a can. Her refrigerator was often bare even though she had invited family to come and stay with her. She had a streak for stinging humor, the kind that embarrasses. I do not have many fond memories of this grandmother, and yet I think of her often.

I learned more about her after she died at age 59. When she was a new mother, her husband went to war overseas and essentially created duplicate families for himself there—new wives, new lives. She divorced and was left to raise two boys, mostly on her own. She was intelligent. She held a job as a public school math teacher for many years. She abused alcohol through many of her working years and beyond. Later in her life, she battled breast cancer and suffered blood clots after treatment which led to a leg amputation.

My life is filled with many who have loved, guided, supported, encouraged and lifted me. But, those I admire and aspire to emulate are not the same person as the woman who inspires me. In my memory, that woman was deeply flawed. The details I learned after her death about the hardships she faced help place her journey in context. My grandmother faced heartbreak, disappointment and disease. From my viewpoint, she was not able to manage the severe challenges of her life well, and her world became small, dark and confining. My grandmother's tale is not a happy one, but it still provides inspiration. Her story inspires me to expand my capacity for joy, to find ways to make my world larger, and to work through the struggles I face in my own life, hopefully with some measure of grace and kindness.

Jennifer L. Johnson, Associate Judge, 22nd Judicial Circuit

In 1976, I was ten years old, and I was a voracious reader. I spent the majority of the summer hiding from chores while draped over a chair or a couch with my nose firmly planted in a book (except when I was watching the Summer Olympics and Nadia Comaneci scored a perfect 10 which inspired super tall, lanky, inflexible, 10 year old me to insist that my parents sign me up for gymnastics, which is another story for another day). What is relevant to this essay, is the fact that in the summer of 1976, I read *Little Women* and I fell in love with Jo March. In part, my attraction to the character could be because my mother's name is Jo. My mother is an amazing woman who was instrumental in shaping the woman I was to become. But setting aside the coincidence of name, the character Jo March resonated with me. She was a tomboy. She loved to write. She was spunky. She got mad at her sisters. She fearlessly went where her passion led her. As far as I was concerned, the remaining March sisters, Meg, Amy and Beth, were a boring side story. After I finished the book, on those hot summer nights, I would lay in my bed and daydream about Jo. I would relive the story in my imagination, but I would change Jo to Janelle and I would become the fearless heroine who fought against the norms of her times to be the girl she wanted to be. I felt inspired by Jo, and at age 10 in the 1970's in the midst of the Womens' Rights Movement, with a strong role model in my mother, I felt empowered. I believed and daydreamed that I could be anything I chose (but, spoiler alert, as it turns out, not a gymnast). The dreams of what I would be "when I grew up" changed, but that unshakeable, underlying belief that I had the power to choose, never changed. Sometimes we read the right book at the right time, and for me, that was *Little Women*.

Janelle K. Christensen, Associate Judge, 19th Judicial Circuit,

Family Law Division

A Real Role Model and Amazing Woman

Senator Evelyn Bowles was County Clerk Evelyn Bowles when I first became an Assistant State's Attorney in Madison County and she was already a legend. Little did I know she'd become one of my closest friends and a wonderful mentor.

"Evelyn" as she always called herself was a worker from Livingston, Illinois. In World War II she served in the military and came home to teach school. She had a summer job in the County Clerk's office and stayed. After two decades working there and being active in local politics, she wanted to run for County Clerk only to be told by 'the party' that it supported a man who had never worked there. She ran in the primary and defied all odds. She won--and continued to win. The party chair once told the press Evelyn was recommended for Clerk "because she's going to win anyway."

We became close friends--our women lawyers' group made her an honorary member. Our kids saw her at holidays as part of the family. She lobbied hard for me when I applied to be an Associate Judge and proudly helped my husband as I donned the robe. Evelyn was my campaign manager when I ran and won a contested election for Circuit Judge and tirelessly campaigned with me.

She later ran and became our first woman state senator--again against some mighty odds. And her best example--she never changed. Always answering her own phone if she was there with "this is Evelyn", she devoted herself to trying to help people solve their problems with respect. I only can aspire to be like her and still miss her!

Judge Barb Crowder (Ret.) 3rd Judicial Circuit

I am a new Associate Judge assigned to Traffic in 1st Municipal, Cook County, having been sworn in on January 6, 2020. I was motivated to pursue the bench because I was fortunate to have a fabulous mentor, Judge Melissa Durkin, who both inspired me and guided me. Melissa taught me how to practice law, navigate opposing counsel, interact with clients, and, most importantly stay genuine and true to myself. Seeing my mentor successfully become a judge 6 years ago gave me the courage to pursue the same path. When you see people you look up to succeed, you start to believe you can too!

Geri Pinzur Rosenberg, Cook County, 1st Municipal

The woman who has inspired me the most both personal and professionally was my mother Doris Clemons (10/29/1928-10/15/2019). My mother was more than the daughter of a railroad porter and maid, the oldest sibling of six, more than the wife of a former Navy ship cook, and much more than the devoted mother of three. She was a force graced with unconditional kindness towards others, a courage that stood by her convictions and a dignity sprinkled with wisdom in the manner she carried herself. She was a strong advocate for those in need once taking gleeful pride in caring for two brothers both with disabilities along with other preschoolers marveling and assisting in their progress stressing that they strive for excellence. She was dedicated to making a

meaningful difference in her community once organizing and funding a cotillion for a large group of inter-city young African-American teenagers in hopes of leaving them with a strong positive vision of the future. In her eighties, it was my mother who was the active chairman of my successful judicial campaign. My mother was an active member of so many organizations and gave of her time and resources in so many ways over her ninety years that it would be too many to list in these paragraphs to give them justice.

Above all, my mother lived through trying political, economic and cultural times yet she never allowed herself to be bitter. My mother's home was always richly filled with people from all types of cultural backgrounds. All from the famous and unknown, rich and poor, black, Asian and white, politically connected and not were treated with the same level of respect like a precious member of her family. She shared her time with music, dance, food and pure laughter to help ease the hopes, aspirations and pains of others. Her motto was to raise above all discrimination and fight to make a change. As she once explained, that as a child because of the darkness of her skin she would often be called "dirt". However, her mother once reminded her that it is from the dirt that grows the most beautiful flowers. In short, I had a very strong, opinionated and caring person that I was blessed to have had such a wonderful role-model and who I had the honor to call my mother.

Judge Carmen Goodman, 12th Judicial Circuit

Let me tell you about my inspiration, my mother, Dolores Eckert. My mother grew up on a farm outside of Belleville, Illinois, where her Dad was a sharecropper and her mother cleaned houses and worked on the farm, cooking for the hired help. She was raised as an only child, her brother was stillborn. Dolores did well in school and her ambition was to be a teacher. She was passionate about her goal.

Dolores was accepted and attended college at Southern Illinois Normal Teacher's College and was expected to graduate in 1940, but graduated a year later due to reoccurring bouts of malaria. The malaria due to the mosquito infested stock ponds of Southern Illinois. After graduation, she returned to the farm and was hired as a teacher in a one room country school house where she taught all eight grades. Her Dad would help her every Sunday during the winter by going to the school on Sundays to chop wood and fill the woodburning stove to heat the school for the next morning. She loved the students and the challenges. After several years, she was hired by Cahokia School District as a 4th grade teacher. She took two rides each morning and afternoon to get to and from school. One ride took her from the farm into town where she picked up the second ride that took her to school.

It was during those early years of teaching 4th grade in Cahokia that she met my Dad. It was during the war. My Dad was in the Air Force during WWII and stationed in the states, but away from home. They fell in love and eloped, traveling to Kentucky to be married by a Justice of the Peace. Why? Women weren't allowed to be teachers and be married. Women had to be spinsters in order to teach. Men could be married and continue teaching. My mom and dad kept their marriage secret for three years during the war so my mom could continue to live her passion...her dream... and teach. Then the war was over and my Dad came home.

When my mom passed away and I was going through her papers I found her letter of resignation that she tendered to the Cahokia School Superintendent after my

Dad came home. She never threw it away. You see, when she tendered her resignation letter to the Superintendent, he handed it back to her. After the war, things had changed and he decided to keep her as a teacher. He told her to go back to her classroom and keep teaching. And that's what she did for the next thirty-three years.

My mother was ambitious, passionate about her profession and resilient. "Ambition is the path to success. Persistence is the vehicle you arrive in." I inherited my mom's vehicle and thank her for it.

**Annette A. Eckert, Retired, Circuit Court Judge
20th Judicial Circuit, St. Clair County**

As with most of us, there are many inspiring women in our lives. I have been inspired in different ways from that first decision to go to law school to my appointment as an Associate Circuit Judge. Missouri Supreme Court Justice Mary Rhodes Russell is certainly at the top of my list for influencing the way I handle my day-to-day "adventures" on the bench.

I met Justice Mary Rhodes Russell in 1988, then Attorney Mary Rhodes, when I moved to Hannibal, Missouri to take a position as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney for Marion County. Justice Rhodes Russell was one of two women practicing attorneys in Marion County when I arrived. She welcomed me to Hannibal by way of invites to lunch, to meetings of community clubs and organizations and to the "young attorneys" meetings of the Tenth Circuit Bar Association. Only four years older than myself, I could tell the Judges and attorneys respected her immensely and that she truly was just being herself. She took her work very seriously, herself not so seriously and great pride in both. She made it so obvious that I would be a full and active part of the Northeast Missouri legal community, that there really was no other option.

When I came across the river to Illinois I brought that attitude with me. When I'm reading reports at home, reviewing a statute just one more time before the trial or using "regular" words in bond court and with a smile explaining things twice I am reminded to take my profession seriously, never be too full of myself and be proud of what I have accomplished.

**Debra L. Wellborn, Associate Circuit Judge
Eighth Judicial Circuit**

In both my personal and professional life, I have been inspired by many strong women.

My great grandmother arrived at Ellis Island with four young daughters. By the time she arrived in America, her husband had started a family with another woman. My great grandmother worked hard and raised four young daughters as a single mother.

My grandmother learned from her mother the importance of perseverance, dedication and hard work. Those traits have been passed on to the women in my family – my mother, my aunt, my cousin, me and my daughter.

In my professional life, there are so many women who worked hard as lawyers and judges and paved the way for my generation to be successful.

I will be forever grateful for the strong women in my family and the strong women who have inspired me in my legal career.

It is my hope that we can continue to inspire young women to be strong and successful.

**Judge Ellen Beth Mandeltort, Associate Judge
Cook County, Third Municipal District**

There are many women who have supported and inspired me. The two that I am mentioning are my mother, Portia Ball Smith and the Honorable Jane L. Stuart (ret.) My mother has encouraged me to succeed and reach many goals that she never had the opportunity to even try. She has always been my biggest cheerleader. Her support of me and my children over the years has given me the time to participate in numerous activities and events. My mentor and friend, Jane Stuart, attended law school with me at the John Marshall Law School. Attending law school to become a lawyer was her fourth career. She encouraged me to join and participate in many activities. Her position was even if I was the only one in the room as a Black person or a woman that I should be there so my voice would be heard. Both of my inspirations continue to support, encourage and love me. They have been blessings in my life by Listening (L), Orchestrating (O), Valuing (V) and Encouraging (E) me. In a word they have provided love.

Judge Patrice Ball Reed, Cook County

My parents married when they were eighteen years old. After several years of marriage, along I came followed a few years later by my little brother. Life certainly was not always easy for my young parents but as a child I did not appreciate the struggles my mom endured for me. Since she was eighteen years old, she maintained full time employment working her way up the corporate ladder both as a female and holding only a high school degree. My inspiration from my mom is not only as a result of her work ethic but also her dedication to family. I am the first in my family to receive a college degree. My mom's support, both financially and emotionally, ensured that I achieved this goal. May of 2003 was a pivotal month for our family, I graduated law school, my little brother graduated college and was accepted into his chosen field for a master's degree and my mom graduated with her college degree after years of on-line course-work while continuing to maintain full-time employment. My mom has inspired me to firmly believe that if you work efficiently there does exist a balance between a successful career and raising a family.

Immediately upon graduation from law school, I accepted employment with a law firm in Springfield with intent to focus my practice on corporate health care. After a few years I shifted gears due to a need at the firm for an attorney to assist in the domestic relations practice. Never did I imagine being in a courtroom as I did not take trial advocacy in law school, never participated in mock trials, and thought I did not belong in the courtroom. Turns out this transition was possible due to me working with the next inspiring and supportive female who came into my life, Peggy Ryan. Lawyers often

talk about being a mentor but being a mentor is hard work. As I navigated the family law scene, Peggy was always by my side. Never a time existed where I could not walk into her office and discuss strategy or ask a legal question. Each and every time as soon as I would walk into her office, Peggy would put down whatever file she was working on to assist me with my question. Despite being in a contentious area of law, Peggy ensured that I always felt supported and capable. Peggy is an inspiration as a true mentor.

Judge Jennie Ascher, Associate Judge, Sangamon County

Laura Cadwell, a friend, an author, an attorney inspires me. Laura was a former civil trial lawyer and professor at Loyola University Chicago School of Law.

She has written 16 books and had novels published in over 25 countries and translated into more than 13 languages, Researching her sixth novel she met a young man in Cook County jail. Compelled by his story, Laura joined his defense team and he was ultimately proved innocent. This inspired her first nonfiction book, Long Way Home: A Young Man Lost in the System and the Two Women Who Found Him (Free Press, Simon & Schuster).

Laura discovered that while many programs are available for ex-offenders after their release, the innocent in most states receive no assistance. As a result Laura created Life After Innocence, an innovative and first-of-its-kind program that help those exonerated to reclaim their lives.

With all her accomplishments what I found most impressive and inspiring about Laura was how she spoke and authentically listened to people. She was truly curious about everything and everyone. She came into my world as my sister's friend but soon became an integral part of our family joining us for birthdays and holidays. Even facing terminal cancer, she always had a smile and a laugh and an ear to listen. Although she could have accomplished more and certainly made the world a happier and brighter place if given more years, she did what most of us find hard to do. She accomplished what Johnathan Swift wished for all humanity, to live all the days of your life. Laura was that. We will miss you.

Judge Colleen Sheehan, Cook County, Retired

My wonderful mother Monica has been the biggest inspiration to me. For the entirety of my life she has inspired me in my personal, professional, and family life. She provided me from the very start with love, kindness, dedication, morals, empathy, and the self-esteem to take on challenges and to uphold a strong work ethic and sense of values.

Last year my mother retired after 53 years in nursing at the age of 76. On her last day of work, her co-workers had Florence Nightingale drawn on cake for her as a tribute to the exceptional empathy, knowledge, and kindness my mother always displayed to those who were ill. My mother always gave her full self to her patients and her family. My mother is also the perpetual optimist who sees the silver lining in every situation. Her daily texts are always full of positive emojis! She is my biggest inspiration and I am so very blessed to have her as my mother and as the grandmother to my children.

Judge Colleen Reardon Daly
Circuit Court of Cook County, Third Municipal District

Woman of influence: Eula McClaney

A list of women who have influenced my life would be pages long. Yet this is about Eula McClaney whom you've likely never heard of. Neither had I before the day of our one and only meeting.

I was seated in the nearly deserted hotel dining room hastily reviewing notes for a seminar at a National Bar Association convention when an older, plainly dressed woman stopped at my table and asked: "May I sit here?" Although desperately wanting a few minutes to myself and puzzled by her request, I replied: "Yes, Ma'am." She introduced herself and continued talking. I gave up my desire for solitude and listened. She had just returned from the Schomburg Center of the New York Public Library and was staying overnight before returning home, she stated. She was honored and surprised that her papers were placed in a collection at the Center, she added. She surmised she had been asked to contribute because of her years spent supporting Yvonne Braithwaite Burke. I recognize the name. Decades earlier Burke had become the first African-American woman elected to the US House of Representatives from a western state, California.

A woman who helped a woman put a crack in the political class ceiling! With that McClaney had me hooked. But it was her own life story that compelled me to seek a speaking spot for her. And, I believe, led to her collection at the Schomburg Center.

The bar president who was to preside over the plenary session later that day was reluctant, to put it mildly, to add to his agenda. "I don't have room to add anyone," he stated. "She's not even a lawyer," he added. "Who is she anyway?" he continued. Finally yielding he said: "Five or 10 minutes; preferably five."

Eula McClaney, this woman with a sixth grade education from an Alabama country school, so mesmerized the audience, including the president, that he permitted her to speak for 40 of his 60 minutes.

With passages from her 68 years journey from Pikes County, Alabama to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania at age 26; to Los Angeles, California at age 44; to the Schomburg Center, she personified "truths" that we all well know but at times forget.

Pursue your passion: *For her it was owning land. "Property" is what she labeled it.*

Deal squarely with obstacles to your goal: *For her a signal one was leaving a man she loved but whose goals were too adverse to hers. "It was my vision, not his," she said understandingly.*

Seek knowledge. Be prepared: *Bit by bit she learned to buy, manage, and sell property.*

Be persistent: *From survival level earnings she set aside small sums of money until she had enough to buy a run-down parcel of property and improve it.*

Be patient: *There were several setbacks. Family circumstances often caused the saved sum to be depleted. Nonetheless, by the time she headed to Los Angeles, McClaney owned a number of properties in Pittsburgh.*

Have faith, hope and charity: *She credits these to her success.*

I later learned that by the time we met Eula McClaney was one of the wealthiest and most charitable women in Southern California. She had amassed her wealth through “property.”

It was courtesy, along with other lessons learned from the Prime women in my life, that permitted me this impact full experience that I am now share with you.

Judge Arnette Hubbard, Law Division, Circuit Court of Cook County

I grew up across the street from Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish and School. So, Sr. Paulanne Held was my neighbor. But what’s more, she was my teacher, disciplinarian (hah, who am I kidding, I NEVER needed any discipline...), mentor, friend and someone who to this day continues to inspire me. Some call her Glenview’s Patron Saint. I think that’s right. She always puts others first: her students, parishioners, neighbors and the needy throughout Cook County and beyond.

When I observed Sr. Paulanne while growing up, it stood out to me that she was always doing: setting up church for mass, attending to the brides at their weddings, sweeping up after a function, shoveling snow (my mom, another woman who has inspired me, always made me go help her!), teaching students how to be altar servers, teaching CCD, leading the students in song, bringing the Eucharist to neighbors and the sick in hospital, collecting clothing and food for the needy, instructing students for their first communion, penance or confirmation. She works tirelessly, with an open mind and heart and with true kindness.

Now don’t get me wrong, Sr. Paulanne is not someone you might call warm and fuzzy. She has a pretty staunch exterior, and you don’t want to mess with her. But once you get inside, she is your friend and supporter for life. When I struggle with life’s challenges, I think about Sr. Paulanne, who faces every day with strength, positivity and love. I try to do the same and I try to make sure she stays in my head and heart to inspire me. I am so grateful she not only touched my life, but was an integral part of my youth. Thank you Sr. Paulanne.

Judge Catherine A. Schneider, Circuit Court Judge Circuit Court of Cook County, Illinois

I have been inspired by a beautiful blue-eyed blond named Marianne. She graduated college in three years, was accepted early into medical school and graduated in 1965 with only three other women alongside the 96 men in her class. She married during medical school and raised four children while in her residency, internship, and while cultivating her own practice in dermatology. Marianne went on to become the President of the Chicago Dermatological Society, the Illinois Dermatological Society, Vice President of the American Academy Dermatology, and she spent five years as an appointee to the Food and Drug Administration in Washington D.C. making sure dermatological medication was safe for use.

Besides her outstanding professional achievements she has always had a sunny disposition and loves people, parties, and parades! Marianne O’Donoghue swears that her strongest passion is her faith, then her family, and then her profession. Her warm

and special gifts are most generously bestowed on her husband, their children, their spouses and her fourteen grandchildren such that she manages to make them ALL feel the resplendence of life when she is around them. How lucky I am! She is my mother.

Judge Maureen O'Donoghue Hannon, County Division, Daley Center, happy middle child. Mother of three wonderful young adults in their 20's and married to Patrick Clair

I am a new Associate Judge, sworn in January 6, 2020, and assigned to First Municipal, Traffic Division in Cook County. Growing up, I had a lot of strong women to look up to. None, however, cast as long of a shadow as my "not quite" 5-foot-tall mother. My mom is small, but mighty. Although she will be 80 years old in a few short months she still has more energy than most people I know, and she still commands every room that she enters. Growing up, I watched my mother consistently set goals and achieve them. She set an inspiring example for my sister and me. Although driven and active in many different groups and organizations, she still always put her family first. I always looked up to my mother as a child, and although I now physically tower over her, I still look up to her as an adult. I owe any and all accomplishments I have achieved or will achieve to my wonderful mother.

Judge Amee Alonso, Circuit Judge, Cook County

I love to swim and was inspired as a young girl by film star Esther Williams who swam her way through several movies, always smiling, looking refreshed and happy. It looked like so much fun. I just wanted to swim too. I swam on my high school swim team and was a swim instructor at summer camp. To this day I love to swim and have done the swimming portion of several triathlons as well as the race to the end of Navy Pier. I have also done the Polar Plunge in the Arctic Ocean and the Antarctica Ocean.

**Judge Carol Kipperman, Associate Judge
County Division and have been on the bench for 31 years**

My name is Carrie Hamilton. I am a Cook County Circuit Court Judge assigned to the Markham Courthouse. A woman who has inspired me is my maternal grandmother, Leona Hacker, or, to me, Grandma Hacker. Grandma Hacker is 99 years young.

In 1920, Grandma Hacker was the sixth child born on her immigrant parent's farm in Harvel, Illinois. Because she was a girl and the youngest, her parents believed that her highest and best role was not to attend college but to stay on the farm and work. Grandma desperately wanted to be a teacher and set her mind to making it happen, against the wishes of (and without the knowledge or support of) her parents. Grandma Hacker excelled at school and a teacher helped her secretly apply to college at Illinois State University. Grandma Hacker was not only accepted but received a scholarship that covered tuition but not books. The summer before she left for college, Grandma Hacker was able to secretly pack for college by wearing two sets of clothes out of the house when she would go on a date. She would then drop the extra set of clothing at her teacher's house. In 1937, She hitchhiked from Harvel to Taylorville and then took a bus to Bloomington. She found a room to rent and a waitress job to pay for rent and books.

She worked every single day while also going to school full time. After two years of college, Grandma Hacker got married and then had five children. My mother, Cathy, is her middle child.

When her fifth child was a baby, Grandma decided to go back to college and get her teaching degree. She was able to get her scholarship reinstated to cover a portion of her tuition. She took a few classes at a time (often night classes and summer school), driving at least 30 miles both ways, all the while holding down a job and raising five kids as a single mother. In 1955, Grandma began her teaching career in the Girard School District (at that time she could legally teach because she had completed two years of course work and was then working toward her four year degree). Grandma Hacker received her bachelor degree in 1960.

Grandma Hacker taught for 37 years and then substitute taught for another 10 plus years thereafter. She touched the lives of so many students during that time. Grandma has lived a very full life and has not been slowed down in the slightest as the years have gone by. She is truly an inspiration to me to work hard, never give up and follow my dreams.

Judge Carrie Hamilton, Cook County Circuit Court

I immigrated from Mumbai, India to the USA at age sixteen with my family. After working at McDonalds (a mandatory rite of passage), I unwittingly landed at the UIUC (I had planned to apply to UIC but checked the wrong box). I met my roommate Dianne Loyet: a smart, humble, and beautiful friend that helped guide me into American life and culture.

We are polar opposites. I am agnostic and occasionally Hindu during tough times. Dianne is a practicing Catholic. I was (and can still be) loud, lost, and overtly ambitious. With neither the discipline, nor the common sense, to save myself from the onslaught of freedom and cultural storm that descends on teenage immigrants, I was unprepared for my new life. Dianne grew up in Collinsville, Illinois and spoke fluent French, was studying Russian and Spanish, and was in the Fencing club. Tough, soft spoken, and kind, she started out by loaning me her brand new leather boots on a night out and took care of me when I finessed my way into bars with my Greencard as ID. I had little possessions, and no money. Without her love and support, I would have flunked out or worse.

Dianne was and is a steady friend and mentor. A request for help with my son's IEP resulted in a six-page letter of support with the most 'up to date' information and encouragement. She has a Doctorate in Multilingual Multicultural Studies and volunteers to help immigrants study and pass their citizenship exam. A cancer survivor, mother, wife, journalist, professor, motorcycle rider...there is nothing this small town girl with a big heart cannot do. There are famous women who inspire us and most have never received the proper recognition. My friend Dianne is a true American hero because she represents the best and often overlooked gift of our nation: everyday, unassuming Americans giving a helping hand of love and friendship to new Americans and welcoming us all with an open heart so we too can aspire to be our best.

Judge Ketki Steffen, Cook County

I am fortunate to have had many women in my life who have inspired me, but my biggest inspiration is my mother, Mary. She raised four children, essentially by herself, and also helped care for my cousins after my aunt died. Even while going through a divorce, navigating the health challenges and addiction issues of numerous family members, and caring for her elderly mother, my mother somehow managed to keep her sense of humor. She always encouraged and supported my siblings and me in all of our endeavors, including coaching our sports teams, serving on the PTA and coming to every game, track meet, science competition and campaign event. She always puts her children (and now, grandchildren) first.

My mother is retiring this June after a 30-year teaching career. I have talked to many of her students and their families over the past several years. They each have their own stories about how my mom inspired them, mentored them through a troubling time or went above and beyond her job as a teacher to assist them. Her selfless dedication to her students serves as an inspiring example. My mother continues to teach my siblings and me many things, but most importantly, strength, perseverance and the importance of service and helping others. I am truly privileged to call her “Mom.”

Clare J. Quish, Circuit Court of Cook County, First Municipal District

Patience, humility, kindness, forgiveness, compassion, spirituality, commitment, perseverance, hard work, optimism, and dedication --- these are just a few qualities I have learned from my Mom, my Rock, my Confident, my Mentor, *Pat McLaughlin* (aka: my precious Mamma). If it were not for her beautiful soul delicately guiding me through some of life's most treacherous obstacles, I would not be the woman or Judge I am today. Like a seed, she watered me with endless words of encouragement... always telling me I could do anything I set my mind to. She believed in me. She pushed me. She inspired me. She motivated me. Not financially (because we did not come from financial means), but through her steadfast, unwavering, and unconditional love. She also taught me to not live in fear for fear takes away one's joy and the ability to dream. She taught me to trust in the Lord and to turn to Him in times of darkness. She taught me to pray ... not only for God's will for myself, but for others. Most importantly, she taught me to forgive – even those who did not seem deserving of forgiveness. The qualities she possessed and instilled in me are priceless, yet they have more value than any trophy or award on my wall could ever have. They have sustained me since I was a child and have equipped me with the tools I needed to maneuver in this complex thing called life. Achieving my goal of Judge would also not have been possible without the mentorship and inspiration I received from *Justice Rita Garman*, and to her and many other colleagues in our profession, I will fore

Judge April G. Troemper, Circuit Court Judge 7thCircuit

When I received the email requesting a short essay on the woman that most inspired me, I immediately thought of only one person, my mother. My mother was beautiful, elegant, brilliant and ahead of her time. Born in Havana, Cuba in 1918 (yes, the year of the Spanish flu that was a global pandemic), she was not deterred by the conventions of the times. Instead of marrying in her late teens or early twenties, as was the norm in those days, she decided that she wanted to become a lawyer, and she did.

She commenced a successful practice by working for Chrysler Corporation in Havana and then clerked for a judge so that she might someday become one. She married my dad, also an attorney, and lived a fun-filled, successful life with her husband and children until fate intervened.

In 1961, in response to the fears created by the Cuban revolution, my mother garnered the strength to put her two children, ages 7 and 11, on a plane as part of Operation Peter Pan. My mother knew that she had to remove us from the horrors of Castro's Cuba, even without any assurance as to when or even whether she would ever see her children again. When I became a mother, I realized how much courage her actions took.

Luckily, approximately a year later, they were able to leave Cuba, and we were reunited. The most amazing thing is that my parents came to the United States in their forties, banned from taking anything out of Cuba except a few articles of clothing, not knowing the language, not able to practice law in the United States, and I never heard them complain. My mother started her life in the U.S. with no money, working in a factory, and dependent on the help of family. She was always grateful that she and my dad were able to leave Cuba and that she had her children back. That is all that really mattered. I too am grateful that my mother lived long enough to see me reach what had once been her dream, to become a judge.

Judge Grace Guerra Dickler, Cook County

The woman who inspired me most is my mother. Throughout my childhood, it never occurred to me that being a woman was a disadvantage or something that could hold me back. I have no brothers so women ruled the family; my father's voice was given no greater weight than anyone else's. It was majority rule and women were the majority.

When I received an acceptance letter to college, my mother took a second job so that my parents could afford the college tuition (and, later, the law school tuition). I offered to take a job during college and contribute toward tuition, which offended my mother. She said that paying for my education made her proud, that I would work the rest of my life, and that I was to spend that period of time in my life studying. I am eternally grateful.

Judge Jennifer J. Payne, Cook County

My 4th grade teacher was a direct ancestor of Elizabeth Cady Stanton. I had no idea who that was, but I knew that when my grandmothers were born, they didn't have the right to vote. That seemed inconceivable. Something so basic and precious.

I became fascinated by the suffragettes: Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Alice Paul, Carrie Chapman Catt, Lucy Stone, Lucretia Mott, Ida B. Wells and on and on.

Reading about woman who were vilified and brutalized and marginalized and jailed and force fed often for just standing silent in front of the White House for seeking something so basic as the vote, made me realize that nothing was impossible.

I remember wearing my “ERA Yes” button on my uniform as I worked in the Kmart grill while working my way through college. I was studying during my break and a man and his young son asked what I was studying. I told him I was going to be a lawyer. He stopped me and corrected me and said I meant I was going to be a legal secretary. I said, no, I’m going to be a lawyer. He laughed and said I may want to be a lawyer, but I will BE a legal secretary. I remember being so angry. I thought he had no idea what women have done to achieve their goals. Alice Paul would have probably punched the guy.

Sadly, the ERA didn’t pass, but I did become a lawyer. Thanks ladies!

Judge Carol Pentuic, Associate Judge, 14th Judicial Circuit

I began practicing law in McLean county in 1982. There were only a handful of women attorneys at that time. I remember driving with a woman client to Danville for her divorce hearing, some time in the late 1980s. When we arrived at the courthouse, we were directed to Judge Rita Garman's courtroom, where we had a brief proof-up for the divorce. I remember very clearly that there were only women in the courtroom---litigant, lawyer and judge. I was delighted and honored to appear before Judge Garman, the first woman judge I ever appeared before. Just seeing a woman judge was an inspiration for me, but of course, having the opportunity to watch Justice Garman as she became an appellate and then supreme court justice was even more inspiring. Justice Garman has led by example throughout her long and distinguished career. She has always made a point of being accessible to other women judges and encouraging them. When I served on the Conference of Chief Judges, she was the Supreme Court liaison to the Conference and several times Justice Garman was available to have dinner with the other women chief judges. Her willingness to spend time with us made it very special. She has been my lodestar throughout my own career as a trial judge and I am so grateful to her for leading the way for other women to achieve their dream of having meaningful careers as lawyers and judges.

Judge Elizabeth A. Robb, Retired, Circuit Judge of the 11th Judicial Circuit

Who inspired me is the easiest question in the world for me. Without a doubt, it was and still is my beloved Mother. My siblings and I grew up in humble beginnings. My mother married at a young age and divorced. She raised five children virtually alone. She instilled the notion that knowledge is power and gave each of us so much love and nurturing that we barely missed material items we lacked. Life was far from easy growing up in the inner City of Chicago; but we made it. I have a sister who is a forensic scientist for the Illinois State Police Crime Lab; a brother who is Auditor of the Fortune 500 Companies for IRS; and a sister who owns her own Public Relations Company. People often remark that our Mother must be very proud of us. However, we politely correct them and respond, "No, we're are very proud of her!" What we have accomplished cannot hold a candle to what she has done!

Judge LaGuina Clay-Herron, Cook County

It has been my privilege to walk through life in the company of a great host of inspiring women. They include my dear mother, my only sister, my aunts and my girl cousins, my girlfriends, my sister judges and lawyers, and a tight band of twelve college friends whom I have known for over 50 years.

My mother taught me to aim high and to look out for others. (To fair, I learned that from my dad too!)

My sister has shown me how to live a life of courage and determination.

My aunts and my girl cousins have given me an abiding appreciation for family ties.

My girlfriends have showered me with laughter when I am happy, comfort me when I am low, advice when I need it, and the warmth of their love.

My sister judges and lawyers have taught me to persevere and to keep on smiling.

My long-time college friends have set a high bar for me. We met as sophomores in college when we spent a year traveling together through Europe and studying at Oxford. (Lest you think we were a wild bunch, I hasten to add that we were chaperoned by a nun – who was also very inspiring!)

The twelve of us came of age as members of the leading age of the baby boom when women were refusing to be denied. Of the twelve, all are professionals in their fields, including five who are lawyers and two who were judges.

Over the years the twelve of us have maintained a close bond through letters, visits, emails, phone calls and reunions. From them, and from all the women who have inspired me, I have learned, to paraphrase Robert Browning, that my reach must exceed my grasp, else what's a heaven for?

Judge Jane Waller, Retired, Lake County

Today I voted! It was barely dawn and I remembered that I had not written this essay. I'm grateful for those who paved the way for women to vote and I remember the later vision of others still fighting for my right to vote long after 1920.

On many mornings like today, no matter where she worked, she took off. The night before, she would pack her lunch and some water. Her clothes were prepared based on the weather, instructions were given for the next morning and evening and then early to bed, early to rise. For as far back as I can remember she was an election judge. I didn't really understand why that was important enough for her to take off from work just to get up earlier and work longer. She continued to do it until she could no longer care for herself.

When I was finally old enough, I registered to vote. She never told me I had to do it. When I voted, I finally understood what she did on those long election days.

I walked into my polling place and saw those dedicated workers. Sometimes I think about the decisions I have had to make and the decisions I've made, (especially when it appears that they were good decisions). There was never an attempt to indoctrinate my thinking other than as it relates to the importance of education, but I had the best teacher who taught by example every day of her life. On this election day, I salute her, my mother.

Judge Cheyrl D. Ingram, Cook County

Empowered Women, Empower Women. That was a lesson I learned early on. It all started on my first day of kindergarten, when my mom sent me to school wearing a bright pink shirt emblazoned with, "I am woman, hear me roar!" While I was fortunate to be mentored by some terrific, strong women, no one woman inspired me, and continues to inspire me, more than my late mother. Her life lessons and mottos still guide and motivate me today. Although my mother was raised during a time when some thought that a woman's place is in the kitchen, my mother made it clear to me that my place is wherever I wanted it to be. Plus, admittedly, I was, and am, an awful cook. I wanted to be a lawyer, but I did not come from a family of lawyers, nor did I know many female lawyers. My mother demonstrated to me that a woman can do anything, and be anything. My mother told me, "Be the CEO your mother wanted you to marry." My mom continually stressed to me that if I wanted to try something, not to let the fear of failure stop me. In fact, my mother taught me my first law: You cannot gain weight on your birthday—it's illegal!

My mother was the kindest, most positive, intelligent person I ever knew— really a "glass half-full" kind of woman; after all, "Crying causes wrinkles, but laughing creates dimples." My mother always emphasized the importance of supporting other women, and that, "A candle loses nothing by lighting another candle." My mother taught me to appreciate the women who came before me who shattered the glass ceiling, and to never be the type of woman who seals up that glass ceiling behind me, preventing other women from entering. In fact, my mother was the opposite type of woman. My mother truly emphasized that, "her success, is not your failure." From my mother's examples, and from her plethora of mottos, I realized the importance of paying it forward. To illustrate, I understand that it is important to continue to mentor younger attorneys, to get them involved in bar associations and civic activities, to conduct practice interviews with them, to sing their praises to supervisors, and to simply lend support or advice.

My mother taught me, "Don't be a bully, and don't tolerate anyone else being a bully." It was natural that being inspired by my mom led me to a career where I tried to assist victims of bullying and domestic violence. After all, she instilled in me the duty to speak up on behalf of those who cannot speak up for themselves, and to seek justice. Most importantly, my mother taught me to always do the right thing— even if it's the unpopular thing, and even when nobody is watching (although I'm pretty sure my mother is always watching. After all, nobody has better eyesight than the eyes in the back of the head of a Jewish mother).

It was not an easy path to run for judge, but I had the lessons imparted unto me by my mother to guide me. Like other female candidates, I was put under intense scrutiny to which male candidates might not have been subjected. My mother's lessons encouraged me to be tough without being harsh or cruel. She also stressed to me that I

would have to be better-prepared, or even over-prepared, to be taken seriously. My mother inspired me to strive to earn my position as a judge, and to not give up on the path to my dream. And, because of my mother, I will continue to strive to be a credit to the bench, and to always do the right thing... especially because I know she will be watching! My mother inspired me to depend on the support and love of my family, my male allies, and women who support women. After all, Empowered Women, Empower Women.

Judge Megan Goldish, Cook County

Among the women who inspired me is my grandmother, Geraldine McLean. Grandma was born on a farm in southern Missouri and had an eighth-grade education. A product of her time, the focus of her life was home and volunteer activities. In any situation, she took charge. Food? She planted the garden, canned the harvest, got the best from the butcher, whipped up a pie every day or so, and would make jelly out of whatever was around (say, crabapples or rose hips). At her church, she oversaw the planning and execution of many wedding receptions and the annual chicken n' dumplin' dinner for 400 people. She tended roses—not just in her own yard but also in the municipal gardens. Any Easter photo from my childhood will show my sister and me wearing dresses and coats Grandma made.

Grandma was a whirlwind of activity from the time she rose in the morning until her afternoon nap. She'd close her eyes, go directly to sleep for 20 minutes, then pop back up and get to work.

She was devoted to her family. We adored her.

Grandma might not be considered accomplished by today's standards, but she taught me by example to use your skills and inclinations to make a mark in the world: take charge, eat well, make plans, keep moving, give back, love fiercely, and nap if you can.

Judge Pamela McLean Meyerson, Circuit Court of Cook County

I am Judge Sharon Oden Johnson, of the Illinois Cook County Circuit Court – Domestic Relations Division. I have served on the Circuit Court since 2010 and am currently the 2020 Democratic nominee for Illinois Appellate Court Judge. I am a proud graduate of Lindblom Technical High School, Bradley University, and Howard University School of Law. I have worked for the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, State of New Jersey, U.S. Department of Justice, and of course been self-employed.

Through all of my experiences, I have found inspiration from many intelligent, bold, talented, and beautiful women. However, the woman that has and continues to inspire me on a consistent basis is my mother Linda J. Oden. She is a model of independence and perseverance. She has overcome many obstacles including divorce, devastating “me too” events, loss of her own mother at an early age, effects of mass incarceration on the men in her family, and the many financial woes that accompany single parenting. Despite all of the outside forces working against her, she managed to invest in real estate, start multiple businesses, become a minister, and obtain her bachelor's degree at the age of 65. During the Covid 19 Pandemic, she prepared and

delivered meals to those in need and organized prayer lines on a daily basis. It is her positive “can do” attitude about life that pushes me to persevere despite the odds. I can recall one day as a preteen attempting to organize friends to go to the movie theater. We could not agree on times or the movie. After a day went by, my mother told me “if you wait on others, you will never do it . . . be prepared to go by yourself . . . you make the plan and follow through, even if no one else joins you.” I have taken this sentiment with me throughout life. If I had waited for the approval of others, my time to run for judge would have never come. My mother’s wisdom and sage advice inspires me to remove the “im” to reveal what is possible.

As every woman judge will attest, it has not been an easy road to the bench. My election could not have been possible without the assistance and encouragement of other women who were brave and considerate enough to make a path for me to follow. As with a potter and a ball of clay, many women have contributed to molding me into who I am today. At Bradley University, I had an advisor who stated in my law school recommendation, “she is extremely capable, but does not know her true potential.” That advisor is now U.S. Congresswoman Robin Kelly. Over the years, I have been pushed, pulled, smoothed, and massaged toward my potential by the experienced hands of elder women who asked for nothing, but my best effort, in return: namely, aunt Cheryl Diane Johnson; aunt Debra NelsonThompson; aunt Gracia Barnett; grandmother Erma C. Godfrey; grandmother Ruth J. Horton; cousin Attorney Judy Martin; Judge Diane Shelley; Judge Shelvin L.M. Hall; Judge Cynthia Y. Cobbs; and Judge Diana Embil. When I think of all of the accomplishments of my mother, the aforementioned women, and the unsung sheroes like them, I am reminded of an anonymous quote: “SHE BELIEVED SHE COULD, SO SHE DID

Judge Sharon Oden Johnson, Cook County Circuit Court Domestic Relations Division

My mother Josephine King inspired my sisters and I to achieve.

My mother, a CPS teacher, was ahead of her time. I went with her to class as she pursued a doctorate in education, while raising five children.

In the early 1970’s, I told my parents that I was thinking about law school. It’s hard to believe now, but close to fifty years ago it was uncommon for women.

My old country Irish father (born in 1910) said, “Oh Sheila, that’s not for you. No one will want to marry you!”

Mom thought it a grand idea. She gave me the courage to go places that discouraged women.

My mom taught school five years beyond her anticipated retirement to pay for medical school for my little sister, Dr. Anita King Bowes, who became a head and neck surgeon.

Mom died on January 23, 2020 at age 102. I had the privilege of holding her hand when she left us and entered into eternity.

Judge Sheila Devane, Retired, Circuit Court of Cook County

How lucky I have been to have two wonderful mentors named Marianna and Mary Ann!

Marianna Johnson Walker was my mother. Mom grew up during the Great Depression with nearly nothing. Her mom had left her dad who refused to work to support six kids. Mom rarely had shoes that fit properly. Her family moved constantly, because her mom would get too far behind on rent. There was also too little food to feed six growing kids.

Surviving her humble beginnings, my mom put herself through Western Illinois University and obtained a teaching degree. She taught in one-room country schools before marrying my dad. She was smart to marry a farmer. Her kids would not go without food. And, she would help educate her own six kids. She sewed our clothes, darned our socks, and preserved our garden-raised food. She also clipped coupons and scrimped and saved in other ways, so that she and my dad could ensure that all six of us obtained university educations. From my mom, I learned how to cook and clean, how to use proper punctuation and grammar, and how to be a good parent. The most important thing I learned from mom was to be resilient! It took me over nine years of trying to become a judge before I was elected to the bench. I am so thankful Mom lived long enough to see me installed as a judge.

Mary Ann Grohwin McMorrow is another woman mentor to whom I am forever indebted. From the time I first met her, Justice McMorrow took her valuable time to take me under her wing. She was a past president of the Women's Bar Association of Illinois. When I chaired my first WBAI committees, she was always there, urging me on, telling me that I had what it took to be WBAI president. She inspired me and imbued me with confidence. I became WBAI president in 1998.

In 2001, Justice McMorrow appointed me to what was then the Illinois Supreme Court Committee on Civility. In 2005, the committee morphed into the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism. I have been a very active and engaged commissioner ever since, including serving as Chair of the Commission for six years. Justice McMorrow was a consummate professional and set the standard for me for professionalism. More than anyone else, Justice McMorrow influenced my legal career and the professional path I am still pursuing. I am very grateful that she lived to see me become a judge and become Chair of the Commission on Professionalism.

Due to the inspiration from these wonderful mentors, I have mentored countless young women (& some men), and I intend to continue to "pay it forward."

**Debra B. Walker, Circuit Court of Cook County
Domestic Relations Division**

My grandmother, Margaret Durkin (nee Moore), fondly known as "Nana", always inspired me. She was one of 13 children living in a small, thatched roof home in Tuam, County Galway, Ireland. Her family was very poor. They had more mouths than they

could feed. As a very young child, she was sent to live with one of her uncles to help him around the house. She went to school only through the third grade.

She emigrated to the United States from Ireland when she was 16 years old. After arriving at Ellis Island, someone she understood was a family member, picked her up and drove her to a train station, where she boarded a train westbound to Chicago. She moved in with cousins that she had never met, before taking a job as a live-in nanny. A family member had advanced her the money for the voyage from Ireland to New York and she was expected to repay the money once she was settled.

Her first job as a nanny in Chicago was not easy. She slept on a cot in the dining room, until one day, someone tried to come in through the dining room window. She called her aunt, who promptly picked her up. She didn't return to that job again.

Her second job as a nanny was a dream job. She loved the family she worked for and they loved and respected her greatly.

They would even have their chef, who also drove the family limousine, drive her to the Irish dances and wait outside for her. That is where she met my grandfather, Michael Durkin, who emigrated to the United States from Ireland, when he was 21. He was a Chicago Police Officer. In Ireland, my grandfather had gone to school only through the seventh grade.

They married and had 6 children of their own. Despite their limited schooling, education was exceptionally important to them. My grandmother would take the street car to the library to take out as many books as she could carry home. Everyone read all of the time.

The children were expected to study hard and to excel in school. Five of their six children obtained advanced degrees—including two judges, my father, Tom Durkin, and my aunt, Maureen Durkin Roy. The eldest son obtained an advanced degree in Mathematics. The eldest daughter received an advanced degree in Chemistry. Another daughter obtained an advanced degree in Education.

So, as we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the ratification of the 19th Amendment, I celebrate and honor my grandmother, Margaret Durkin, for her bravery, strength, perseverance and example.

Nana asked that “God Bless America” be played at her funeral. She said that everything good that happened to her in her life happened after she came to the United States.

Melissa Durkin, Cook County

Judith Manzke, Dorothy Morgan and Dolores Kubalanza. These are three women who greatly impacted my life as I was growing up.

Judith Manzke was my 8th grade history teacher. I learned a love of history and government from Mrs. Manzke. Because of her influence, I studied history which led me to become an archivist. But, it did not end there, as I went on to become a lawyer and now a judge.

Dorothy Morgan was my teacher and basketball coach. From Ms. Morgan I learned how to win and lose with humility and honor. Most importantly, I learned to be a team player and as the captain of the team, a leader.

Dolores Kubalanza my mother. I learned to be kind, considerate and accepting of others no matter what the differences may be.

There are other women who have impacted my life, too many to mention. I am grateful to all those women as well. I must also note that I saw many women who did not mentor other women. Importantly, they taught me not to be like them.

Joan M. Kubalanza, Associate Judge, Circuit Court of Cook County

Like many of us, I am sure, my essay begins with my mother. She was lovely, joyous, and absolutely unwavering in her support for me and my sisters. She valued family above all else, and her greatest pleasure was in watching us succeed. She was selfless, made us laugh, didn't know how to tell a lie, and she loved us more than the world. I must also add that we were incredibly fortunate to have had a great father as well. He taught us that we were equal in every way and could shine in the world with hard work, tenacity, and humor. I was and am blessed. And here's to my sisters, daughters, and girlfriends, who always inspire me.

Judge Jean Golden, Circuit Court of Cook County

My mother inspired me with her hard work and her faith. No matter the difficulties, she never faltered or hesitated to support and encourage all her children; but especially, she encouraged her daughters in their education and their dreams at a time when that was not a popular attitude to have. She had a scholarship in Art to attend college that she was never able to use because at the age of 18 years, she was married and had a child. She had eight children over a twenty-year period and supported and loved them all. She was not perfect which made her life-long efforts to improve her knowledge and abilities all the more inspiring.

Outside of my family I have been inspired by Eleanor Roosevelt. Besides pushing the boundaries of what it meant to be a First Lady, she was also a great supporter of Civil Rights and the United Nation, which she was appointed to as a delegate by President Harry Truman. As a delegate, she had a hand in drafting the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. She is the author of numerous quotes that inspire many, but this quote has meant the most to me: "You gain strength, courage and confidence by every experience in which you really stop to look fear in the face. You are able to say to yourself, 'I have lived through this horror. I can take the next thing that comes along.' You must do the thing you think you cannot do."

I am very proud to say that my granddaughter is named Eleanor.

Judge Donna-Jo Vorderstrasse, 19th Judicial Circuit

I have been inspired by numerous strong women in my life but, professionally speaking, I would never have risen to my current position without Andrea Zopp as someone to admire and emulate in my career.

As an undergraduate at Northwestern University, I saw Ms. Zopp speak at a Women in the Law event. At the time, she was the First Assistant State's Attorney for Cook County serving under State's Attorney Jack O'Malley. I was struck by her powerful no nonsense demeanor that she exuded while still remaining professional. She was a woman of color holding the second highest position in an office predominantly comprised of white men. She sent a strong message that women like her could make a difference and hold positions of authority while still being female and an ethnic minority. She explained that being a woman and a minority were both assets when dealing with victims and witnesses who looked much like her. As a Latina hoping to go to law school, I saw that it was not only possible to do but to also do at a high level.

I graduated from law school never forgetting Ms. Zopp's speech and the wisdom she imparted. Later in my career I became an Assistant State's Attorney in Cook County and served in that office for over 16 years, advocating for victims of child abuse, sex crimes and violent offenses including murder. I continued to follow Ms. Zopp's career from her role as President of the Chicago Urban League to Deputy Mayor of Chicago to CEO of Business World Chicago. In 2017, I was appointed to a vacancy on the bench. At an event that year, I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Ms. Zopp in person and explaining her role in my career. She was incredibly gracious and we have continued to communicate socially as minority women whose careers are better because of the women who have inspired us along the way.

Stephanie Miller, Circuit Court of Cook County

I've had the great fortune of being born into a family of inspiring woman. The profound influence of my mother, sisters, grandmothers and aunts can't easily be described or summarized. Their courage, strength and encouragement inspired the confidence in me to pursue the professional path I've chosen. And though many of them have passed on, their impact survives.

I was reminded in my late 30's that to meet someone truly inspiring and not of your shared bloodline is a remarkable gift. That reminder came when I was privileged to meet Lisa Callahan Kay while we worked in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. It wasn't until each of us had been in the office several years that our paths crossed and we were assigned as partners in the courtroom of Judge Stuart Palmer, a coveted post. Lisa's reputation preceded her; incredibly hardworking, dedicated, whip smart and kind. Learning we would be partners was great news to me but I was a bit skeptical that she, or anyone, could be as good as the "buzz" about Lisa. Day one working together any skepticism gone. In no time at all I knew the "buzz" understated.

Working together, Lisa's intellect was evident but that never stopped her from dissecting the newest court opinions, cautious always to scrupulously follow the law. With remarkable energy and the deepest commitment to justice, she dove into all of her work as an advocate for truth. And in that pursuit, she did so with grace and humility but with the confidence of extraordinary preparation.

We've all heard the lyric "to know her is to love her," but that's a fiction, right? It is not. Soon not only were Lisa and I work partners but also very good friends. For Lisa, her closest friends were an extension of her actual extraordinary family. Putting others first, Lisa always observed and listened. Intuiting when something was not quite right, she never pretended to have all the answers, but inevitably lent a willing ear, thoughtful advice and strong support.

At the age of 34, and after a heroic battle against metastatic breast cancer, Lisa died. She was initially diagnosed several years before I knew her and the cancer had recurred even before we worked together. For the entirety of our friendship, Lisa knew she was in a fight for her life. Yet cancer did not define her. In spite of the devastation cancer wreaked on her body and the often debilitating treatment she endured, Lisa was never diminished as an extraordinary wife, daughter, sister, aunt, friend and advocate. She excelled in every role. Her remarkable love, determination, resilience and selflessness defined her. During her last hospitalization, surrounded by her family and friends and in the midst of quilts she was making for hospitalized children, were case files. On a sex crimes case, just days before her death, she participated in case conferences over the phone, insisting she fight for a survivor on a case she knew best. That woman later expressed her deep appreciation and regard for Lisa in a letter to published in the Chicago Tribune.

Truly, to know Lisa was to love her, to admire her and to know your good fortune in being part of her life. Lisa's imprint on my life is indelible. Always leading by example, Lisa's firm but gentle hand in influencing the moral compass of all around her made her a great woman to know. Her boundless love and humor, her tremendous courage, compassion, resilience and exceptional character made her an extraordinary woman. Every day that I knew Lisa I was inspired by the generosity of her spirit. She will always be an inspiration. And for that I am deeply grateful.

Karen L. O'Malley, Circuit Judge, Cook County

My grandmother, Aldona Skeistaitis, was a unique woman, a real character, whose example of perseverance, independence, determination, and love of community inspired me on my path through life – along with all who knew her. She was a teenager during the Great Depression and had to learn to find her way through the world by self-reliance. To get her first job, in a five-and-dime store, she had to convince the owner to give her the opportunity, as the few jobs that were available usually went to adults. But she needed the money, and so she bargained with the owner that if she could sell the bruised oranges in the corner that no one was buying, he would hire her. Within minutes of unleashing her powers of persuasion on the buying public, the oranges were sold and the job was hers.

Aldona's determination to reach her goals and her perseverance in the face of obstacles – not to mention her personal charm – continued throughout her life. She married an Army officer, which meant she left her small New Jersey hometown and never again stayed in one place for long. Their family moved all over the country, and the world, to places like Oklahoma, Panama, and Germany. As a result, Aldona could not coast by in a comfortable routine and had to be able to find her way in strange new

places time and again. She made the best of each place she went, reaching out to strangers and making them her friends. Instead of focusing on the differences that existed, she chose to build connections between people and created community wherever she went.

Aldona's example not only inspired me, but I believe it is reflective of both the spirit of the women's suffrage movement and the present age. To make this world a better place, may we cultivate our strength and determination in the face of adversity and persevere even when our goals seem distant. May we continue to fight for our ideals and strive to improve the world. And may we focus on building bridges between people, making friends out of strangers, and on our common humanity, instead of our differences.

Kerrie Maloney Laytin, Circuit Court of Cook County

My mother Florence Gottainer has inspired me throughout my life. She instilled in me that if you work hard you can accomplish anything. She encouraged me to do my best in school. She told me I could accomplish anything. My mother was a Chicago School teacher and then she had three children. When we were older my mother needed to take a full time job to help our family. She chose to go into real estate. She received her broker's license and opened her own brokerage firm which she had for almost thirty years. Her firm concentrated in Commercial Industrial real estate. This was an area in real estate that most women did not practice in. My mother was very successful and worked very hard to put large deals together.

When I told my mother I wanted to become a lawyer she was very proud and worked hard to put me through Law School. I chose to continue working full time even as I raised a family and she was supportive. She supported me when I opened my own practice. She supported me when I told her that I wanted to try and become a Judge. Women are Judged for choosing to work and for not staying home full time with their children. My mother only encouraged and supported my work and never made me feel bad for my choices. My mother showed me that you can work and raise children. She taught me that it was important to stay true to yourself. Thanks mom.

Lauren Edidin, Circuit Court Cook County

Rosemary Ward was an 11th generation American. She was a descendant of Major General Artemas Ward, second in command to General George Washington during the American Revolutionary War. She was a 1944 college graduate who later obtained a Master's Degree. She read all the time. She loved films and popcorn. She was an only child. She loved her family – husband, children, parents, and an ongoing menagerie of pets. She was a third grade school teacher. She was a skillful bridge player who was always trying to improve her game. She died suddenly one night at the age of forty-seven. She was my mother.

Mom always made me feel safe and protected. When we walked together on the sidewalk, she would make me walk on the inside, away from the road. When I asked why, she said, "So if a car comes off the road, it will hit me and not you." With our

regular outings to the public library, we bonded over our love of books. She taught me to read before I went to school.

One of my earliest memories was of her taking me with her to vote. She went behind a curtain to pull levers, just like the guy in the Wizard of Oz! She did this every time there was an election, always taking me along. I have never once missed voting in an election.

I always sensed that mom had high expectations for me. Because she died when I was still a child, her early guidance proved crucial to living without her physically in my life. Our mothers quite literally live on in us. It is our duty to make their lives count. Mine taught me that, not only could I do anything, but that I must.

Rosemary Ward Trew was a good American.

Mary S. Trew, Circuit Court of Cook County

I have been very fortunate to have had several women serve as mentors in my life. Probably the most important gift they gave me was confidence in my own abilities. Having someone you admire see something special in you is a priceless gift.

Justice Rita Garman not only gave me the opportunity to serve on the Fourth District Appellate Court, she also drafted me to serve on my beloved Committee on Education, predecessor to the current day Judicial College. While on that Committee, Justices Mary Jane Theis and Susan Hutchinson teamed up and drafted me to revise the New Judge Seminar from top to bottom, declaring “You are the person who can do this.” How do you say no to that? That responsibility gave me so much satisfaction, both professionally and personally, because I was able to be a small part in the launching of 450 new judges during my tenure on the Committee. It must have reignited my maternal instincts because at the end of every New Judge Seminar, I felt like the mother bird seeing her chicks leave the nest. In addition, I was able to make so many lasting friendships with judges all over the state who answered the call to serve as faculty members on the many educational projects offered by the Committee.

Judge Hollis Webster, who preceded me as Chair of the Committee, was also an inspiration. Her steadfast integrity, her calm and patient manner of dealing with obstacles that arose during her service on the Committee, and her unrelenting strength and dignity engendered the respect and loyalty of the hardworking members on the Committee. She was truly a model for me to emulate. What a gift!

Carol Pope, Fourth District Appellate Court, Retired

I grew up in a very female family—three sisters as my only siblings, mostly girl cousins, and a host of aunts, grandmothers, and great aunts. So, in thinking about who inspired me, it was natural to think collectively. There were groups of women who served as guides throughout my legal career, along with a few notable leaders.

Early on, the members of the “Judge John Powers Crowley College of Law,” exemplified brilliant legal thinking, amazing writing skills, and balanced personal and professional lives. They did all of that with a lot of laughter. Like me, Judge Crowley was surrounded by women in his family. When he chose law clerks, he put together a collection of inspirational women, such as Mary Rigdon, Ellen Robinson, and Judge Joan Corboy. I was privileged to be a part of that group and even today am inspired by each of them and their lasting spirits.

Later on, while working in the office of the Illinois Attorney General, there was no shortage of competent women colleagues. We worked shoulder to shoulder often on very challenging cases. Many served as heads of divisions, directors of state agencies, or agency counsel. When friends in the private sector would comment on the rarity of finding women in high places, my thoughts turned to meetings in which agency policy and important litigation decisions were discussed. Regularly, a glance around the room reflected predominately women’s faces. Of all these women, Rosalyn B. Kaplan stands out. Roz spent many years as an Assistant Attorney General and later as Solicitor General. No one knew more about state government than Roz. She had an extraordinary legal mind and generously shared it with anyone in need, from the highest office holder to a new lawyer struggling to write her first brief. In talent and in service, by her example, Roz inspired all of us to reach for the highest level of excellence.

Like so many, for me, Justice Mary Anne McMorrow was a guiding light and inspiration. Thinking about the fortitude and courage it must have taken to be the first woman in so many areas is reason enough to admire her. Here, I want to focus on her dedication to the courts and devotion to the judiciary. She cared deeply about her appointments whether to committees or to judicial vacancies. She sought out candidates with qualifications that would match the needs of the court system. It has always been a source of pride to find myself among so many exceptional women (and men) whose judicial careers began with a Justice McMorrow appointment. After my appointment, I commented that I did not know how to thank her. She responded, “Be a good judge.” She inspired me and countless others by her integrity and selfless service.

As was true of the suffragists, the exceptional collection of women in my life amplified female voices in all quarters. I am grateful for each and every one.

Rita M. Novak, Retired, Cook County

Catherine E. Carpenter, never Cathy, always Catherine, finished law-school and passed the bar in 1934 at the age of 22. She was technically a second cousin once removed, but I called her Aunt Catherine. I visited her law office at the old Chicago Title and Trust building (111 W. Washington) as a young child and loved playing at lawyer while my mother typed Wills for Catherine. That meant spinning on the big office chair and delivering mail to the mail chute in the hallway. As I got older, I graduated to

making copies on the smelly mimeograph machine and fixing the colored backs onto various documents with the brad machine.

Growing up, I recognized my family and others had great respect for, and reliance, on Aunt Catherine for their major decisions and purchases. She advised them on all aspects of life in addition to legal matters. No topic was beyond her ken. I would be remiss if I didn't mention that I also admired her glamorous outfits. This was the 1950's and no lady was properly dressed without her hat, gloves, heels and purse in addition to her jacket and dress. And of course, they all matched. She was like a live Barbie doll with all her outfits.

She practiced in the fields of real estate, estate planning and family law. A newspaper article written in 1939 about an infamous client's divorce proceeding, noted the Plaintiff was represented by lady lawyer, Catherine E. Carpenter. The article contained multiple references to the lady lawyer because she was such a novelty at the time.

My mother greatly admired her cousin and nodded approvingly when, in 5th grade, I announced that I was going to be a lawyer. I was so sure of my decision; I never considered a back-up plan. Catherine Carpenter provided a strong moral compass that never wavered for her clients and family. She pursued her clients' best interests and worked zealously for them for more than 50 years. Although she stopped practicing law, she never stopped advocating against any perceived injustice.

Diane Winter, 19th Judicial Circuit

We are all a culmination of the histories, efforts, and love given to us from teachers, colleagues, friends, and family. Each person who has uplifted me is a part of who I am, and the basis for what I have accomplished. Throughout my life, however, there has been one steady voice lovingly challenging me to be my best self, my mother, Cecilia Mary Cahill Ogarek.

My mother, Ceil as she likes to be called, was raised the only girl in a family of boys in Chicago, Illinois. While my mother held her own aspirations, she worked to support her family. My mother viewed my education as a way to gain independence and obtain all that I wanted out of life. My mother taught me never to settle, but rather to seek until I found the answer. My mother was a strong supporter of the advancement of women, no doubt a result of her own experiences. She instilled in me a belief that ambition and the confidence that nothing could hold one back were admirable qualities, especially for women, meant to support efforts toward achievement. My sisters and I were often reminded of our responsibilities to always push forward to be anything we chose. My mother's ability to advocate for us demonstrated how to debate with intelligence, tenacity, and empathy. When I came to a place in my career where I was looking to have a greater impact, my mother was there guiding and encouraging me toward my new role in the judiciary. Ultimately, my mother's stewardship not only inspired me, but also provided my foundation in this role as a judge.

My mother has always remained true to herself and endearing to those with whom she worked, volunteered, or befriended. I remember how she organized volunteer programs and motivated the volunteers with a laugh, story, and sometimes pure will. I know empathy and love from my mother by witnessing her supporting those she loves

while living through devastating illness and losses of family and friends. She revealed true faith at such times. I have found wisdom in her resilience. The happiness that I witness in my mother, encourages me to live my life, as she has, with authenticity, hope, and by treating people with respect and sincerity. My mother's appreciation for education, her work ethic, genuineness, devotion to friends and family, and grace in the face of hardship are attributes that weave themselves into every fiber of my life. These values are also applied in every part of my work. You see, I am inspired not only to be a judge but to be the type of judge I am because of my mother. My mother's love, devotion and sacrifices have blessed me with this remarkable opportunity to serve as a judge. For all of this and a lifetime of example, I am inspired by and love my mother, Cecilia Mary Cahill Ogarek.

Margaret Ogarek, Circuit Court of Cook County

The Power of One Woman's Words

My path has been paved by the leading footsteps of so many extraordinary women: my fiercely loyal and whip smart sister, Joan; my brilliant, kind, and incorruptible cousin, Mary Kay; my wildly spirited patron, Noreen; my tirelessly encouraging teachers, Sister Catherine and Mrs. Michaelson; my professional friend and mentor, Alice; and my judicial model, Margaret, among so many others.

Yet, for me, no one has been a greater influence or inspiration, than my mother, Lois, affectionately also known as "LuLu".

At my mother's heart and center was her love and respect for language. She kept a well worn dictionary in the kitchen for easy access and regular reference. Dinner was joyfully interrupted to confirm an exact definition or to add a new discovery to the prized collection.

She loved words and shared them generously; in handwritten missives on monogrammed linen stationery, over the phone with the coiling cord stretched to its limit, and at the kitchen table in her blue robe over a cup of tea. Words for comfort, motivation, and entertainment. The senior class at Steinmetz High School voted her "best conversationalist" which she dismissed with a laugh, "that only meant I talked too much!" But in truth, she listened in at least equal measure.

My dear and beautiful mother used kind and precisely chosen words to promote and humor and inspire everyone in her sphere, and, most gratefully, me.

Liz Rochford, 19th Judicial Circuit

I have been blessed to have been influenced by many wonderful people in my life. First and foremost is my mother, Joan K. O'Brien. She was widow at 26 when I was 8 months old and my sister not yet 3. She remarried when I was 8 and raised 5 more children. She did not have the opportunity to go to college but she made sure that her children took their education seriously. She had us memorizing poems to recite at

dinner and choosing articles out of the newspaper to tell the family about. She's an avid reader who inspired my love of books that I have passed on to my daughter.

Professionally, I have been positively influenced by retired judge Wayne Meyer who was my wing supervisor in the State's Attorney's Office. When Wayne found out that I was making a bottom second chair salary as a first chair in the felony trial division, he made sure I got a raise. Salaries were a secret back then and about the only people making the higher salaries played on the office softball team! Tom Epach was my mentor for many years and is still a good friend. He taught me how to be the best trial lawyer I could be and how to be a good boss. Tom sent handwritten notes to ASAs who had done something well, he was generous with his time, and always open to new ideas. Judges Lynne Kawamoto and Sandra Otaka taught me how to be a good judge. Lynne guided me in my first assignment in the Child Protection Division at Juvenile Court. She was always prepared, told me not to make a decision on a tough case until I was comfortable with it, and had a work ethic that was unrivaled. Sandra had a gift of making me think about things differently. Sandra's generous heart helped many people, I miss her every day. I am incredibly lucky to have worked with so many amazing professionals!

Joan O'Brien, Circuit Court of Cook County



What Woman Inspired Me? My Mom, born Mary Margaret Kelleher often called Babe by many

My name is Kathleen Marie Burke. I am a Circuit Court Judge from Cook County. I am very blessed to have strong family support. I have two sisters and one brother who are attorneys. From the legal community, they are inspirations to me. They are dedicated and conscientious lawyers.

In a broader sense, it is my mother who is my greatest inspiration, who led me on my path to becoming a lawyer and judge. My mother, Mary Margaret Kelleher Burke was the daughter of Irish immigrants who traveled to America as very young adults. My grandparents met in the United States. They eventually married and started raising a family. My mom was their only daughter. She had two older brothers. She soon was called "Babe". It is a name which remained with her throughout her life. She understood the importance of hard work. My grandfather always held two jobs to support his family. He lived through the depression and realized the hardships that it brought to so many, including his family. My mom studied hard and had an appreciation for education. She always said she never wanted to disappoint her parents. These values she passed along to myself and my brother and sisters.

My mom taught grammar school for approximately 46 years. As she repeated frequently she loved her job. She embraced every obstacle as a challenge. She was not intimidated by anything. She enjoyed people and their stories. Parents often asked to have their children assigned to her classroom.

There are so many stories I could share about my mom. As a college student at the University of Notre Dame she traveled by bus to surprise me on my 21st birthday. It

is a wonderful memory. My mom drove, but not necessarily expressways, hence she came by bus, carrying a cake! Unbeknownst to me on her way home, that same day, she became ill, which was later believed to likely be salmonella. I did not hear about that for several weeks later as she didn't want me to worry.

As lawyer and a judge I introduced my mom to many of my friends that I met through the legal community. She attended several Women's Bar Association dinners with me over the years. When I ran for judge she embraced the challenge of running. What began as a simple invite to attend a few events with me became a regular tradition. I loved the companionship of her during the campaign.

My mom continued to attend book clubs and luncheons with her friends well into her nineties. It was her enthusiasm for everything which is clearly something I try to emulate.

Mary Margaret Kelleher Burke was and continues to be a driving force in my life.

Thank you to the committee for asking woman judges this question.

Kathleen Marie Burke, Circuit Court of Cook County

The women who inspired me were not lawyers or professionals. I am extremely blessed to work and to have worked with so many phenomenal women in my field. Judges Neera Walsh, Angela Petrone, Joan O'Brien, Colleen Highland, Judge Margaret Ogarek are only a handful of those women who motivate me every day and inspire me by their examples and ideas. But the women who inspired to obtain an education when college was not a guarantee were the women of my family and of my childhood. For the women in my family higher education wasn't even an option and for some finishing the 8th grade was an accomplishment. My grandmother, Carmen Aguilar, died penniless in Cook County hospital before I was ever born. When I was a little girl I would stare at her passport picture and think about what my Auntie Rafaela had described about her in that photo. She was a teenager, her parents, poor peasants who worked as farm laborers in La Piedad, Mexico. She married a wealthier land owner against both families' wishes came to the United States to raise their family. In the picture she was holding my Auntie's hand. I would say, "she's so beautiful but she doesn't smile." My Auntie would tell me that she had had the mumps and was pregnant with my Uncle Sal when the picture was taken (she would later have 5 more children including my father, Vicente) and that she was so brave bringing her children here so that they could have a better life. I use to stare into her very dark eyes and think if she could come here with nothing and work hard and be so committed to raising her family in the United States, well I wasn't about to waste the benefit of her courage! Both sides of my family didn't have the luxury of higher educations but they worked and fought hard so that I could. Most of them didn't graduated from high school. When they told my maternal grandmother I was going to go to law school she said "well I didn't know women could do that but if anyone can do it Carmen can!" They were bright, determined and compassionate women who today could have been bankers, lawyers, artists ... if they had my opportunities. Anytime I feel like giving up, not good enough, not the right look I think about these women. When I think about justice and the law these are the women who inspire me today to do my best, to work hard, to learn and to be compassionate.

