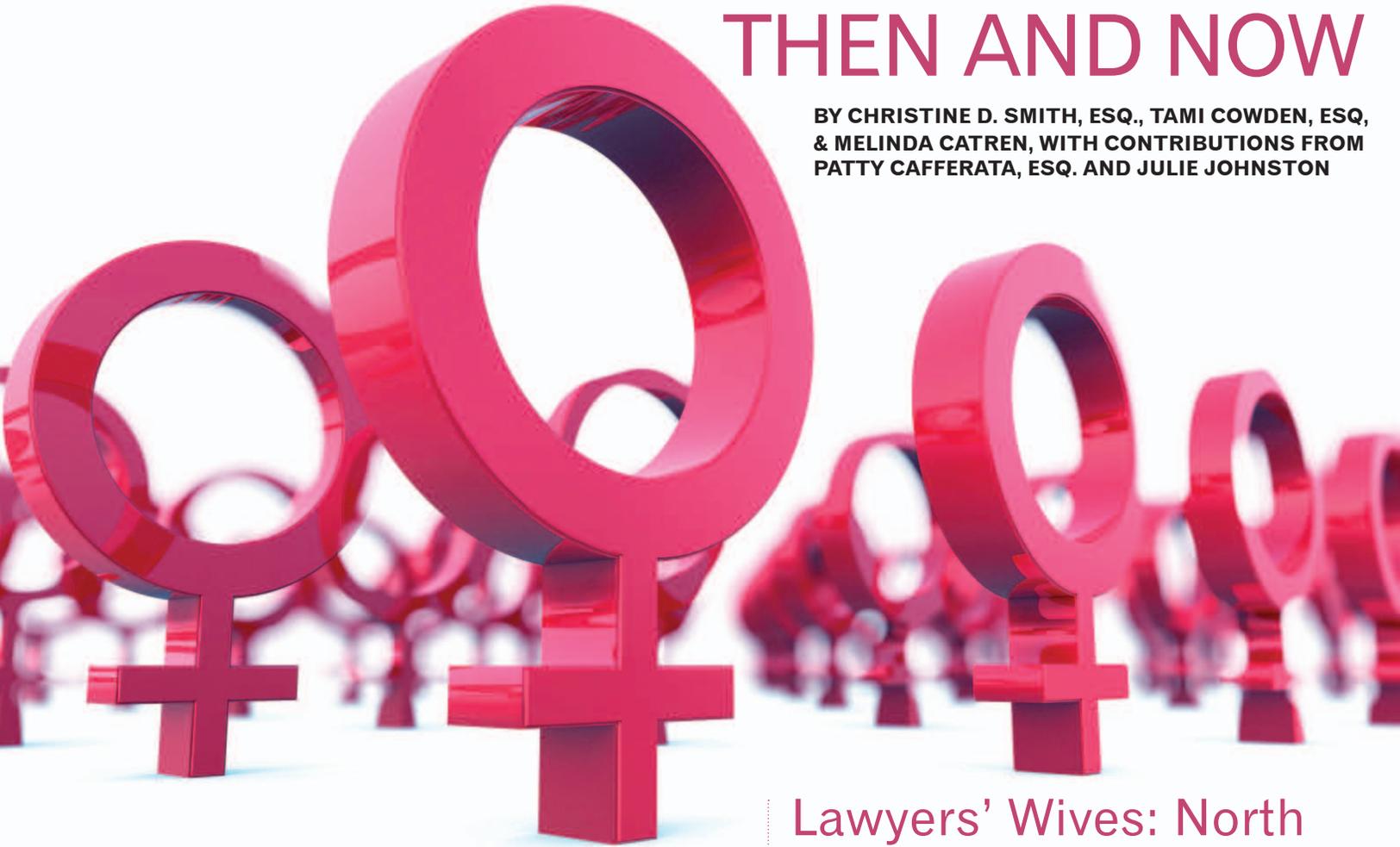


WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS WITHIN NEVADA'S LEGAL COMMUNITY: THEN AND NOW

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In Nevada's history, women's organizations have existed to support the Nevada legal community. In the 1950s and '60s, the first organizations were formed – including two groups of attorneys' wives, which focused their efforts on hosting charitable and social events supporting the legal community. In the late 1970s, two new organizations, one northern and one southern, formed to assist female attorneys themselves, allowing members to network and pursue educational opportunities. These organizations have changed and grown over time – both attorneys' wives organizations are now defunct, and the current women attorneys associations continue to grow as Nevada sees an increase in the number of women practicing law.

Lawyers' Wives: North Women's Auxiliary to the Washoe County Bar Association

The Washoe County Lawyers' Wives was founded in 1953 by Vivian Hammersmith, who was also the organization's first president. The club's original mission was to raise the money to build Wittenburg Hall, a detention facility for juveniles. Proceeds from all of their projects during nearly their first decade in existence went toward that goal. Before the hall opened, juveniles were housed in a windowless, unventilated room in the back of the Reno City Jail. The lawyers' wives organization worked with Dwight Nelson from the juvenile detention agency to build the new facility, which opened in the '50s and served the community until 2004.

During the '60s, '70s and the early part of the '80s, the wives organized luncheons, dinners, skiing trips, bridge parties, luaus, fashion shows and home tours. All of these events were held to raise money for a variety of charities; most of the proceeds and donations went toward providing legal services to the needy or to Regina Hall, a home for runaway girls.

Some of the more unusual activities the wives sponsored included an art show of Nevada State Prison art, organized to raise money for the prison's special projects fund. In 1968, the organization contracted with Baroness Maria Von Trapp (the woman famously portrayed by Julie Andrews in "The Sound of Music") to appear at the Pioneer Theater Auditorium.

In 1982, facing waning participation, the group amended its bylaws to make any female State Bar of Nevada members who lived and practiced in Washoe County, and were in good standing with the bar, honorary members of the wives club. These female attorneys could attend and participate in the organization's activities but could not vote.

In spite of efforts to swell their ranks, the group voted to disband in April of 1984. As more and more women entered the work force, fewer had the time or interest required to serve on the board or participate in the club's activities. All of the organizations remaining monies were donated to Regina Hall.

Lawyers' Wives: South

Clark County Attorneys' Wives

The Clark County Attorneys' Wives organization was formed in 1960 during a tea party at the home of Lucy Deaner. It was estimated that nearly all of the attorneys' wives in the area were in attendance for this gathering – nearly 65 of them total. Phillis Berkson became the organization's first president at the first official meeting the following month. The objective of the Attorneys' Wives, according to its charter, was "...to cooperate with the local and state bar associations, to

encourage friendly relations among its members, and to further the aims of justice under law, including, but not limited to, programs of education, social welfare and philanthropy."

In the Attorneys' Wives first year, Second Vice President Ann McNamee suggested leading tours of some of the spectacular homes in the Las Vegas area. The idea was an instant hit and a tradition was born. Over the years, the wives organized tours of homes belonging to Siegfried and Roy, Wayne Newton and other Las Vegas legends. The proceeds from the tours originally went to the Clark County Legal Aid Society. Once that organization became self-sufficient, funds went to organizations dedicated to eliminating child abuse and neglect, and assisting victimized women and abused wives. During the wives' last 16 years all proceeds from the home tours went to Working to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect (WECAN).

In 1961, Attorneys' Wives held a joint social with the county bar association; the dinner-

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dance became an annual event, as did the Professional Wives Luncheon. The Attorney's Wives held lunch meetings once a month, put on fashion shows and hosted several evening social events in which members' husbands could also participate.

First and foremost, the organization excelled at uniting southern Nevada's ever-growing legal community. It hosted receptions for new admittees and put on receptions when bar members became judges.

As with its northern counterpart, the Attorneys' Wives felt the membership crunch when women began to enter the work force in greater numbers than ever in the late '80s and early '90s. With much regret, its members handed off the annual home tour to the Assistance League in 1992, due to low membership and lack of attorneys' wives support and commitment. Luncheons also scaled back due to poor attendance. They held one more fundraiser and a final luncheon in 1993 before dissolving the group.

NORTHERN NEVADA WOMEN LAWYERS ASSOCIATION

The Northern Nevada Women Lawyers Association (NNWLA) was founded in 1978 by Justice of the Peace Patricia Lynch, retired U.S. Magistrate Judge Phyllis Halsey Atkins, the late Sylvia Thompson and Lindsay Weston. Its founders were four of only 23 women practicing law in northern Nevada at that time.

When NNWLA was formed, the United States District Court, the Nevada Supreme Court, and the Second Judicial District Court were exclusively male. No woman had served on the Nevada State Bar's Board of Governors or as an officer of the Washoe County Bar Association. While that has changed, the mission of NNWLA has not; its function continues to be the advancement women in the legal profession and the improvement of the administration of justice.

NNWLA's membership includes women from all sectors of the legal profession and has provided a variety of services to its members and the greater legal community. During its 30-year history, NNWLA has sponsored numerous continuing education programs and voter forums on law-related political elections and issues. NNWLA has filed amicus curiae briefs with the Nevada Supreme Court on legal issues of interest to women and children and its members have galvanized individuals championing the rights of women in the legal profession in the face of significant resistance. NNWLA and its members have also contributed tremendously to the implementation of the gender equity plan at the University of Nevada to ensure compliance with Title IX and have collaborated with the Nevada Press Women's Association and the Nevada Women's Lobby on law-related projects of interest to women.

SOUTHERN NEVADA ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN ATTORNEYS

For nearly 32 years, the Southern Nevada Association of Women Attorneys (SNAWA) has offered support, networking opportunities and guidance for personal and professional development to its members, both male and female. The first SNAWA meeting took place in 1979, in the children's playroom of the home of its first president, U.S. Representative Shelley Berkley. SNAWA's other founding members were Sylvia Beller, Ruth Cohen, Mary Hyer Huntington, Martha Karp, Kathryn Kirkland, Lisa Lavelle, Sally Loehrer, Susan Scann, Gerri Schwartzter, Charlane Bigelow Stead, Patricia Trent and Penny Wheat.

Since those early days, SNAWA has become a major resource among attorney organizations in southern Nevada. Traditionally, it has striven to present events that differ from the run-of-the-mill attorney get-togethers. Early SNAWA events included a judicial reception, held in the home of now-retired Chief Justice Miriam Shearing; an annual barbecue, hosted by Sally Loehrer when she was a District Court Judge; and a new admittees brunch hosted by Berkley. The New Admittees Brunch is now an annual tradition and the barbecue ultimately evolved into a fabulous turkey dinner event, hosted annually by Elana and Ben Graham.

NNWLA CONTACT INFORMATION

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SNAWA supports the Boyd School of Law, and formed the SNAWA Foundation. The organization then transformed the turkey dinner event and the successful “First Chance/ Last Chance CLE” event into fundraising efforts to support scholarships for second- or third-year female law students. The CLE, held just before the deadline to complete CLE requirements (making it a “first chance” for the diligent and a “last chance” for procrastinators), has been so successful that SNAWA has been able to present thousands of dollars in scholarships to students. Last year, three students each received \$3,000 to help them complete their legal studies. ■

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