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Federal Bar Association

J. CLAY SMITH, JR.*
NATIONAL PRESIDENT
FEDERAL BAR ASSOCIATION
before the
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN'S CLUB
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, INC.
WASHINGTON, D.C.

September 21, 1981

Dr. Marguerite Rawalt: The First Woman President
of the Federal Bar Association (1942-1943)

Madam President (Jean L. Pucher), Reception Chairman,
(Adair Mitchell), Jeanne Wasile (Program Chairman), officers and
Trustees of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation,
as National President of the Federal Bar Association, I am
delighted to participate in this "memory contribution" regarding
Dr. Marguerite Rawalt. Hopefully, these prepared remarks will be
useful to complete the book which is being written about Dr. Rawalt.

In 1942, the FBA elected Marguerite Rawalt as its first
female president. She was described as - "the witty, gracious

*/ Dr. Smith is the National President of the Federal Bar
Association 1980-1981. He received his J.D. from the Howard
University School of Law in 1967, LL.M. and S.J.D. degrees from
the George Washington National Law Center in 1970; 1977, re-
spectively.

1/ A portion of these remarks appear in a paper entitled "The
Contribution of George Washington University School of Law and
Its Graduates to the Federal Bar Association" delivered by
J. Clay Smith, Jr., during the Annual Federal Bar Association
convention on September 10, 1981 in Denver, Colorado which is
on file at the national office of the Federal Bar Association.

and capable Marguerite Rawalt."^{2/} Ms Rawalt was acquainted with the members and familiar with the work and functioning of the Federal Bar Association in which she had been active since 1934, having held successively the offices of third, second, and first vice president. In addition, Ms. Rawalt served on the governing body of the Association, the Executive Council, and on numerous committees including the Taxation Committee, the Special Committee on "Reciprocity" Rule for Admission to the District of Columbia Bar, and the Committee on Chapter Activities. Association members commended her easy and able manner of presiding at dinner and luncheon gatherings, and her executive ability in conducting the affairs of the Association and enlisting the activities of a large percentage of the membership.

Ms. Rawalt was Special Attorney in the Appeals Division of the Office of the Chief Counsel of the Bureau of Internal Revenue. She represented the government in the trial of income, estate and gift tax cases in state and federal courts, and was on the Washington headquarters staff which reviewed and coordinated the work done in the various regional or division counsel offices throughout the country. Her business and professional experience had been extensive and varied.

Ms. Rawalt served as president of the National Association of Women Lawyers during the year 1942-1943. She was the first

^{2/} 5 Fed. B.J. 67 (Dec. 1942).

woman to be seated as a delegate in the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association when, in March 1943, the National Association of Women Lawyers, under her leadership, qualified for representation and selected her as its first delegate. Her term of office as president of that organization had not yet expired when she was elected president of the Federal Bar Association. For a time she held both offices concurrently. She served as a member of several committees in the American Bar Association, in the Tax Section, the International and Comparative Law Section, and on the Special Committee on facilities of the Law Library of Congress. She participated in the program of the Inter-American Bar Association at its first conference in Havana, Cuba, in March 1941. She is a member of the Bars of the District of Columbia, Texas, and the United States Supreme Court; member of Kappa Beta Pi Legal Sorority, American Judicature Society. She delivered addresses on Federal Taxation at the National University (as George Washington Law School was previously named) Tax Clinic, and before the Womens Bar Association of Baltimore. She was guest speaker before the General Session of the 1943 convention of the State Bar of Texas and was once described by the Texas Bar Journal as "Woman of the Year--Careerist, Wife and Sportswoman."

Ms. Rawalt came to Washington to combine the study of law with her secretarial work. She entered George Washington University from which she was graduated with the degrees of A.B., LL.B., in 1933; and LL.M., in 1936. She served as Student Editor on the George Washington Law Review, and upon graduation was elected to the Order of the Coif.

This versatile woman brought to the presidency an energy and freshness of viewpoint which stimulated and enlarged interest in the activities of the Association. Her alert friendly manner and patently sincere desire to advance the usefulness and prestige of the Federal Bar Association brought rewards in increased membership and increased activity for a greater proportion of the membership. One of the articles she published was captioned, "How Our Federal Tax Laws Grow."^{3/} We all know how relevant that subject is even today.

More recently, Ms. Rawalt was appellate counsel in the precedent setting cases upholding application of Title VII to ban sex discrimination (Weeks v. Southern Bell Telephone and Telegraph Company and others).

The Marguerite Rawalt Resource Center of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation was dedicated in Washington in January, 1980 in honor of its founder and first president. The Foundation was established in February 1956 by action of the

^{3/} 5 Fed. B.J. 86 (Dec. 1943).

National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, during the term of Marguerite Rawalt as president, and was headlined as the first tax exempt foundation of its kind set up by a national women's group.

During the quarter century of its operation, the Foundation Center has acquired a nationally recognized library and records center at 2012 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C., devoted to the advancement of working women. It has published research bulletins and has awarded extensive grant scholarships to encourage the advancement of business and professional women. The Foundation is a major project of the officers and the thousands of members of the Federation who contribute annually to its operation. Gifts and grants from outside sources support extensive research activities administered by a skilled resource center staff.

Today, the Honorable Sandra Day O'Connor was confirmed by the United States Senate as the first woman Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court. There is no question in my mind that had the legal profession been more open to women in the law during the time that Dr. Rawalt was president of the Federal Bar Association, she would have been highly qualified to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, and probably would have been selected.

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For nearly half a century Dr. Rawalt has supported the Federal Bar Associations. She is presently a member of the National Council, the governing body of the Association. Her life is a model to men and women alike.

J. Clay Smith, Jr.
National President