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Interview no. 735

Kitty Schild

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UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

INSTITUTE OF ORAL HISTORY

INTERVIEWEE: Kitty Schild (1948-)
INTERVIEWER: Pauline Dow
PROJECT: Women Attorneys of El Paso
DATE OF INTERVIEW: November 26, 1984
TERMS OF USE: Unrestricted
TAPE NO.: 735
TRANSCRIPT NO.: 735
TRANSCRIBER: Pauline Dow

BIOGRAPHICAL SYNOPSIS OF INTERVIEWEE:

Municipal judge and attorney, El Paso.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW:

Discussion of college courses, law school experiences, hiring practices toward women attorneys in mid-1970's, reactions to career choice by family and friends, reaction to female judges, and the founding of the Women's Bar Association in El Paso. She also explains her feelings about the Bar Banquet skits in the 1970's.

Length of Interview: 1 hour Length of Transcript 40 pages

KITTY SCHILD
by Pauline Dow
El Paso, Texas
November 26, 1984

KS: Is that working?

PD: Yeah, that's right. Okay.

PD: We're ready to go here. As long as it doesn't go out--

PD: Okay. Full name please?

KS: Kitty Schild.

PD: Okay. And the date and place of your birth?

KS: June 09, 1948, Princeton, New Jersey.

PD: Okay. And your marital status?

KS: Single.

PD: Okay. Have you children?

KS: No.

PD: Okay. When you went to college, what kind of courses, if any, did you take to prepare yourself for law school?

KS: I didn't, because I didn't decide to go to law school until the very last, right, yeah.

PD: Okay. What was your -- I'm sorry.

KS: I was a Political Science major.

PD: Oh, okay. What was your family's reaction to your decision to go to law school?

KS: They were very supportive of it-- my father -- I had been talking about not going on to any kind of graduate school and my parents -- and just going out to work and my parents were very

happy when I decided to go to law school.

PD: So, both of them wanted you to --

KS: Yeah, they wanted me to continue my education.

PD: Okay. Did you have a boyfriend or fiance or anything at the time and what was their reaction, or just your friends, men and women?

KS: I don't know; it was just kind of I didn't really decide to go to law school until the week before law school started and I didn't decide to stay until my second year of law school, so I -- it really would be hard to say. It just really wasn't a decision that made until the last minute.

PD: Okay. When you applied for law school, did you find the administration, you know, giving you any problems about getting in, or did you just breeze through?

KS: No. I scored very highly on the LSAT and I didn't ever talk to -- I just sent in my application to a couple of law schools and never talked to anyone in the law schools themselves about getting in or not. I applied to the University of Houston and the University of Texas and got accepted to both of those. I applied to Harvard

and didn't get accepted and I don't know -- I applied very late to Harvard. Somebody told me once that they fill a lot of their places early, so, I mean, there may not have been any places left over; I don't know. But, I never talked to anyone.

PD: So as far as you know, there was no obstacle there with the administration?

KS: No.

PD: Okay. Was there a quota system where you were?

KS: No -- you mean for females?

PD: Uh-huh.

KS: No.

PD: Okay. I don't know -- you probably didn't apply for scholarship money, but was it available; do you know if scholarship money was available for women when you were applying?

KS: I think so. I went to the University of Texas at Austin. I think -- I don't think that there was any limitations as far as I know of. I knew females that were getting -- you know, there is-- there is very little scholarship money for law school -- it's not like graduate schools where you have teaching assistanceships and things like

that. So, I don't -- I know very few people, male or female, that were getting scholarship money per se. The ones I did know, they were part some of each sex; just in law schools, generally there is very little of that kind of help available anyway.

PD: How did the male colleagues or male students react to women lawyers or women student lawyers or whatever. I mean, did you see any difference between attitude of the women towards women than towards men towards the women?

KS: Well, it varied. When I -- I -- my freshman class at UT-Austin was about 700 and there were about thirty women, somewhere in there. And so we were all pretty conspicuous and it depends, you know, a lot of those male fellow students were -- just treated you ordinarily, then there were some that, you know, thought you shouldn't be there and seemed to resent -- resent women being there, and so it just really varied.

PD: How about the professors; say you were asked to recite, you know. How were you treated in that situation?

KS: Again, I think it just really depended on the

professor. Some of the professors were -- were very (pause) -- there was one professor; I didn't actually have him, but there was one professor who refused to call on women students. He would not call on the women students in his class to recite. He wasn't one I had, but I knew of him. And then like the -- I had one real old professor who would not initially call on the women; he -- I guess to be a gentleman he wouldn't force us to do it-if you raised your hand and offered to discuss an issue, he would call on you and then I had other professors -- probably say the younger professors who would call on us. It just really depended a lot on the professor.

PD: And how about the fellow male students; how did they react. Did they just vary again?

KS: Yeah, it just really varied. I had a funny -- my first year in law school, I used the word "fuck" in class once. We were discussing the Chicago Seven trial and this was in a Constitutional Law class and we were discussing some of the issues and I was saying how it was important for the defendants in that case to use language in the court room to let the jury -- to show the

jury that when they used those words it didn't mean the same as when other people might use it or they didn't mean to be offensive; it was just part of the vocabulary. And that was one of the words that I -- you know, I mentioned that was the example. And for years afterwards, I'd be stopped and they'd say, you know, you're the girl that said "fuck" and -- and, I mean, it just shocked everyone that I said the word out loud. And this was in -- I guess this was the spring of 1970. I started law school in '69. I think it was the spring semester and, you know, everyone was shocked that I -- I think they were shocked anyway that anyone would use that word, let alone a female student. And I got a lot of reaction from that. But, again, I think it was just varied on males, and I ended up studying with a group of male law students. We studied together and prepared for tests together and everything, and they were all, you know, very helpful and just treated me the same --

PD: Equally?

KS: -- equally, and then I said there were other students that had a real hard time dealing.

PD: How about grading; do you feel that both men and women were graded with equal fairness?

KS: Yes, because they graded us by Social Security numbers --

PD: I see.

KS: -- in Austin, so the professor -- you just had your Social Security number on your test and so --

PD: It was just really --

KS: -- yeah.

PD: Okay. How about unnecessary roadblocks; did anybody do that, counselor, professor, just anybody you can think of when you were going to law school?

KS: No; again, it was a male professor that talked me into even taking the LSAT and going to law school and nobody -- I said for me, it was kind of a real last-minute -- I had never even considered law school. I had never thought of it as a possible career and this one professor who happened to be a friend of mine said, oh, you ought to try law school and so, again, it wasn't anything that I really discussed with anybody and I just took the LSAT and did pretty well, so I thought, well, I'd try and apply for a few law schools and, you know, I said I applied and

I got into U of H and UT and -- and in those days, again, it was kind of like I started law school right when it became the in thing to do.

PD: Right.

KS: And, for example, UT-Austin had in the past accepted between like 750 and 800 students and about 550 would show up, which is what they wanted for a class. In our year, they accepted 750 and 700 of them showed up. And so, after that, they really started, if you got accepted you had to -- but when I got accepted, they just sent you a post card saying you are accepted; if you want to come, show up September 1st at 9:00 a.m. at the law school. You didn't have to let them know you were coming; you didn't have to be -- you know, they just sent you a post card saying show up if you want to come --

PD: If you're still interested?

KS: -- if you're still interested. And so that's basically about the end of August, I find my parents going, well what do you want to do, and I said, well, I guess I'll start law school and see what happens. So, it was just such a -- in a way, it was a very casual decision. There

wasn't any roadblocks, anything to put in my way there.

PD: Right. Once you were in law school, I understand that you don't specialize in law school, is that right? You just take sort of a broad general --

KS: Right.

PD: You learn sort of about the law in general terms?

KS: Yeah. You can. You can -- if you're sure you want to go into, say, corporate law, there are types of courses you can try and take. But very few students do -- I'd say the majority just take what's interesting, and don't try and take courses in any one area.

PD: Right. So, then to follow that up, were you ever discouraged when you were getting close to graduation, say in- you're -- law students are starting to decide maybe well, you know, where am I going to go apply for a job; were you ever discouraged from any one particular field, say, court room law?

KS: Well, I think it was -- when I was going through it was understood that the big firms were still not hiring women and, basically, they -- I, in a way, I really wasn't interested working for a big law firm anyway, but it was very much understood that

women did not go and you didn't sign up for those interviews. And basically, you know, I interviewed basically with government agencies, because in those days, if you were a woman, that was the kind of jobs that were available to women. And they were-- they were available. But basically, it was -- you know, and again it was one of those things where in a way, I wasn't really that interested in those kinds of jobs anyway. In fact, I didn't want to go work for a big law firm. But had I been, it was very well understood that women were not -- yeah. And it was kind of funny; what happened was, the year after us -- I was in the top 10 percent of my class and I probably one of the top women in my law school class. The year after, three out of the top four students in that class were women. And there was a big thing where the big firms came to interview on campus and here -- and they normally would just interview the top students anyway in the Law Review and here three out of the four of the top were women, and there was a real stink. Some of them didn't want to interview any women at all and then some of them made a token of at least talking to these women that were interested, but it

as I said, it was very much understood that they weren't -- didn't want to talk to women and in our class, again, I don't know if there were that many women interested in it, but the year behind us, there really were -- and also during the summer because, again, the big firms would hire all the students as law clerks during the summer, pay them a lot of money to come down, basically spend three months being wined and dined by the firms, trying to woo them to come to come and work there when they would graduate. And there were just a lot of problems with the school and I know that there'd be protests and would try to keep the school from letting some firms interview on campus, because they were saying they wouldn't talk to women. It was -- you know, I think right about that time, again, they kind of would start, you know, all the big firms like Houston would have two or three hundred lawyers-- , they would hire one woman sort of type thing, but that was all happening right about that time. But it was, like I said, it was understood that you didn't interview for a big firm, that you wouldn't have a chance.

PD: How -- what kind of things would you do to try and protest that kind of stuff; just through the administration, or would you physically picket?

KS: Well, it's been a while. You have to realize I've been out of law school 12½ years and -- yeah, I just remember like I said, there was -- I remember we talked to the -- I guess it was my senior year in law school, we started a group, a Women in the Law group that were -- there were sex discrimination lawsuits going through the university system; not law professors, per se, but other professors. And we got involved in -- and we got involved in the interviewing thing and I remember, like I said, there was a move and I think we may have even kept a couple of firms from, you know, to come on campus to interview because they refused to talk to women. And ~~the~~ we were just working -- a lot of us volunteered and worked on different lawsuits and -- and were getting, you know, just kind of getting organized in the law school, both to work on other aspects of sex discrimination in the university as a whole and then -- and then working on the law school.

PD: When you graduated from the law school and took

your bar and everything, what position did you apply for; what kind of job did you go out to look for?

KS: Basically, again, I had interviewed basically with government agencies, federal and state, and I got hired -- I guess it was -- I think they called me the week before I graduated or right after. It was right around graduation time -- for the State Legislature and that's the first job and I started in August.

PD: So that's something you wanted; you didn't have to settle for less than --

KS: Well, it ended up -- I ended up getting -- my last year in law school was the year that Nixon had put a 5 percent reduction on federal hiring and when I went and interviewed, I interviewed with a bunch of federal agencies and they weren't hiring, but then they -- you know, they said they would and what happened -- I don't know if I would -- if I had known about the other jobs, I'm not sure but what happened was I got that job like the end of May and then started -- and started the beginning of August. And then basically starting July, August and September,

a bunch of the federal agencies that I had applied for called up and said, hey, we have an opening, we want to hire you, but I had already started work, so I ended up turning down -- if I had had all of them, I don't know if I would have ended up with that job. Probably either that or something similar. But I was also real interested in legal aid but Austin just had two openings and they hired -- in that case, it was kind of an ethnic; they hired a black and a Mexican-American, and I was an Anglo and they -- yeah, they wanted the minorities there. So, -- but the two guys that are both friends of mine got hired there. That was in Austin. So, I don't know -- Austin is a real hard town to go out on your own, as far as private practice, so I never really considered that in Austin.

PD: What -- what did you do after this job with the Texas legislature?

KS: Well, I -- I stayed there about a year and a half and then I left there and came out to work for Legal Aid-- here in El Paso. That's when I moved to El Paso. I had always been interested in legal aid type work and there was an opening

here and I applied and got hired and moved out here. Eleven years in January.

PD: So you've been in El Paso --

KS: Yeah.

PD: -- 11 years? Okay. Let's see. As far as -- I guess one of the main questions I'd like to ask is whether your husband or your boyfriend or your friends -- you know, how did they view you in this career now, and have their views changed at all, but since when you got in --

TELEPHONE INTERCOM: Kitty, Mr. Jones is waiting to see you.

KS: Okay. He's an hour early. His appointment's not until 2:30.

TELEPHONE INTERCOM: Okay.

KS: Tell him he's going to have to wait a while.

TELEPHONE INTERCOM: Okay.

KS: Sorry.

PD: It's all right. But, you know, say you were to talk to one of your old classmates when you were just getting out of college, do you feel that oh, she's an attorney, or did you do or -- anything --

KS: Yeah -- I don't know. As far as that, my family has always been real proud and after I became a -- my father, he died unfortunately about a month before -- a couple of months, I guess, before I became a judge. But I know he used to -- I used to have to ship him a bunch of my cards every few months because he'd hand them out to everyone, you know, my daughter the lawyer and he was just always real excited about it and very thrilled. Again, most of my friends, -- because if they weren't that way, they probably would be my friends -- were very, you know, proud about it. And, you know, thinking it was a ^{neat} career. It's just hard to say. I think like I said, most of the people -- I'm sure there are people who don't approve, but if so they weren't longtime friends.

PD: Okay. As far as your career goes, I know a little bit -- I know that you're a judge now and that you also have a private practice.

KS: Right.

PD: Right. So you worked on legal aid here in El Paso.

KS: I was a legal aide for 2½ years and I left there

and opened up my own practice.

PD: How about opening up your own practice; what was that like for you and, you know -- it's -- it's -- I know it's difficult. I've heard from other --

KS: Yeah, very, very scary and it still is. It's just very uncertain; you may make tons of money one month and the next month you don't make any. And I think they're -- I would say probably most people that come to see me, either hire me or they don't hire me, but the female issue probably doesn't really come up and sometimes -- sometimes I'm sure they come talk to me and go away and -- and don't hire me because I'm a female. On the other hand, some people specifically come to you because you're a female. On the other hand, I hear a lot. People say -- friends say, oh, I referred such-and-such to you today, they'll be calling you and they don't, and I think a lot of that, that they don't follow through because I'm a female. If I'd been a male lawyer and someone had referred them to me, that they might have been more likely to come. And, again, I don't know; they never -- I never -- they never show up, so I

don't know. But I do know that I run into a lot of that. You know, my friend needed a lawyer for a divorce, my friend was in an accident or my friend -- and, you know, I gave them your name, did they ever call you. And I've had some tell me that, oh, you know, I gave your name to so-and-so, but they won't come to you because you're a female. So, there -- I think there's a lot of that going on and, again, like I said, you do get the reverse; you get some people that want to come to you because you're a female. But I think there's a lot of clientele that don't come to you initially because of that.

PD: Would you say then that -- is there any distinction or sort of an imbalance between men and women who come to you; more women, more men?

KS: I -- I would say almost equal. It's hard to say. Maybe more female clients. I do a lot of family law. I do a lot of -- well, I used to. I don't do that much now, sex discrimination law. It's really hard to say; I don't think statistically -- I think if you looked at my files, you'd find some of each, maybe more women, but I don't know if that's -- I think for example in family law,

you're just going to find in many cases -- of course both sides will have an attorney, but if just one side has an attorney, it's usually going to be the woman and so you'll probably going to find in general that more women go to lawyers in family law disputes than men go to lawyers.

So I think any lawyer is probably -- who has that kind of practice is going to have a -- a disparity there, but in the other kinds of cases I -- and I am a real general practitioner, I do some of everything, and I have both. And, again, I think that -- I would say, for example, my criminal practice, most of those cases are appointed and mostly male and that's probably one area where I've heard people, you know, people told me that a friend of theirs got arrested for something and they gave them my name, but they didn't want to go to a female lawyer. These are male criminal defendants and I think that is probably -- but even then, again, I've had males hire me to represent them in criminal matters, so --

PD: So what you're saying is it depends?

KS: Yeah.

PD: What do you aspire to in the future? I mean, is

this -- are you going to stay and be a general practitioner; do you have more political aspirations, like being a district judge or something like that?

KS: I want to go on to at least a district judgeship.
When, I don't know, but yes that's--

And I'd love to be a federal judge, but that's not something you can really work on; that just either happens or it doesn't happen. I mean, that to me would be -- I would love to be a federal judge if I had the opportunity.

PD: But you will, then -- you do feel that you'll run for --

KS: Most likely, yes.

PD: If you had it to do all over again, as far as your law school and courses you took and that stuff and the way you opened your -- took your first job and opened your law practice, would you do anything differently in that chain of events?

KS: Probably not. I mean, it's worked out pretty well for me and I don't know -- I guess the first job I took at the legislature was not -- you know, I didn't enjoy it and that's why I

didn't stay there very long. But even then, that was interesting. It's an experience I'm not sure I would have traded, but it certainly wasn't something that I wanted for a career and, I don't know, maybe I would have taken -- should have taken another job, but I don't even know about that. It was interesting, but -- wasn't -- didn't get me any further in my career.

PD: You had to go looking.

KS: Yeah. I still can't say that I would have not have done it if I had known.

PD: When you came to El Paso -- I always find this interesting -- and with the other lawyers-- were you into the Bar Association at all; I mean, did you apply to become a member of the local Bar Association, and what was the reaction?

KS: No, I -- okay. I came here with Legal Aid and there were very few -- I think I was probably the fifth female in town who was practicing law and there were a couple of older women lawyers. One worked for a title company, one worked for a trust department in a bank or something, but they didn't really practice law. And (pause) I can't remember. Partly, you know, of course, being a woman and

then being a legal aide lawyer, it took me a while just because I was not into Bar Associations, but I finally joined the Bar Association and really didn't have much trouble there, but then -- I don't know if you've heard the story about the Bar skit and how they used to have the Bar Banquet every year and it was a stag affair and, so Janet Reusch and I finally -- I guess it was about my third year here -- and she and I went, crashed it and went to the banquet. The year before, Ruth had gone, she'd gone to the drink part and then had left before the banquet, so Janet and I just went and we stayed through the whole thing.

PD: Was it pretty off color?

KS: Yeah. I'm -- I don't know, I enjoy dirty jokes I guess as much as anything, and I thought most of it was pretty funny, but some of it actually, it seems, we have been having a problem in years after that, after we started coming and in a way, it got a lot more sexist in that the jokes about the women were much more -- not just dirty jokes, but they were sort of much more sexist. And initially it was just -- you know, it was dirty jokes and jokes, but I personally,

you know, I thought most of it was pretty funny, but some of it wasn't funny, but that had nothing to do with sex. And then, in the last few years, we've had a lot of calls because the people that were running it -- there were a group of men running it and a group of women had been very -- real involved in it, but then at the last minute, they would change the whole skit, 2 or 3 hours beforehand, and throw out all the stuff they had been working on and throw in a bunch of stuff that was offensive in that, again, it was dirty jokes based on sex -- on the sex of the women lawyers, as opposed to just funny things that they had done.

PD: What was the reaction to -- of the men around you, you know, when you crashed that? I mean, were they embarrassed or were they --

KS: Yeah, a little embarrassed and some of the -- a lot of them were supportive; they thought it was pretty silly, but then a lot of them -- again, a lot of resentment that we were crashing their sacred banquet and embarrassed -- embarrassed to be with -- have women there and listening to these kinds of off-color jokes. I don't think they quite

knew how to behave at that point. They were kind of -- you know, everyone kept looking at us and we were very conspicuous in our presence. And since then, it's funny, a lot of men have gotten turned off by the banquet. A lot of male attorneys don't go; they just don't like the whole concept of it and it's -- it's been kind of and -- like there was this group of young male attorneys who had kind of taken over the skit part, because the Junior Bar, the Young Lawyers were the ones who traditionally put on -- would put on the skit. And there was one group who had been doing it and they did, for example, the first year Janet and I went and I think that year and the next two years -- I mean, I was enjoying it, they would be really funny and then they kind of got old and moved on and kind of this new group came in and one year they had -- I wasn't there, but they had a naked girl jump out of a cake. And, or something, I don't know, she came out -- you know, and it offended -- several of the women walked out and that's when -- so the next year -- and they said, well, you all didn't work with us, so, you know -- so the next year, a group of women went down and

started working with the men on the skit and drawing up stuff and then at the last minute, they threw out all that stuff and brought in some more stuff that was not -- it's been kind of a problem. And, again, they're the kind of lawyers, probably that these particular guys are guys that were going to law school or many were just afterwards that -- in that age group, maybe a little younger than me, because when women first started coming into the law school in much larger numbers.

TELEPHONE INTERCOM: There's a call for Judge Schild on 7.

KS: I'll take it. Would you please excuse me?

KS: Where were we -- oh, we were talking about the banquet, the skits.

PD: I wanted to -- what do you aspire to sort of socially in the future? I mean, do you feel that you can some day, you know, have children and have a husband and all of that with this, -- or -- do you see what I'm trying to say?

KS: Yeah.

PD: What do you think about that?

KS: I don't know. I -- I would like to have children.

It's hard to say. A lot of men find me very intimidating; not only the lawyer bit, but being a judge.

PD: Are career and marriage a viable combination?

KS: Yeah, it's just really hard to say on that. I enjoy children and think I might get married and have children; on the other hand, I have to admit, I've gotten used to -- I like being single, I like having my privacy and my own life, so I just really -- my feeling is that a good marriage is probably better than being single, but being single is a lot better than a bad marriage. So if I could meet someone I find I could have a good marriage with, I mean, I have no objection to being married. Maybe having children, although if I don't have any in the next few years I guess I'm not going to be able to. It's -- like I said, it's just hard to say. I think it does intimidate men, having my position, but I'm not willing -- I played dumb a few times in high school and I guess even in college, played the dumb broad in order to get men interested and quickly found out that it was not worth it and I've never done it since and now I just -- I'm happy with what I do and if they

can't take it, that's their problem.

PD: Okay. I've tried to ask just as general questions as I can, you know; this, like I say, is sort of a historical data --

KS: Yeah.

PD: So if you can think of anything that happened to you during your career or some story or just something, you know, recently. I know Ruth Kern was telling me that -- of course her stuff is all -- she signed a release and she's just really anxious for us to use it -- but something that's really interesting is that she didn't feel like there were any obstacles or anything like that when she was going to school at all and you seem to feel like there wasn't either. But she said that when she came to El Paso, it was really difficult for her to find a job at all.

KS: Yeah. Well, see, I came here with a job. Now, if I had -- and I did when I came here now, for example, I interviewed with a couple of firms and I got the distinct impression -- I came out here to interview with Legal Aid, but since I was coming out here anyway, I went up and signed up for a couple of firms and basically got the impression they weren't

interested in hiring women. I -- the D.A.'s office had some openings and I wrote them and I got a kind of strange letter back from Steve Simmons that you know where El Paso is and I was living in Austin at the time and I sent a resume. It said they had sent it to the --

PD: No, that's fine.

KS: -- that they had sent one of the cards to the office -- the placement office in Austin. And that there was an opening, so I applied and I got this letter back, not like we're interested or anything; just kind of, if you're ever in El Paso, walk in and talk to us type thing. Well, you know, you don't just come from Austin to El Paso just to walk in, and it was kind of a strange -- it wasn't, you know, yes, we're interested, but you have to -- if you want to interview, come out here, make an appointment -- you know, it was kind of like, if you're ever here, and, again, he hadn't -- I guess right about that time he may have had Doris Sipes, but, you know, she was kind of not supposed to be in the court room during . . . You know, he had this one woman on the staff. Of course, that's changed; there are quite a few

women and -- but, I just had a job when I came down here, but, again, there were very few women and everyone kind of like, you know, oh, you're a woman lawyer and a lot of the other -- especially the older male attorneys that would try and intimidate you or, you know, get around you or whatever and clients -- at Legal Aid there were all these people that would come in and I'd talk -- you know, my name is Kitty Schild, I'm one of the attorneys, we'd discuss their cases and they'd go out after half an hour, an hour at my office, and go up to the front and say, now do I get to talk to the lawyer. And they'd have to explain, oh, yeah, you know, that happened several times, you know, when do I get to talk to the lawyer, and, you know, and now that I've talked to the secretary or whatever she is -- and even now, as a judge a lot of people, you know, I've got a woman judge -- I think a lot of people are surprised to have a woman judge and I find as a woman judge, for example, that again most of -- I think most of the attorneys in town are very accepting and respect me and -- but there are some male attorneys that get very -- you know, that I've ruled against

and have gotten very, very upset and I think a lot that had a male judge had made the same ruling, they might not have agreed with it, but they wouldn't have gotten so personally upset, and I think the fact that I'm a woman ruling against them upsets them a lot. They think I -- one case in particular and he was -- it was a male attorney and I knew -- some of my friends are friends of his and he was bad-mouthing me all over town; he'd go to bars and say how horrible I was. And it was just -- like I said, it was very much the fact that I was a female ruling against them; if a male judge had made the same ruling, he might have said I don't agree with that ruling, but he wouldn't have taken it so personally. I think they tend to think that they can smile at me and use some masculine charm and I'm just going to immediately, you know, oh, yes, you're totally right. So -- so, there's some of that and a lot of people still have trouble accepting female judges, but I think more and more of that attitude is changing after they get used to it, but there's still some of that. When Pat Palafox -- I was talking to her earlier and she was just telling me about a search warrant she

issued, a case involving someone taking indecent pictures of a child and that they brought her the pictures back and as part of the search warrant -- and several years ago, we did not have night magistrates on duty at night, and the judges -- we took turns being on duty at night. And one night I was on duty and I had heard in advance who -- this was during the Westfall Administration -- that they were going to be doing a big porno raid and it was very quiet that night. And then in the morning I got up and read that they had done in fact a big porno raid. They hadn't brought any of the cases out to me; they had gotten some male judge and taken them all to this male judge -- I don't remember who it was. And, technically, again, it was my -- you know, if someone else wanted to volunteer, that was fine, but it was my night on duty. And they could have called me. And afterwards --

PD: Right.

KS: -- I heard again that they were -- and I think that's changed; I think now that they, you know, they would take anything to me and any kind of case to me, but this was a few years ago and I was

the first female judge and they just didn't want to take all this pornographic stuff up there and, you know, be embarrassed in front of me. And I'll still get -- I get people in court who don't want -- the case involves the use, for example, foul language and they don't want to -- well, he said some bad words to me. And I'll say, well, I'm sorry, but you're going to have to repeat the actual words, you know, you can't just say he said bad words; that's not sufficient and I still get some of that. And some of that may be just the court room setting, that people -- but it's more -- I think it's more so the fact that I'm a female, but you still get some of that reaction. Officers, especially, I get some young officer to translate from Spanish into English and I can understand -- my Spanish is pretty good, I can understand a lot. But even then, if you're having a case on the record, you have to have the official translation and you can tell that they don't want to repeat the words in front of me; they'll sort of mumble --

PD: Yes.

KS: Yet you have to, you know, I'm sorry, but it has

to go on the record and you have to -- have to say the words, don't worry, I've heard them all before, I've used a few of those myself. So, I still get some of that.

PD: Do you feel that you're well on your way to reaching a personal goal?

KS: Well, I think so. I mean, I'm satisfied with my life. El Paso has been very good to me. I came in a way -- I think I was very lucky, because when I did come here, there were very few female attorneys and I ended up getting involved in some things kind of, at the ground level and I was making a name for myself and I was very lucky in a way, because there were so few of us that people knew who we were and we kind of stood out and had the opportunity to make ourselves and get involved if we wanted to. And I did and took advantage of it. I mean, I didn't deliberately set out to do that, but I'm just here at the right place at the right time. And, you know, like I said, I'm the presiding municipal court judge now and eventually want to be in a district court and I think as district judge, I think I have a very good chance at it.

PD: Were you involved -- talking about the things that you got involved in when you came here and the right time and the right place -- were you ever involved with the creation or founding of the first Women's Bar Association?

KS: Yes, yes. There were -- I think that was about the first year I was here, that group of us got together and started the Women's Bar Association.

PD: What was it like then? I know now you meet in big rooms and--

KS: Yeah, there were about 10 of us at the time. I think -- I can't remember. There was one particular -- something that came up having to do with some woman judge and I can't remember what the issue was but there was some kind of issue and we sort of got together and started talking about it and ended up starting the Women's Bar and I remember one year, I was -- I guess I was the Secretary the first year and I was Vice President and then I was the President. And like the third year I remember going to a meeting and I was the only one there. And now, of course, there's so many -- you know, and it used to be I could tell you every female attorney in town and where she was

working and everything. And now there's so many that I've lost track. But it was--we use to-- you know, there would be eight to ten of us at a meeting and we'd kind of set up I guess an old girls network, that type of thing, and helping each other out and, you know, having a network and kind of a system, being able to call someone and ask for advice without seeming like an idiot, and feeling like an idiot, and helped each other find jobs and do other things like that. And now, like I said, there are so many, that I've just lost track of them all. I don't know them all.

PD: You, too?

KS: I think -- when did we start? I moved here in January of (pause) '74 and I guess we started the Women's Bar in '75, maybe '76; I can't remember. It's been a long time.

PD: Yeah, sometime in the mid-'70s, around there, I think?

KS: Yeah.

PD: Ruth Kern couldn't remember the exact date.

KS: Yeah, she was our first president and Janet was the next president and I was the president after that, yeah.

PD: So --

KS: I think '75, or somewhere in there.

PD: Yeah, I'm trying to piece it all together, because I haven't found someone who remembers the date, but I guess it to be around '71--I would like to know-- because I think that would be interesting.

Well, I -- you know, unless you have any other more general infor or any-- , something -- some anecdote to talk about. I've asked as many general questions as I can think of.

KS: I'll tell you one funny story about a judge --

PD: Oh, please.

KS: Again, that this is the police officer told me this, that they were bringing a prisoner up to my house and the -- he was asking, he was saying a woman judge, you know, what - what's that like, and they said well, she's pretty fair, you know, she's a good judge, but the one thing is we came up here a few months ago and we apparently got her out of the shower and she came out and her hair was dripping wet and, boy, she just put, you know, this huge bond on this defendant, this real big bond, so as long as -- you know, as long as you don't get her

out of the shower, she's just fine. So they pull up to my house and only -- they don't come in; they pull up behind my -- I live on a condominium complex and they pull up behind my car and then the dispatcher calls me and I go out to the police car. And so they pull up and call the dispatcher and I come out and he says I walk out there and my hair is just dripping wet and he says that defendant couldn't ask what his bond was until he was halfway back downtown and then he just kept stuttering like what -- what -- what's my bond, what's my bond? You know, so now I'll say if they have a defendant who's being belligerent or something and they want to try -- try and tell me to set a high bond, I say it's a wet hair case.

But, anyway, it is funny. It's -- you get people that -- oh, one other story. I was coming down, going to my court one day and this was in the time where we parked, where I would park in this lot and I would come up the back staircase and I'd go down a hallway past two district courts and then at the end of it, there were some doors and then our two court rooms, the municipal court rooms, on the other side of the stairs. So there was a

guy peering in the window of the municipal court --
I mean of one of the district courts and I was
walking past and I had my purse and some files
and he must have thought I was the secretary or
something because he stopped me and said, "Can
you go in there," pointing to the district court
and I said, oh, yes, you can go in quietly and sit
in the back, but you know trials are public and you
can go in and watch. Instead of going in, he started
walking down the hallway. He said, "Well, what
about those courts up there?" pointing to the
municipal courts. And I said, oh, yes, you can go
in and watch those. And we're coming closer and he
get -- and he says, well, what happens, he said,
I know -- you know, everyone's called it --
at that time my court was at 3 in afternoon and I said
oh, yes -- everyone's called at the same time and
then they just call people one by one as their case
comes up. And just as we went to the doors and I
returned to my court room straight ahead, but I
turned to go through the clerk's office, which is
where I go in, and he goes, "And that's where they
hang you, right?" I kept walking and he went into
the court room and when I walked onto the bench

about five minutes later, I could just see this guy's mouth, his mouth just fell open.

PD: Oh, you did!

KS: Unfortunately, it turned out he was not a defendant, he was with a girlfriend or something. He was -- it was a very minor ticket. But he obviously just thought I was some kind of secretary or something like that and I walked in to the bench, you know, a few minutes later, I could just see this guy at the back of the court room. That was the judge I was talking to.

PD: That is funny. I know, -- I've heard myself, you know, just stories that, you know, I have to go do a traffic ticket or something like that.

Of course, you are a very popular, a female judge, I mean, everybody knows that and so, myself, observations that I, myself have been able to pick up. It is something special, I think, in people's minds that just --

KS: Yeah. Well, now there are three -- there are six regular municipal court judges and three of us are females.

PD: That's -- that's a balance.

KS: We're taking them over, yeah.

PD: If we could just--strike-- that balance in all other areas, that would be really great. I know that in my department at the university, there are, what, ten professors and two are women.

KS: Yeah. Well, we're still -- though, that's all on our side and then across the street there's Janet, so -- we'll get-- eventually; it'll just take a while.

PD: Well, listen, I really appreciate this.

KS: You're welcome.

PD: I really do thank you.

(END OF INTERVIEW)