

THE DAILY RECORD

LAW, REAL ESTATE, FINANCE AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE SINCE 1908

Women Who Provide Inspiration And The Efforts Of WEDO

BY DENINE K. CARR
DAILY RECORD COLUMNIST

This year marks the 100-year anniversary of the death of Susan B. Anthony.

The Anthony Center for Women's Leadership is planning a year-long reflection on Susan B.'s work, measuring the progress women have made since her death.

The Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys is joining in this celebration by adding its HerStory Lecture Series to the program of events. How better to measure the progress of women than by listening to women tell their stories?

Today, Myrna Felder, renowned New York City matrimonial attorney who has represented many high profile clients, is sharing her story at noon at the Crowne Plaza. Felder will be regaling her audience, talking about how she went from performing on Broadway to performing in the courtroom. Felder is also a past president of the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York, of which GRAWA is a chapter.

Next month, on the evening of March 29, local women physicians, Ruth Lawrence and Wende Logan-Young will be sharing their stories. Dr. Lawrence attended medical school in the 1940s and Dr. Logan-Young attended approximately 15 years later. Both women were certainly precursors of their time.

In 1958, Dr. Lawrence began running the second Poison Control Center in the nation. She later made a name for herself in the field of breastmilk research, accomplishing much in her profession while raising nine children.

Dr. Logan-Young founded one of the nation's first free-standing mammography centers, the Elizabeth Wende Breast Clinic, in 1978. She raised four children, including a daughter, who is also a physician. Contact Elaine Cole for your \$10 tickets at (585) 530-8465.

Another forerunner of our time, Betty Friedan, a woman who was undoubtedly inspired by Susan B., just passed away. Friedan was probably as controversial as Susan B. was in her day.

She was valedictorian of her 1938 high school class and graduated from Smith College *summa cum laude*. Following college, Friedan attended University of California at Berkley

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for her Masters and had a prestigious fellowship.

Friedan was a working woman when she met her husband, but was at home raising her three children in Rockland County when *The Feminine Mystique* was published.

While at home and before writing the book, she went into therapy because she was suffering from depression. Her therapist recommended against her "wasting her education," and encouraged her to do freelance writing to give her more of a sense of self. Freelance writing is what she was doing when she attended her 15-year class reunion at Smith College.

Friedan had planned on surveying her classmates and writing an article about how these women, who were now at home raising their families, were doing. When Friedan couldn't

find a publisher for this article, she spent another five years researching, interviewing women and writing *The Feminine Mystique*, which was published in 1963.

In her book, Friedan claimed that women were suffering from "the problem that has no name," which could be "cured" by tranquilizers and therapy. What she found was that women were not feeling wholly fulfilled by their husbands and children. Friedan asserted the revolutionary and novel concept that it was okay for women to have personal goals and desires without feeling guilty that these other aspirations did not involve a spouse and children.

In 1966, Friedan founded the National Organization for Women, and in 1970, on the 50th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment (women's suffrage), led a march on Fifth Avenue which drew 500,000 women.

Among other things, Friedan fought to prohibit sex discrimination in help wanted ads, successfully lobbied President Johnson to sign an executive order prohibiting sex discrimination by federal contractors and forced airlines to change a long-standing policy that required flight attendants ("stewardesses" back then) to resign once they married or turned 32 years old.

Controversial until the day she died, Friedan had a profound impact on the women's rights movement. She said in

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an interview later in life, that if women are able to make motherhood a choice, that choice in and of itself is a liberating one. I couldn't agree more.

Today, women are able to choose whether and when to have children, just as they are able to choose what career path to follow. While some women work and have children at the same time, others take a break from the workplace while raising their children. What is important is that today, women have choices. It's reassuring that so much has changed in the past 40 years. And it's women the likes of Susan B. and Betty Friedan, who, by challenging the status quo and "lighting fires," are able to effect change so successfully.

The Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO) is an international organization that advocates for women's equality in global policy, and seeks, among other things, to empower women as decision makers to achieve economic, social and gender justice.

WEDO's basic tenet is that when women are represented in a critical mass (at least 30 percent), they are able to influence policy outcomes. It points out that because women constitute a majority of the world's poor, that they are at particular risk when it comes to global economic policy making. WEDO strives to promote gender balance in decision-making, based on the belief that women can make a difference in policy outcomes.

WEDO points out that the International Monetary Fund board of governors and board of directors are comprised of 97.8 percent and 100 percent men, respectively, and that the

World Bank board of governors and board of directors are comprised of 94.5 percent and 91.7 percent men respectively. Apparently the World Trade Organization's numbers are similar to the World Bank's. Why is this information important? Without a critical mass of women, issues that directly impact women will likely not come to the fore.

Here are a few examples of where having a critical mass of women in government has made a difference: In Sweden, where women hold 42.7 percent of seats in Parliament and 82 percent of cabinet ministries, the Swedish Child Care Leave Act and National Insurance Act for Parental Benefits was passed; in Norway, where women hold 35.4 percent of seats in Parliament, legislation involving more flexible work hours, increased publicly-sponsored child care services, improved pension rights for unpaid carework and increased child benefits for families that don't use public childcare services all passed.

It's important for women to run for office and be placed in positions of power. With a critical mass of women in key roles, policy and law will more likely positively impact issues that impact women.

Along these lines, GRAWA's Judicial Evaluation Committee is "gearing up" again. If you will be running for judicial office (regardless of your gender), please contact Greta Kolcon or Sue Tebor, co-chairs of the committee, to begin this important process.

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