

# Basic Detail Report

## Title Interview with Sandra P. Gersten

Date 2007 September 5

Description Oral history interview with Sandra P. Gersten who was interviewed

by Debra C. Ruel on September 5, 2007 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's

History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project. Topics Discussed:

- Background : Sandra P. Gersten was born on June 21, 1936, in Hartford, Connecticut. Her father was a Russian immigrant who, after arriving in the U.S. at age eighteen, started the first Jewish delicatessen in Hartford and later went into the real estate business. Her mother was a housewife who later worked for the State of Connecticut. - Sisters' Legal Education: Sandra Gersten had two sisters who were also lawyers: Annette Gold (deceased) and Roslyn Motlick, who is retired. Both sisters practiced law in New Haven for many years. They attended the University of Connecticut School of Law. - Sandra Gersten's

Educational Journey: Sandra Gersten graduated from Hartford's Weaver High School in 1953. She then attended Vassar College from 1953 to 1957, majoring in Sociology. During her college years, she spent her junior year abroad in Paris and at the University of Geneva High International Studies. She also participated in the Junior City Council and Junior Achievement in Hartford. - Law School:

Sandra Gersten went directly to the University of Connecticut School of Law after college. She recalls that female students were very scarce; her class started with five women, but only two, including herself and Katherine Yeoman Hutchinson, graduated. She was the Treasurer of the Student Bar Association,

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which primarily managed the bookstore. - Bar Exam and Early Career: Sandra

Gersten took the Bar Exam in New Haven, a two-day, seven-hour-a-day exam.

She passed and then sought employment. Firms were hesitant to hire her because she was married, questioning her commitment. As a result, she decided to open her own practice. Years later, she moved her practice to West Hartford Center. - Family and Law Practice: Sandra Gersten has always practiced independently but was loosely affiliated with her husband's firm when her children were young. For the last twenty years, she has been affiliated with her son, Peter Gersten, who also practices law. Her daughter, Karen Gersten,

practices with her husband. - Practicing Law as a Woman: Sandra Gersten found that her colleagues and adversaries were generally courteous, partly because many knew her husband, Aaron. She had no issues dealing with judges as a female attorney, emphasizing that respect was earned through preparation. -

Law School Application Process and Social Norms: Law school applications in her era involved personal interviews. She interviewed with Thomas Archibald from UConn. She did not wear her engagement ring to the interview to avoid being seen as not serious about her studies and future practice.

Dimensions Duration: 1 Hour, 17 Minutes