

# Basic Detail Report

## **Title Interview with Judge Holly Fitzsimmons**

Date 2016 November 9

Primary Maker Holly Fitzsimmons

Description Oral history interview with Judge Holly Fitzsimmons who was interviewed by Alyssa Esposito on November 9, 2016 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project.

Topics Discussed: - Background : Judge Fitzsimmons was born in Waterbury and raised in Naugatuck, Connecticut. Her father worked in rubber shops and later Pratt & Whitney, and her mother worked at the Farrel Corporation factory in Ansonia. The family moved to Naugatuck, and her father had a gas station until the Flood of 1955. - College: Judge Fitzsimmons initially considered teaching as a career. She later developed an interest in journalism while working part-time at the Naugatuck Daily News. She entered Smith College in 1967, seeking a broad liberal arts education. Her class (Class of 1971) was significantly influenced by the women's movement. - Early Career in Journalism: During summers while at Smith, Judge Fitzsimmons worked at the Waterbury Republican. - Mentions of riots in Waterbury following the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy. - Marriage: Judge Fitzsimmons married a fellow intern from the Waterbury newspaper at Smith College chapel. Her husband was teaching while awaiting draft numbers. - Living Overseas: They decided to live in England in April 1973. During this time, she pursued her interest in history, visiting sites related to the Wars of the Roses and the early

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Tudor period. They were abroad during the 1972 election, gaining a valuable

outside perspective on American events like the Vietnam War and President

Nixon. - Law School: She was accepted into a joint history and law program at

the University of Virginia, and entered law school in 1973. - Early Legal Career:

After her first year of law school, she returned to work at the Waterbury

newspaper. She interviewed with firms in Connecticut and was offered a

summer job at Robinson & Cole, which was seeking its first woman lawyer. She

had a welcoming experience at the firm. She took a full-time position at

Robinson & Cole after graduating in 1976 and worked there until the fall of 1978.

She was given many opportunities, including an appellate case involving the

Feres Doctrine. - U.S. Attorney's Office: Following her argument in the Second

Circuit, she was invited to join the U.S. Attorney's Office for trial experience. She

tried significant cases, including the first continuing criminal enterprise case

involving a marijuana importing operation in the early 1980s, which she tried

against her former mentor Jim Wade. In 1986, she became the head of the

Bridgeport office. She then began handling international money laundering and

illegal export cases, notably prosecuting Arif Durrani in 1986 for shipping Hawk

missile parts to Iran during the Iran-Iraq War. - Magistrate Judge : After about 14-

15 years in the U.S. Attorney's Office, Judge Fitzsimmons began considering an

alternative due to increasing case complexity and stress. A new magistrate judge

position became available in Connecticut, and she took it. - Work-Life Balance in

the Legal Profession : Judge Fitzsimmons emphasized the ongoing challenge of

work-life balance for lawyers.

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Dimensions Duration: 9 Minutes, 3 Seconds