

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Catherine Roraback

Date 1999 July 29

Description Oral history interview with Catherine Roraback who was interviewed by Bruce M. Stave on July 29, 1999 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project. Topics Discussed: - Early Life and Family: Catherine Roraback was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1920. Her father was a Congregational minister, and her mother was a native Brooklynite from an old Dutch family. They lived in Flatbush. - Great Depression. - Berkeley Institute: a private girls' high school, graduating in 1937. - Mt. Holyoke College. - Religion: Her childhood was influenced by her father's ministry, leading to a cynical view of formal religion due to the contrast between preaching and parishioners' daily actions. - Law Practice: Her family had a strong legal tradition. Her grandfather opened a law office in 1873. His brother, J. Henry Roraback, known as "Boss" Roraback, also practiced law there. Her uncle, Clint Roraback, a County Public Defender, was a significant influence on her, continuing the family law practice and serving as a second set of parents. - College Education: Mt. Holyoke College (1937-1941), she majored in economics. - Student Industrial Club. - Hudson Shore Labor School (successor to the Bryn Mawr Summer School from the early 1930s), which trained women workers to be union leaders. - Political Engagement: She was involved in a "peace caravan" in the summer of 1939 and winter of 1939-1940, coinciding with the invasion of Poland (September 1939) and the lowlands (Spring 1940). She supported

Basic Detail Report

Roosevelt in 1940 and was involved in a torchlight parade for him. - Career: She

worked for the Department of Agriculture, initially in the Division of Program

Surveys, and later for the Treasury Department. She then worked for the War

Labor Board in Detroit. - Legal Cases: Poe v. Ullman (1961), Griswold v.

Connecticut (1965), Erika Huggins Black Panther trial (1971), Peter Reilly murder

trial (1974). - WWII: She decided to go to law school after the war ended. - Law

School: Entered law school in October 1947. Her class included approximately

30 women out of 450 students. - Diversity: She describes a diverse student body,

including liberal and conservative students.

Dimensions Duration (d): 1 Hour, 56 Minutes, 16 Seconds Duration (e): 1 Hour, 59

Minutes, 3 Seconds Duration (total runtime): 3 Hours, 55 Minutes, 19 Seconds