

# Basic Detail Report

## **Title Interview with Judge Sheila M. Hennessey**

Date 2005 April 13

Description Oral history interview with Judge Sheila M. Hennessey who was interviewed by Catherine A. Mohan on April 13, 2005 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project.

Topic Discussed: - Early Life: Sheila McCue Hennessey, born August 30, 1937, grew up in Middletown, Connecticut, where her father was a mechanic and her mother a homemaker. - Early School: She attended St. John's School and Woodrow Wilson High School in Middletown. - College Education: Sheila attended Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, a small Catholic women's college, and graduated in 1958. She majored in political science and was the only one in her class with that major. The college was run by Dominican nuns and fathers who emphasized social responsibility. - Boston College Law School : Her interest in law stemmed from her political science background and participation in mock legislative sessions. Sheila Hennessey was the first lawyer in her family. She went directly to Boston College Law School, graduating in 1961. She was also on the Law Review. - Marriage: During law school, she became engaged to Edward Hennessey, who was in her class. They graduated in June 1961 and married in August 1961. - Post-Grad: She took the Connecticut Bar exam at Yale Law School in Summer 1961, and received results in August. She took a two-day Bar review course taught by Bill and Charles Moeller in Hartford. - Early Career: After passing the Bar, she started working in the Legal

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Department of Connecticut General Life Insurance Company in Bloomfield. She

was the first woman on their legal staff. - Family Life and Return to Work: Her

first child was born in August 1962. She had four sons and chose to stay home

and raise them. She later opened a general practice law office in an addition to

her home in Wethersfield. - Reflections on Women in the Legal Profession: Sheila

discusses the evolving expectations for women balancing family and careers,

admiring the current generation, including her three sons who are lawyers. -

Technology: Sheila reflects on significant technological changes, such as the

shift from dictation to computers, email, and cell phones, noting her personal

adjustment to these advancements in her later career, particularly at the

Probate Court. - Ethical Issues - Probate Judge Tenure.

Dimensions Duration: 1 Hour, 18 Minutes