

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Judge Joan Margolis

Date 2016 December 14

Description Oral history interview with Judge Joan Margolis who was interviewed by Bill Narwold on December 14, 2016 for the Connecticut Bar Foundation's History of Connecticut Women in the Legal Profession Project.

Topics Discussed: - Grandparents' Background: Judge Margolis's four grandparents immigrated from Russia in 1905, fleeing pogroms and facing poverty. Her father was a Yale University graduate and U.S. Army veteran. Her paternal grandfather died at 36 in an industrial accident, leaving her grandmother to raise four children. Her maternal grandfather lost his business during the Great Depression, leading to her mother and a sibling living with neighbors. - Childhood and High School: Judge Margolis grew up in Westville, New Haven. Her father was a CPA. She graduated as valedictorian from Richard C. Lee High School in 1971. Her high school experience was marked by the New Haven race riots that occurred near the school. The school had a diverse student body and she learned to navigate racial tensions. Her mother served as president of the New Haven PTA Association. During the Vietnam War, many Yale, Trinity, and Wesleyan graduates taught at the school to receive draft deferments. Judge Margolis was also politically involved in the 1960s and 1970s, participating in protests on the New Haven Green, influenced by events like the Black Panther trial and the Vietnam War. - Her Husband: In the summer of 1970, she met her husband, Stuart, while volunteering for Joseph Lieberman. -

Basic Detail Report

College: She applied to four colleges and chose Brandeis. Stuart initially

attended Carleton College in Minnesota but transferred to Brandeis. - Law

School: Her father suggested law school, and she decided to pursue it. Judge

Margolis and Stuart both entered UConn Law School in 1975. They financed their education using wedding gift money. During a summer working at a Milford,

Connecticut law firm, she befriended a female attorney named Sonja Goldstein,

who later became her neighbor. She served as a Notes and Comments editor for

the Connecticut Law Review. - Clerkship: Upon graduating and passing the bar

exam in 1978, she completed a two-year clerkship for Judge Ellen Bree Burns. -

Becoming a Federal Judicial Officer : She was motivated to become a judicial

officer by the concept of justice. She was appointed seven years after law school

during the new Bail Reform Act. Her office locations were various: Hartford, New

Haven, and Bridgeport. - Enjoyment of Work: Judge Margolis most enjoys

settlement conferences, particularly complex and challenging cases. - Notable

Cases: She settled a significant case involving HIV positive inmates, resulting in a

consent decree that became a national model for correctional facilities and in

which she remains involved. Another notable case involved settling a dispute

with the City of Hartford's Police Department regarding weapon discharge

incidents. - Connecticut Law Review Alumni Award: Judge Margolis received the

Connecticut Law Review Alumni Award. - Changes in Legal Practice and Judging:

She notes that technology has dramatically changed the legal profession.

Judging has also changed with technology, as information is now primarily

digital, and filings can be made 24/7. - Naturalization Ceremonies: Judge

Basic Detail Report

Margolis enjoys conducting naturalization ceremonies. - Personal Interests: She

enjoys "extraordinary" TV shows on streaming services and is a "binge-watcher."

She is religious and attends synagogue often.

Dimensions Duration: 9 Minutes