



**Jean Hoefler Toal**

Born on August 11, 1943 in Columbia, South Carolina, Chief Justice Jean Hoefler Toal is the eldest of five children. Her education began with Catholic grammar school and continued in the public school system. She graduated from Dreher High School, where she became South Carolina's first female champion debater.

Chief Justice Toal attended Agnes Scott College and majored in philosophy. Due to her first-hand witnessing of the civil rights struggle and her own personal convictions, she was inspired to become a civil rights activist. She participated in voter registration drives in South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi. After graduation, she was accepted to the University of South Carolina Law School, where she was one of four women in her class. In her third year of law school, Chief Justice Toal served as the Managing Editor of the South Carolina Law Review. Her first job out of law school in 1968 was as an associate at Haynsworth, Perry, Bryant, Marion & Johnstone in Greenville, South Carolina, the largest law firm in the state. She worked under several partners on a variety of corporate, trusts, real estate and defense litigation issues. Two years later, she went to work for Belser, Baker, Barwick, Ravenel & Bender in Columbia, where she remained for the next eighteen years. In 1974, she became a partner, adding Toal to the firm's name. Her practice included plaintiff and defense work, criminal trial work, and complex constitutional litigation.

Chief Justice Toal flourished as a trial lawyer. She appeared frequently in all levels of trial and appellate courts in the state, from the county courts to the South Carolina Supreme Court. She also gained considerable experience as a litigator in United States District Court, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and made one appearance in the United States Supreme Court.

Chief Justice Toal worked on several cases that changed the justice system, established new legal rights, and influenced the outcome of future cases. In one highly publicized case, a female law student was appointed by her Senator to serve as a page in the South Carolina Senate but was denied employment because of her sex. The decision held that this practice was unconstitutional, thereby establishing the right for women to serve as pages in the South Carolina General Assembly.

In another noteworthy case, Chief Justice Toal's client was granted a new trial after it was found that the jury had been improperly influenced by information that came to a juror from outside the courtroom. This decision established the guidelines concerning when the "jury room may be invaded."

In addition to practicing law, Chief Justice Toal served in the South Carolina House of Representatives. Elected in 1975, she served for 13 years. During her tenure, she chaired the House Rules Committee, becoming the first woman to chair a committee in the South Carolina General Assembly. Chief Justice Toal also served as chair of the Constitutional Laws Sub-Committee of the House Judiciary Committee. She quickly became regarded as an expert on constitutional law and state finances. She also floor-led and sponsored various bills and resolutions to improve the conditions for women in South Carolina, including a joint resolution to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment, a sex crime law that defined the crimes of criminal sexual assault, a law that expanded the application of the South Carolina Human Affairs Law, and a law that established a Victim's Compensation Program.

In 1988, Chief Justice Toal became the first woman ever elected to the South Carolina Supreme Court. She served as an Associate Justice until she was elected Chief Justice in 2000. During her more than 16 years on the Court, she has written over 900 opinions addressing all areas of the law. Her opinions have established important precedents regarding the admissibility of certain evidence regarding both civil and criminal procedures. She resides with her husband, Bill Toal, in Columbia. They have two grown daughters.

Chief Justice Toal continues to be an outstanding example of leadership, expertise and inspiration. It is without question that she has achieved greatness as a prominent and influential lawyer and judge. The improvements she

has made to the legal system for women and others have made an enormous impact on the people of South Carolina and the nation.