

ABA Senior Lawyers Division  
Women Trailblazers in the Law

**ORAL HISTORY**

of

**CAROLE K. BELLOWS**

Interviewer: Krista D. Kauper

Dates of Interviews:

November 16, 2005  
November 30, 2005

---

# Oral History of the Honorable Carole Kamin Bellows

## Second Interview

This is the second interview of the oral history of the Honorable Carole Kamin Bellows, which is being taken on behalf of Women Trailblazers in the Law, a project of the American Bar Association Commission on Women in the Profession. It is being conducted by Krista D. Kauper on November 30, 2005.

Ms. Kauper: To begin this second interview shall we start with your career?

Judge Bellows: Yes.

Ms. Kauper: When you were graduating from Northwestern, did you think about a variety of positions, for example working at a firm or a clerkship?

Judge Bellows: Well, I went to work for my father. Remember in those days, women weren't really considered for clerkships.

Ms. Kauper: Did you know any women who pursued clerkships?

Judge Bellows: I know one woman who had a clerkship, and as far as I know, that was the only judicial clerkship I know of that had a female.

Ms. Kauper: And that was true at all levels of clerkships?

Judge Bellows: Oh absolutely. There may have been one female clerk for an Illinois Supreme Court Justice, but that's the extent of it. It wasn't a usual thing. It wasn't a career back then the women looked at. It wasn't readily available to women.

---

Ms. Kauper: And did you feel left out? I mean compared to your male colleagues?

Judge Bellows: Don't forget that my whole family was in the law business, and I got married in 1958 right after my freshman year of law school. I finished law school. My husband was lawyer. My father-in-law was a lawyer. My father was a lawyer. So, what I did was I worked for my dad. And then my daughter was born in June of 1961, so that kept me pretty busy. Then, in, I think it was 1962, sometime in '62, I did have a clerkship for an Illinois Court of Claims Judge, which I did for about 10 years. That was a part-time job.

Ms. Kauper: How interesting.

Judge Bellows: So, it wasn't a standard clerkship, but I did all the writing of the opinions and all of the research, because the Court of Claims did write every opinion. Every decision was written.

Ms. Kauper: That's good experience.

Judge Bellows: And I did do that for ten years.

Ms. Kauper: And, I was going to ask how having children impacted your career. So, working part-time was one impact?

Judge Bellows: Oh, that's right. I did that part-time, so it worked very well. And, at that time my mother was alive, and she helped me with the baby-sitting and those things. But, I did definitely work part-time.

Ms. Kauper: And what was your relationship with the Judge? Did you get an opportunity to know the Judge very well? Over ten years, I would think so.

Judge Bellows: Oh yes, oh yes. I would hear all of the oral arguments that were in the Chicago area. They were primarily in the Chicago area, as I think of it. I

would hear all the oral arguments. I would write all the opinions, and it was a good position. So I did have a good clerkship. But as far as traditional clerkships with judges, women just couldn't see that.

Ms. Kauper: Well, going back to right when you graduated, you said you went to work for your dad. Did you always plan to do that? Did you think about doing something different?

Judge Bellows: No, not really. In 1960, I didn't have a big career plan to tell you the truth. (Laughs).

Ms. Kauper: (Laughs) And how was working with your Dad?

Judge Bellows: Oh, I loved working with my Dad. He was at that time, in 1960, already a professor at Loyola part-time.

Ms. Kauper: Okay, good.

Judge Bellows: And he taught labor law there, and so it was fine.

Ms. Kauper: Was that his area of practice, labor law?

Judge Bellows: Labor law, right.

Ms. Kauper: And so you practiced with him in that area or were you doing other things as well?

Judge Bellows: I did other things. I didn't do anything major. (Laughs) Believe me.

Ms. Kauper: And how long did you say you practiced with him, about a year, a year and a half?

Judge Bellows: Yes, about a year and a half or so, and then I got this clerkship after my daughter was born so that worked out very nicely.

---

Ms. Kauper: And when you were doing the clerkship, did you enjoy it?

Judge Bellows: Oh, I loved legal research and legal writing. Oh, yes. Oh, very much so.  
You know, it was basically research and writing, and writing opinions, and I loved that. What lawyer doesn't like writing opinions?

Ms. Kauper: Right. (Laughs)

Judge Bellows: (Laughs) So.....

Ms. Kauper: And were there other clerks as well? Did you have colleagues that were law clerks?

Judge Bellows: Oh, not every Judge had their own.

Ms. Kauper: Not their own.

Judge Bellows: No.

Ms. Kauper: Did you get to know some of the other clerks or didn't you have that kind of interaction?

Judge Bellows: I didn't have that interaction. I probably got to know the Attorneys General who represented the state better than I knew the law clerks.

Ms. Kauper: What were your colleagues from law school doing when they graduated? Were there a variety of positions or were they practicing in law firms mostly?

Judge Bellows: Oh yes. Do you mean the women colleagues or all the colleagues?

Ms. Kauper: Any.

Judge Bellows: Oh yes. We had about a hundred people in the class, and we all did different things. We had three women graduate. There was another woman in school, but I don't think she graduated with us. One of my colleagues was an Appellate Court Justice, Jill McNulty. I think she started in a law

firm, ended up teaching at Kent, and then ended up on the bench. And then my friend Barbara O'Malley went to Washington. She went to work for the federal government, and she's now my age, 70 years old, and she's still working for the federal government. She is in the Department of Justice.

Ms. Kauper: That's great.

Judge Bellows: And so, ever since we got out of law school, 45 years ago, she's been with the federal government, and she raised four children doing that.

Ms. Kauper: What are your impressions of the profession generally from those first years out of law school? Were you, and again you come from a background of lawyers....

Judge Bellows: Right....

Ms. Kauper: ...so, it wasn't a surprise to you, but did you have any impressions that stand out about the profession generally?

Judge Bellows: Well, it was very unusual to be a woman in law. I have a clipping from the *Tribune*, from probably the mid 1960's...it was a full page on husbands and wives who were lawyers. It was so unusual, and obviously I knew all the other women on the page. One of the couples was my friend Kathryn Sowle, who was number one at Northwestern in 1956, with her husband. My husband and actually my whole family posed for the picture. My brothers were in law school at the time. Another friend of mine who was married to a lawyer, and then another lawyer couple who I knew too. We all knew each other because there weren't that many of us. It was so

unusual at the time, and this is the mid 1960's, and they made a big deal out of it.

Ms. Kauper: Isn't that interesting.

Judge Bellows: Yes, a big deal. It was on the first page of what was *Tempo* magazine. The whole first page. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: That's great.

Judge Bellows: Anyway, I do have the article. It was so unusual.

Ms. Kauper: And what did your husband do when he graduated from law school?

Judge Bellows: Well, he was practicing with his father, and they did mostly criminal law. My father-in-law was a very prominent criminal lawyer. My husband went into practice with his dad, and he did a few things in the civil area. My father-in-law was a very high-powered criminal lawyer.

Ms. Kauper: That's interesting that you both went to work with your fathers. That must have been even more unusual.

Judge Bellows: Well, that's how we met actually, because my dad was a labor lawyer. His dad was a criminal lawyer and one of my dad's clients was indicted, and Charlie Bellows represented him in the criminal case.

Ms. Kauper: Oh, that's interesting.

Judge Bellows: So that's how we ended up meeting. The fathers starting talking to each other -- well I have a single son, I have a single daughter. And that's how we met through our fathers.

Ms. Kauper: Isn't that interesting. That's great.

---

Judge Bellows: Yes, it was fun.

Ms. Kauper: And you met in your first year in law school.

Judge Bellows: Yes.

Ms. Kauper: Very good. So, let's jump ahead a little bit. You did your clerkship, and what made you think about moving from the clerkship to something else?

Judge Bellows: Oh well, that was just a part-time job. Actually, a lot of things happened on a parallel course, and this is where my bar career actually started in 1961.

Ms. Kauper: That's good.

Judge Bellows: Which I should mention was very important in my life.

Ms. Kauper: I was going to get to that a little later, but that's great.

Judge Bellows: That was very important in my life. A few weeks after my daughter was born, she was born on June 10, 1961, the president of the Illinois State Bar, who knew our family, appointed me to a committee. He appointed me to the Bill of Rights Committee of the Illinois State Bar Association, and that just wasn't done in those days. So, just a few weeks after Marcia was born, I went off to my first Illinois State Bar Association Meeting and that's how I got involved in bar work, through the Illinois Bar on the Bill of Rights Committee. I became very active, and I eventually became the Chair of the Committee, and that's what started the whole bar career, that president appointing me.

Ms. Kauper: That's great.

Judge Bellows: Yes, it was nice.

Ms. Kauper: You have quite of list of bar work. Obviously, you've been very involved your whole career. Were there any other committees at the state bar level or

any other things that you were involved with the state bar level that you are particularly proud of?

Judge Bellows: Well, I'm particularly proud of the Bill of Rights work. We wrote a book about our Bill of Rights.

Ms. Kauper: Good.

Judge Bellows: I was so involved in that project, and then I did run for the Board of Governors. There had never been a woman on the Board of Governors, and the wonderful thing about the Illinois State Bar is that the Board, and all the Officers, are elected by the members. It has no nominating committees. I think if there were nominating committees...it's really the men of the Illinois State Bar Association who gave me the support that I always have had from the organized bar. Because when I started running in contested races, which was probably in the mid 1960's...I just want to see when I became a member of the Board of Governors.

Ms. Kauper: 1969? Was that it?

Judge Bellows: Actually that's when it was, thanks. Yes, so I ran in 1969 after having been Chair of the Bill of Rights Committee -- my beloved Bill of Rights Committee, which I just adored. Around 1969, I was also on the Constitutional Revision Committee of the Chicago Bar Association. What we did that was so outstanding on the Constitutional Revision Committee was that the State of Illinois hadn't had a new constitution since the mid 1800's, and it was desperately in need of revision. Our Constitutional Revision Committee of the Chicago Bar Association supported having a

constitutional convention, which was a statewide vote, and then the delegates were elected. Actually, my brother was one of the delegates. Our committee broke up into sub-committees, and we basically wrote a draft Constitution for every single Article in the Constitution.

Ms. Kauper: Sounds fun.

Judge Bellows: And, I was on a small sub-committee on the Bill of Rights area of the Constitution, and our little sub-committee actually drafted the non-discrimination language in the Bill of Rights. This was in 1969 or so, while they were in session. The Constitution wasn't passed until 1970.

Paragraph 17 of Article 1 of the Bill of Rights states: "All persons shall have the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, national ancestry and sex, in the hiring and promotion practices of any employer or in the sale or rental of property". And that's a Constitutional revision. We came up with that. It was so controversial that we were afraid to give it to the Board of Governors of the Chicago Bar Association. It was, in that day and age at the end of the 1960's, very controversial to put that in the Constitution.

Ms. Kauper: And that language hasn't changed since then, not since your sub-committee drafted it.

Judge Bellows: It made it into the Constitution. That was a very proud moment, because at that point there was terrible discrimination on the basis of sex and race in housing and in employment. So that was quite a unique provision, and it did become part of the Constitution.

Ms. Kauper: That's great.

Judge Bellows: So that was major in that time.

Ms. Kauper: What an exciting thing to be involved in.

Judge Bellows: Yes, to be a young lawyer and to be involved in that and to see it actually happen, it was just wonderful. Then in 1969, I went on the Board of Governors, and I served my three terms. You could only serve three terms. I always had a contested election, and then when I had to go off after the three terms, I ran for third vice-president. Again it was the members of the Illinois State Bar who elected me in a contested election, and there weren't very many women at that time.

Ms. Kauper: Were there other women on the Board with you?

Judge Bellows: Never. I was the first and only for quite a while. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: And on these committees as well. I assume...

Judge Bellows: Oh yes, not at all, not at all.

Ms. Kauper: And when you say you had a contested election, you've mentioned several times the support you had...did you have people that were opposed to you, do you think, because you were a woman?

Judge Bellows: Oh I don't think so. I really don't think it was sexist at that point, but there were other people active in the Bar who deserved to be on the Board too.

Ms. Kauper: Right, right.

Judge Bellows: And, who deserved to be third vice-president. (Laughs) So, these were people who did not come out of nowhere.

---

Ms. Kauper: Right.

Judge Bellows: They had a nice resume. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: So, you didn't feel it was because you were a woman.

Judge Bellows: Never, never. At that point, never.

Ms. Kauper: It sounds like you had tremendous support.

Judge Bellows: I did. I've always had support.

Ms. Kauper: From the men that you worked with.

Judge Bellows: I've always had that support, for which I am very grateful. I was young too, and that was a mark against me. But, it didn't seem to hurt (laughs), and I was very devoted. I never missed meetings. I always worked very hard in the bar, and I always thought it was a privilege to have input in the things like the Illinois Constitution.

Ms. Kauper: Absolutely.

Judge Bellows: It was wonderful.

Ms. Kauper: So you were talking about being involved with bar work and did that lead to your new position in law after your clerkship? Did it help you think about what you were going to do?

Judge Bellows: It was a parallel track. The bar work was in parallel.

Ms. Kauper: Parallel.

Judge Bellows: Yes. Then, when my kids got a little older, I went into practice with my husband and my father-in-law, and that was my next career move.

Ms. Kauper: Okay.

Judge Bellows: So then I was working full time.

---

Ms. Kauper: And how was that working with your husband and his father?

Judge Bellows: Oh, it was great. I mean, it was just wonderful. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: That's a very unique background, first having worked with your father and then working with your husband and his father.

Judge Bellows: Yes, when you have that much family in the law (laughs), that is what happens.

Ms. Kauper: Small firm, I take it?

Judge Bellows: Yes, yes.

Ms. Kauper: And what was the day to day experience there?

Judge Bellows: Well, I did a variety of things. I didn't do criminal work at all, and I basically followed whatever I liked, whatever I wanted to follow. I ended up doing some anti-discrimination -- early anti-discrimination litigation, when it wasn't so easy to win in those days. (Laughs) That was so important to me to have fair employment. It was very important to me, and I worked on several things in that area and ended up going to the U.S. Supreme Court on one issue. It was an interesting issue. We had a discrimination case in federal court against Delta Airlines, which we didn't win. We represented a flight attendant, a poor flight attendant, and we didn't win it, although I thought we had a pretty good case. But we didn't win. We had Julius Hoffman as our judge (laughs), a very, very conservative man. But, there was a rule that if you lose in a federal case you have to pay the costs. For this poor girl, who had no money whatsoever, Delta Airlines came after her for the costs. So that was the issue that ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court. It was *Delta vs. August*, and

we won. (Laughs) We won the argument that the rule doesn't apply to civil rights plaintiffs. That was the upshot.

Ms. Kauper: Very good.

Judge Bellows: Yes. My husband was very, very sick at the time, and actually he was dying at the time. So one of my friends argued the case.

Ms. Kauper: That was what I was going to ask you...

Judge Bellows: Yes, yes. But I was there, I was there. It was very exciting. It was very exciting to win a big civil rights victory that civil rights plaintiffs do not have to pay costs. That was major.

Ms. Kauper: Your case set a precedent.

Judge Bellows: Major, yes. It was very exciting to be there and to write the briefs.

Ms. Kauper: Absolutely. You mentioned your husband. What impact did his passing have...I take it he must have died shortly after that?

Judge Bellows: He died right before that.

Ms. Kauper: Oh, right before. Did that have an impact on your career? Were you still practicing with him and his father?

Judge Bellows: Well, no. At that point, I had just gone to a bigger firm, so I was just trying to pull the pieces together along with things I had started. They were very supportive, very supportive of that.

Ms. Kauper: And what made you make the decision to go to a bigger firm?

Judge Bellows: Well, my husband and my father-in-law were very, very ill, both of them at the same time.

---

Ms. Kauper: Okay.

Judge Bellows: So, I really had nowhere else to go. So, to be practical I made the move.

Ms. Kauper: And which firm?

Judge Bellows: I went with Reuben and Proctor, which was a spin-off of Kirkland and Ellis at that time. I was with them for a few years.

Ms. Kauper: And, what was your experience there?

Judge Bellows: It was very interesting. I met a lot of different people and did a lot of different kinds of cases, and it was very interesting. I think it was there that I first got interested in family law, because I somehow ended up with a lot of family cases. Even though they did not do that much family law, a big firm really needs to service their clients like that.

Ms. Kauper: Right.

Judge Bellows: So that is how I got interested in family law.

Ms. Kauper: Oh, very good. And what made you interested in that firm? Did you seek them or did they seek you?

Judge Bellows: No, I don't remember in detail right now, but I did end up with them.

Ms. Kauper: Okay, and....

Judge Bellows: I think my father-in-law had talked to Don Reuben, who was the senior partner. I think that's how it was put together.

Ms. Kauper: And what was the environment like there? Were there other women there?

Judge Bellows: Oh yes, there were other women at that point. There were some very good ones, very good ones. This was about 1978 or 1979, around that time.

Ms. Kauper: Did you have a mentor at that firm? Was there anyone that particularly influenced your career?

---

Judge Bellows: Don Reuben was very much everybody's mentor. (Laughs)

I don't think anybody else was a mentor at that firm, but he was very helpful.

Ms. Kauper: And you said that's what got you interested in family law?

Judge Bellows: Yes, because I ended up with a lot of family law things, and I ended up loving that area. Because it's a people-type area, and I just very much liked it. I've been doing it for 23 years on the bench. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: Were you able at the firm to do that the majority of your time or was it a smaller amount time? Were you doing other things too?

Judge Bellows: I did other things too. I was also keeping up with my bar work, and don't forget the bar work was a huge part of my life through the 70's and the 80's. I was in the House of Delegates, I was Chair of a section of the ABA, and I was Chair of a standing committee of the ABA. So I had a lot of bar work, and the firm was supportive in that work too.

Ms. Kauper: And was that typical of firms, at that point, to be supportive of bar work? Did most firms support it?

Judge Bellows: The good firms. I think they were always supportive of bar work. Although in later years some of the people who had spent a lot of time in bar work were punished, that wasn't my situation.

Ms. Kauper: Let's actually go back to your bar work for a minute. You were, you said, the first woman elected to those positions and you were the first woman president of the Illinois State Bar.

---

Judge Bellows: I was the first woman president of any bar.

Ms. Kauper: Of any bar?

Judge Bellows: Of any state bar.

Ms. Kauper: In the country.

Judge Bellows: In the country, right.

Ms. Kauper: Very impressive. And how did that feel? Did that feel like a big accomplishment? It sounds like.....

Judge Bellows: I don't know. I always used to say, "I may be the first, but I won't be the last." That, of course, turned out to be very true.

Ms. Kauper: Do you know if there were other women presidents of other states, not necessarily just Illinois, shortly after you? Did it take long for other women to follow suit?

Judge Bellows: I don't remember. I don't know if there were any women in the 70's. There were certainly a lot of women by the 80's. There may have been some in the late 70's, but I just don't know. Maybe the ABA has records of that, but I don't know.

Ms. Kauper: Maybe.

Judge Bellows: I don't have any memory specifically of women presidents.

Ms. Kauper: And what did you enjoy most about being President of the Illinois State Bar?

Judge Bellows: Well, the wonderful thing about bar work, as I may have indicated before, is that you do get to influence the legislative process. I think the most

---

important thing that we did in the bar was get a legislative agenda that we

felt helped the administration of justice. When I was President and President-Elect of the Illinois State Bar, we obviously would lobby in Springfield and we would lobby in Washington. I think having the organized bar input was good -- some of the congressmen and representatives were very amenable to that, especially if they were lawyers. If they weren't lawyers, they weren't necessarily amenable to it. I remember, in 1972, getting slaughtered by people like George Ryan trying to pass the Equal Rights Amendment. (Laughs) It was just brutal. I went down to Springfield with a nun, and they asked the nun all the legal questions and they wouldn't ask me any legal questions. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: Interesting. (Laughs)

Judge Bellows: There was terrible discrimination at that point against women. Just terrible. But, I had debates against Phyllis Schlafly on the Equal Rights Amendment and on other issues our input was important. The 1970's, this was a very interesting time in the organized bar, because you saw the organized bar change from a very narrowly focused group, talking about how to change the rules and procedure, something like to that, to getting into social issues.

Ms. Kauper: How interesting.

Judge Bellows; And at the beginning, let's say in the mid 70's, beginning of the 70's, there was tremendous resistance from the organized bar -- I was in the House of Delegates of the ABA -- to getting into social issues. I got very active in the Individual Rights and Responsibilities Section, which of course was all about social issues.

---

Ms. Kauper: Right.

Judge Bellows: And we used to get beat up in the House of Delegates something terrible. I remember one time we gave them a resolution against hunger, and there was this one discussion about whether hunger was germane to the purposes of the American Bar Association. When I was Chair of the Section, we presented the first gay rights resolutions to the House of Delegates in 1975. I was Chair, and I presented it, because our delegate at the time wouldn't present. (Laughs) It was controversial even in the Council. So, basically the resolution, if I remember, is something like: "That we the American Bar Association believe that there should be no discrimination against people on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and housing" or something close. I can't remember right off-hand, although it's in the archives. But it was the first gay rights resolution brought before the American Bar House of Delegates, and it was very controversial. At one point, I was presenting it and they were trying to boo me down, and I said, "this is the American Bar Association House of Delegates, not the supreme soviet." (Laughs) That did not go over big. But then, some of the top leaders from the bar got up and said, "of course this is germane to the purposes of the American Bar Association, we are talking about civil rights." That was just phenomenal. I mean, this was a sea change. They tabled it, because that's how the House of Delegates was at that point. Of course in later years they supported things like the Equal Rights

---

Amendment and pro-choice and gay rights and all that, but that was to come

later. There was just a sea change in the House of Delegates, and that was kind of exciting in the mid 1970's. If you could influence legislative action or public perception, I think that's good and well worth doing.

Ms. Kauper: And that's something you learned from your parents too, going back to their community involvement.

Judge Bellows: Oh yes, oh yes. The organized bar really did, and does, have a lot of influence on societal issues.

Ms. Kauper: Do you remember who those leaders were who stood up and said "it is germane?"

Judge Bellows: Oh yes, I remember specifically. One of them, Barnabas Sears, was one of our top trial lawyers in Chicago, former President of the State Bar and state delegate for many years. He was one specifically that I remember saying that. Somewhere in the archives I think there are House of Delegates debates on this.

Ms. Kauper: Sure.

Judge Bellows: So, I might be able to find it, but it is in the archives. In 1975. I think it was the Midyear Meeting in 1975.

Ms. Kauper: Okay.

Judge Bellows: In Atlanta.

Ms. Kauper: And even though it was tabled, did you feel what you'd accomplished?

Judge Bellows: Absolutely. Just raising the perception and getting the issue in the public discourse was phenomenal.

Ms. Kauper: That's great. At what point, I'm jumping back just a little bit, did you start getting involved in the ABA?

Judge Bellows: I was Chairman of this little Bill of Rights Committee at the Illinois State Bar, and the American Bar Association at that time, about 1967, was trying to organize a Section of Individual Rights. That interested me. So, I went to the ABA meeting and I volunteered to help with the membership drive for the Section of Individual Rights and Responsibilities, and that's how I immediately got into the ABA.

Ms. Kauper: So you were essentially a charter member of the IR&R Section?

Judge Bellows: Oh definitely, definitely. I was a charter member of the Section, and that was the late 1960's, so that's what got me into the ABA. Then I became Recording Secretary of the Section, but I was very young. I was very enthusiastic. I helped with the membership, and it was very interesting. I met some incredible people at that time.

Ms. Kauper: You were the first woman Chair of that Section. Do you know if you were the first woman Chair of any section at the ABA?

Judge Bellows: I think there was somebody from Texas who was Chair of the Family Law Section before that, so I wasn't the first Chair of an ABA section, maybe the second one.

Ms. Kauper: When you started your involvement with the ABA, did you see more women lawyers involved in those activities compared to the state bar?

Judge Bellows: That was still the 1960's, so no you didn't see very many women lawyers at that point. Very few.

Ms. Kauper: And your bar association activity, whether at the state level or the ABA, did that give you networking opportunities? Did it give career opportunities here at the local level?

Judge Bellows: I would say not at that point, not necessarily career opportunities, but definitely networking. I met people all over the country. It was just wonderful. I mean, I still have friends all over the country from my ABA work.

Ms. Kauper: Very good. I guess from there I would go back to Reuben and Proctor. You were very involved with the bar association, you were doing some family law work, getting more and more interested in that, and what happened next in your career?

Judge Bellows: Well, I was with Reuben and Proctor from the late 1970's until the mid 1980's, and in 1986 I had a chance to go on the bench.

Ms. Kauper: Oh, good, so...

Judge Bellows: So, I was.....

Ms. Kauper: Okay. (Laughs)

Judge Bellows: Which was a good thing because Reuben and Proctor merged with Isham, Lincoln & Beale, and shortly thereafter everything dissolved. I had just gotten on the bench, so I weathered all of that (laughs), which was a good thing.

Ms. Kauper: And when you say, you had an opportunity to go on the bench at that time, were you appointed or were you elected?

Judge Bellows: I was appointed by the Illinois Supreme Court.

Ms. Kauper: Okay, and were all judges appointed at that time?

Judge Bellows: No, just vacancies.

Ms. Kauper: Ah, okay, okay.

Judge Bellows: There was a vacancy.

Ms. Kauper: And, how do you think you were given that opportunity?

Judge Bellows: Well, I had a pretty high profile at that point. Justice Seymour Simon was a very liberal man, and I think he wanted a chance to appoint a prominent woman. It was just 1986, and I knew him, somewhat. He gave me the opportunity, and I took it. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: That's great. Had you ever thought about being a judge?

Judge Bellows: It had been in the back of my mind, but you know it's basically very political, usually a very political process. When Justice Simon made the appointment, he made sure that the Democrats were going to back me at the next election. So, I mean he was very, very supportive. He was a huge mentor, just tremendous in my life. I owe my life to him really. (Laughs)

As far as this judicial career goes.

Ms. Kauper: And how did you meet him? Was he someone you knew from back in your career?

Judge Bellows: Don't forget, I networked over the years. I knew so many lawyers and judges, because you know being a Bar president and...

Ms. Kauper: Right.

Judge Bellows: ...just being active in the profession. I knew a lot of people. (Laughs)

---

Ms. Kauper: And, when you started on the bench were there other women?

Judge Bellows: Yes, there were. I can't remember what percentage, but in the 1980's there were beginning to be more women on the bench.

Ms. Kauper: Did you come on to the bench in the domestic relations area?

Judge Bellows: Yes, the presiding judge of the division asked for me, so I never went to traffic court like most other judges. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: That's great.

Judge Bellows: In fact, I've had this particular office on the southeast corner of the building since January 1987, and I got on the bench in November of 1986. Actually, I was given my current assignment being a team leader and preliminary judge in January of 1987. So, I've been doing the same thing since January '87.

Ms. Kauper: And what has changed in those years on the court? Has much changed?

Judge Bellows: Well, lots more women, obviously. And, I think there's more transparency in the court. I don't see any backroom deals being made, you know like there used to be. At least we heard tales that there used to be.

Ms. Kauper: Right.

Judge Bellows: I think it's a much cleaner operation now than it reputedly was. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: What about the work load, has that changed?

Judge Bellows: Not really, not really.

Ms. Kauper: No?

Judge Bellows: I think we have a pretty good load. It's pretty steady over the years. We have about 20,000 new cases filed in our division every year, and I don't think it's gone up and down that much.

Ms. Kauper: And what do you enjoy about being a judge?

Judge Bellows: What I like is that I can do problem solving for families. Just being able to protect children is so major, to try to get them in the best possible environment. We work with mental health professionals and with mediators, and just resolving family problems is so rewarding to me. Not every family can be saved, but for the ones that we can help, it is so wonderful. We can make life better for a kid. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: Absolutely.

Judge Bellows: Making sure that the parents, both parents, can be involved. Trying to save some of the kids from this dysfunctional whirlpool that they get into, getting them counseling, and getting them represented by lawyers. I think Illinois has a wonderful system because every custody and visitation dispute goes to mediation. It is court provided mediation, and they must sit down with the mediator for at least two half days, and they talk to the kids. They must go to a four-hour parenting class. You know, just these things that we're able to do in Cook County are wonderful. If I still have problems ongoing after the mediation process, which does resolve 80% of the problems, then we get the children represented by specially trained attorneys. That's just been a wonderful thing. If you can impact families...that's why I never wanted to go to another division, because I can't think of anything more important than impacting families and children.

Ms. Kauper: Absolutely. Are there any cases that stand out in your memory? Obviously all of your cases really do make a difference, but are there any that are really memorable or stand out?

Judge Bellows: Oh, you know over nineteen years there are many, many cases of course. Some people are more dysfunctional than other people, like the airline captain who went to jail for months for contempt because he hid his money and he didn't want to pay child support. (Laughs) Things like that always stand out. There are some really crazy, crazy things that happen.

Ms. Kauper: And what do you do when you get frustrated over things like that?

Judge Bellows: I never get frustrated. (Laughs)

Ms. Kauper: Well, that's good.

Judge Bellows: Being on the bench, you can always do something about it. People are lying to you, you can say, "you've perjured yourself and you're going to get six months." I don't like to send people to jail, but it has happened.

Ms. Kauper: And what is your relationship with the attorneys that appear before you?

Judge Bellows: Oh, I really do like the domestic lawyers and attorneys because they work so hard and their clients are so difficult. I feel that they really are trying to do the best they can for the families. Sometimes they're embarrassed -- they'll come in and say, "judge, my client is really crazy and my client, you know, really has issues." Then, of course, we deal with substance abuse issues. We get random testing, and if they're dangerous for the kids, we don't want them with the kids without supervision. We keep the drunks,

hopefully, from driving the children. We try to protect the children at all costs.

Ms. Kauper: Right. What are the qualities that you think make a good attorney?

Judge Bellows: Hmmm...

Ms. Kauper: In the context of being a judge, from your perspective as a judge?

Judge Bellows: Well.... patience (laughs) is number one; compassion, number two; empathy, number three. I think you have to have legal knowledge -- you must read the pleadings. You must follow the law. You must...you have to know what you're doing. You can't just do it all on instinct, although instinct is very good. Common sense is very good, but you really have to know what the law is. But, I think our attorneys are just wonderful, and on the whole, I admire them. I know how hard it is to represent these people who are at the height of emotion.

Ms. Kauper: Right.

Judge Bellows: They might be normal in other situations, but they're not normal when they come to divorce court.

Ms. Kauper: And what are the qualities that make a good judge?

Judge Bellows: Well, the same thing.

Ms. Kauper: Same.

Judge Bellows: Patience, compassion, legal knowledge. You know, you do have to be patient.

Ms. Kauper: What are your relationships with the other judges on the bench?

Judge Bellows: Oh, very good. We're very collegial in our division. We have monthly meetings. The women judges do yoga a few times a week, or some of them do. We do major birthdays. This is mostly for the women, although my team will celebrate the birthdays for our whole team. We have five members on our team. We do birthday parties and lunches and yoga. We have a very good relationship with each other, and we're not isolated from each other like some divisions are. We have the monthly meetings when we have lunch together.

Ms. Kauper: That's great.

Judge Bellows: In general, we're very collegial.

Ms. Kauper: Do you have or was there a judge that was a mentor to you, once you came on the bench?

Judge Bellows: I had certain judges that I really admired, and even though I didn't necessarily work with them one-on-one, I had particular judges in this division who I tried to emulate. We do have a formal mentoring program now.

Ms. Kauper: Oh, good.

Judge Bellows: And I have mentored many, many judges. We didn't at that time, but now it's formalized.

Ms. Kauper: I would think being a mentor to judges coming on the bench would be a fun part of your job.

Judge Bellows: That's what I've done for many, many years, and the formal mentoring program has you eating with your mentee at least six times during the first six months that they're on the bench. So, I've been a mentor many times.

[End of Second Interview]