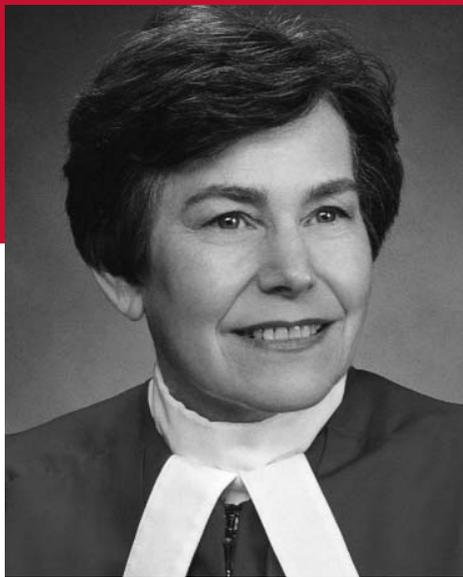


2007 Margaret Brent Awards

Irma S. Raker



Judge Irma Raker grew up in Brooklyn, New York, the daughter of a lawyer and school teacher. In 1959, she graduated from Syracuse University with the intention of attending law school. Instead, she married her nuclear

engineer husband, Sam, and moved to Maryland. Judge Raker did not start law school until she was 32 years old, having deferred her legal education while raising three children, but she has more than made up for lost time. One year after graduation, in 1973, she became the first woman prosecutor in the history of Montgomery County, Maryland. During her six years with the State's Attorney's Office, she quickly emerged as a leader, acting as a mentor and counselor to many women. Her success, a product of her courage, scholarship, and collegiality, paved the way for women who followed her into a then-male-dominated field.

Throughout her legal career, Judge Raker has been known for her intellectual approach to the law as well as for her commitment to the issues related to women and children. As an assistant state's attorney, and one of the few women litigators in the county, Judge Raker prosecuted major criminal cases. She was a leading advocate in Maryland to revise the sexual offense laws, modernize jury instructions in rape cases, and champion on behalf of victims of domestic violence and child abuse at a time when the law enforcement community was only just beginning to acknowledge the devastating nature of these crimes.

In 1980, Judge Raker was appointed to serve as a judge on the District Court of Maryland, and in 1982, she was appointed to the Circuit Court for Montgomery County. Judge Raker was known for her standard of fairness in addition to her intellectual power. Her much-publicized *Burning Tree* opinion impacted country clubs across the U.S. In *Burning Tree Club, Inc. v Bainum*, she held, as a trial judge, that the private Burning Tree Country Club was not entitled to a special tax exemption because it refused to admit women

among its members. This decision—ultimately upheld by the Maryland Court of Appeals—resulted in many country clubs within and outside Maryland changing their practices.

Judge Raker was appointed in 1993 to the Court of Appeals of Maryland, the state's highest court. She chairs the Judicial Compensation Committee of the Maryland Judicial Conference and has been successful in representing the judiciary in encouraging fair compensation for Maryland judges. Sensing a need to open channels of communication between the different branches of government, and to encourage networking between the women legislators and judges, she initiated an annual dinner held at the court (which has become a national model) for women legislators and judges. Since 1980, she has served as the chairperson of the Maryland State Bar Association Pattern Jury Instruction Committee, and the resulting *Criminal Pattern Jury Instructions* is recognized throughout the legal community as one of the best of its kind. She is an elected Life Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and an elected member of the American Law Institute. She is an adjunct professor of law at the Washington College of Law of the American University and a faculty member of the Maryland Judicial Institute.

Judge Raker is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Women's Law Center Dorothy Beatty Memorial Award for Significant Contribution to Women's Rights, the Women's Bar Association Rita C. Davidson Award, the Maryland State Bar Association Robert C. Heeney Award, the Syracuse University Outstanding Alumna Award, and the Daily Record "Maryland's Top 100 Women" award.

Judge Irma Raker's leadership and professional excellence have benefitted all Maryland women and men. She continues to be a prominent, active, and dynamic member of the community and understands the challenges women lawyers face today. She serves as a role model, a mentor, a trail blazer, and a legal scholar. Her past and present accomplishments make her a worthy recipient of the award named in honor of her home state's first practicing attorney, Margaret Brent.