Judith L. Lichtman arrived in Washington D.C. in 1966, fresh out of the University of Wisconsin Law School where she was one of two women in a graduating class of 150. She joined the Office of the General Counsel of the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare as a civil rights attorney and subsequently made a career out of shattering the glass ceiling.

Beginning with a small, dedicated group of D.C. area volunteers who worked on behalf of women’s legal rights, Ms. Lichtman molded them into a powerful, cohesive network of women lawyers from all areas of practice, from all across the country. Thus, was born the Women’s Legal Defense Fund, now the National Partnership for Women and Families (NPWF).

As executive director, president, and now senior advisor of the NPWF, Ms. Lichtman transformed the legal landscape for women by litigating landmark cases and by inspiring, conceptualizing, and lobbying into law historic pieces of legislation such as the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, and the 1993 Family and Medical Leave Act, which insiders on Capitol Hill refer to as the “Judy Lichtman Act.” She was the first woman “Washington Power Broker” on equal par with the men—so much so that Senator Ted Kennedy nicknamed her “the 101st Senator.” If a Senator wanted to know what women thought of a particular bill, or when a President wanted to know who to name to a high-profile post in his Administration, they called Ms. Lichtman.

Ms. Lichtman fought to open to women lawyers the influential posts traditionally reserved for men. Through her appointment to both the prestigious D.C. Federal Judicial Nominating Commission and the D.C. Judicial Nomination Commission, she worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that the local and federal benches are models of gender, racial and ethnic diversity. She also created institutions to give women a voice and a “place at the table,” such as the Women’s Law and Public Policy Fellowship Program which provided one-year fellowships for recent law graduates to work on issues of importance to women; the Women’s Appointments Project which advocated for the appointment of women to senior executive branch positions; and was a founding member of EMILY’s List, the Democratic women’s political action fund that has propelled so many women (particularly women lawyers) to national public office.

Ms. Lichtman has served on dozens of boards and advisory committees, from the American Civil Liberties Union to the Washington Council of Lawyers to the American Jewish Congress. She has been recognized by Working Woman magazine for her commitment to diversity, and named as one of 1989’s “America’s 100 Most Important Women” by Ladies Home Journal. Washingtonian magazine in 1989 named her one of the “100 Most Powerful Women of Washington,” and Sara Lee Corporation awarded her the 1989 “Frontrunner Award in the Areas of Humanities.” In 2008, she received the Fannie Mae and Working Woman Diversity Award for excellence in the non-profit sector, and, in 2001, the Council for Court Excellence Justice Potter Stewart Award for significant contributions to the administration of justice in the community.

Over the past three decades, Ms. Lichtman has encouraged countless women to go to law school, and has personally mentored them and launched them in the field of women’s rights. She has sought, at every turn, to place women lawyers in influential positions in the public and private sectors, and to inspire them with a sense of their responsibility to use their legal skills to work for the good of all women.

Mary Ann McMorrow grew up in Chicago at the height of the Depression. Although times were lean, her parents always stressed education and values. Her innate sense for doing what was “right” coupled with a penchant to debate current events with friends led her to pursue a career in law. However, in the 1940’s a woman in the law was more of a dream than a reality; but not for Mary Ann McMorrow.

She enrolled in law school and was the only woman in her graduating class at Loyola University School of Law in 1953. Despite being the sole female in her class, twice she was elected by her male classmates as class president and associate editor of the law review. After completing law school, Chief Justice McMorrow was employed by her law school for a short time and then was appointed an Assistant State’s Attorney of Cook County. There, she was the first woman to prosecute major criminal cases. She left the State’s Attorney’s office in 1963 to enter private practice. It was very risky for a woman in those years to enter private practice, but Chief Justice McMorrow quickly established a client base and earned the respect of the practicing bar for her trial and appellate skills.

At a time when few women were elected to the bench, Chief Justice McMorrow was elected to the Cook County Circuit Court in 1976. In 1986, she was elected to the Illinois Appellate Court where she became the first woman to chair its Executive Committee. She topped an already impressive career by running for the Illinois Supreme Court and, in 1992, became the first woman in 173 years to be elected to that court.

In September 2002, Chief Justice McMorrow became the 115th chief justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, and one of only a handful of women nationwide to hold the distinction of chief justice. In her position as Chief Justice, she leads a court system of over 900 judges in 102 counties who dispose of an average of 4 million cases a year. Her tenure has been marked by an exceptional level of cooperation among the judiciary, the organized bar, and the legislative leaders in advancing the interest of the citizens of Illinois. Chief Justice McMorrow has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the 1998 Myra Bradwell Woman of Achievement Award, the highest award of the Women’s Bar Association of Illinois, and the National Association of Women Lawyers’ Arabella Babb Mansfield Award in 2001. She was named by Chicago Business as one of “Chicago’s 100 Most Influential Women” in 1996; by Chicago Lawyer magazine as “2001 Person of the Year”; and by the Chicago Sun Times as “The Most Powerful Woman in Chicago Law.”

Despite her honors and professional achievements, Chief Justice McMorrow remains warm, caring and approachable. She performs many charitable deeds out of the public spotlight, such as volunteering to work in soup kitchens and providing direct service to low-income individuals. In addition to her extraordinary involvement in state, local and specialty bar associations, she frequently inspires law students by speaking with them about professionalism and service to the public and to the legal profession.

In news reports following her unanimous selection as the next chief justice of the Illinois Supreme Court, Chief Justice McMorrow stated that “[w]hen I went to law school, women couldn’t even dream of such a thing [becoming chief justice]. I hope this [my election as Chief Justice] would forever indicate that there’s nothing that limits women in any job or any profession.”