

THE WOMEN'S ADVOCATE A CATALYST FOR 2003

Women and the Law Section Newsletter
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2003-2004 WAL OFFICERS AND COUNCIL

CHAIR

Judy L. Ney
12242 Brookvalley Dr.
Houston, Texas 77071
Office: 713/723-1937
E-Mail: judylneyjd@aol.com

CHAIR-ELECT

Teresa Oxford
Law Office of Teresa A. Oxford
519 S. Presa
San Antonio, Texas 78205
Office: 210/227-3200
E-Mail: teresaoxford@sbcglobal.net

VICE-CHAIR/MEMBERSHIP

D'Metria Benson
Law Office of D'Metria Benson
1920 Abrams Parkway, LB 398
Dallas, Texas 75214
Office: 214/320-4853

VICE-CHAIR/NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Lisa Smith
David Van Os & Associates, P.C.
1606 N. Alamo Street
San Antonio, Texas 78215
Office: 210/225-1955
E-Mail: lisa@vanoslaw.com

SECRETARY

Mara Aysa Blatt
500 E. San Antonio, 12th Floor
El Paso, Texas 79901
Office: 915/546-2240

TREASURER

Lisa R. Hernandez
Easley & Marquis, L.L.C.
5000 Legacy Drive, Suite 400
Plano, Texas 75024
Office: 972/578-9597 x131
E-Mail: lhernandez@easleyandmarquis.com

CHRONOLOGIST

Suzanne Duvall
Burdin Mediations
4080 Stanford Ave.
Dallas, Texas 75225
Office: 214/361-0802

IMMEDIATE PAST CHAIR

Misty M. Ventura
Hughes & Luce
1717 Main St., Suite 2800
Dallas, Texas 75201
Office: 214/939-5462
E-Mail: VENTURM@HughesLuce.com

EMERITUS VOTING MEMBER

Louise B. Raggio, Dallas

COUNCIL TERMS EXPIRING 2005

Georgina Benavides, *McAllen*
Kathy Cannon, *Austin*
Ronnie Harrison, *Houston*
Carolyn Moore, *Lubbock*
Carmen Samaniego, *San Antonio*

COUNCIL TERMS EXPIRING 2004

Ralph H. Brock, *Lubbock*
Avo Stevens Butler, *Sherman*
Sherry Wetsch, *Houston*
Jennifer Rustay, *Houston*

BOARD ADVISORS

Kim J. Askew, *Dallas*
Linda R. Butter, *Longview*

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Women and the Law Section Members:

It's fall so a big WELCOME to all the new as well as the continuing members of the Women and the Law Section. I especially want to welcome the new Board members Georgina Benavides (McAllen), Kathy Cannon (Austin), and Carmen Samaniego (San Antonio), and thank them ahead of time for the time and effort they and all the other Board members put in to making OUR section so vital.

If you weren't able to make it to the last State Bar Convention in Houston the Section was extremely visible. Our annual meeting was host to Dean Nancy Rapaport (University of Houston Law Center), who informed and entertained us with her presentation on how women lawyers are portrayed in the media. Are women attorneys still seen as the Katherine Hepburn type, as in the movie *Adam's Rib*, or as Reese Witherspoon in *Legally Blonde*?

Our own Louise Raggio was honored for her 50 years as an attorney by the Texas Bar Foundation and personally signed her new autobiographical book, "The Texas Tornado". Where would women today be without her help in changing the Texas Marital Property laws?

The Sarah T. Hughes Award honoring significant accomplishments of a fellow woman lawyer went to Chief Justice Alma L. Lopez of San Antonio. The Ma'at Justice Award went to Carolyn Moore of Lubbock.

Sales from our book drive at the Annual Convention netted close to \$1,500 for the Women's Advocacy Project. This organization also received the State's Pro Bono Award for providing free legal advice and promoting access to justice for Texas women in need.

On the national scene, Wichita Falls attorney Charlye O. Farris, the first African-American woman licensed to practice law in Texas, was one of five recipients of the 2003 Margaret Brent Women Lawyers of Achievement Award at the American Bar Association Annual Meeting in San Francisco. She was honored for her leadership and extraordinary accomplishments over the past 50 years.

This year the Section is adopting the theme of "New Women, Old Issues" as part of our continuing education program. Do we as women lawyers have to work harder at our image, our work ethics, and our professionalism? Even in 2003, whether employed by a small or large company, in-house counsel, government employee, or solo practitioner, of course we do. Women attorneys still live under that microscope and any little societal infringements are magnified. Let your Council members know how the Women and the Law Section can grow, represent, and further the positions and issues of women and the legal profession in Texas.

— Judy

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WOMEN AND THE LAW SECTION OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS JUNE 12, 2003, IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

Judy L. Ney of Houston, Chair-Elect, convened the annual meeting of the Section, welcoming members and guests, which totaled about 50 people. She complimented the work of Jennifer Rustay in getting contributions for the meeting's expenses and refreshments. She asked attendees to read the names of sponsors that were listed on a large poster board.

Ms. Ney explained the absence of several officers. Misty Ventura, Chair, was not present at the meeting because she was giving birth to her first child. Teresa Oxford, Vice-chair/membership, was in trial.

Ms. Ney introduced Amy Wright, Executive Director of Women's Advocacy Project, explaining that the Project, nominated by the Section, had just been named winner of the 2003 Pro Bono Award from the State Bar's Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters Committee. Ms. Wright thanked the Section for the nomination as well as for all the money donated to the Project by the Section for many years.

Ms. Ney stated that Ms. Harrison, with the help of Leo Ney, were involved in additional fund raising for the Women's Advocacy Project during the State Bar's Annual Meeting in Houston. She said that anyone who visited the vendor's area should stop by the Women and the Law Section's booth to purchase a book bag for \$20.00, which could be filled with ten books to be selected by the purchaser from the books in the booth.

Deborah Ingraham moved, with a second from Jennifer Rustay, that the minutes of the April 30, 2003 teleconference meeting of the Section, which had been e-mailed to officers and council members, be approved. The motion carried.

Louise Raggio moved, with a second from Deborah Ingraham, that the election of officers and council members for the 2003-2004 year be by voice vote, rather than by written ballot. The motion carried.

Ms. Ney stated that the Nominating Committee submitted the following nominations for officers and council members:

Teresa Oxford of San Antonio, Chair-elect
D'Metria Benson of Dallas, Vice-chair/Membership
Lisa Smith of San Antonio, Vice-chair/Newsletter
Mara Blatt of El Paso, Secretary
Lisa Hernandez of Plano, Treasurer
Suzanne Duvall of Dallas, Chronologist
Georgina Benavides of McAllen, with a term through 2005
Kathy Cannon of Austin, with a term through 2005
Ronnie Harrison of Houston, with a term through 2005
Carolyn F. Moore of Lubbock, with a term through 2005
Carmen Samaniego of San Antonio, with a term through 2005

Ms. Ney stated that Misty Ventura, Chair, would assume the position of Immediate Past Chair and that Ms. Ney, having been elected Chair-elect at last year's annual meeting, would assume the position of Chair upon election of new officers. She stated that Louise B. Raggio of Dallas, Emeritus Voting Member, previously elected, does not have to be re-elected each year. In addition, Ms. Ney, announced that the following people had previously been elected as council members for a term to end at the end of the State Bar Year in 2004:

Ralph H. Brock of Lubbock
Avo Stevens Butler of Sherman
Jennifer Rustay of Houston
Sherry Wetsch

Jennifer Rustay moved, with a second from Deborah Ingraham, that the slate of officers and council members as submitted by the Nominations Committee be unanimously approved. The motion carried.

Jennifer Rustay announced that Carolyn F. Moore had been named the winner of the Ma'at Justice Award. Ms. Moore accepted the award, thanking the Section.

Jennifer Rustay announced that the Honorable Alma L.Lopez, Chief Justice of the Fourth Court of Appeals in San Antonio, was the winner of the Sarah T. Hughes Award. Chief Justice Lopez accepted the award, thanking the women lawyers in San Antonio who nominated her as well as the Section for selecting her to receive the award.

The business meeting adjourned at 3:30 P.M. After a short break, Ms. Ney introduced Nancy Rapaport, Dean of the University of Houston Law Center, who spoke on "Images of Women Lawyers in the Media." At the end of the presentation, Ms. Ney presented Dean Rapaport with an auto-graphed copy of Louise Raggio's book, **Texas Tornado: The Autobiography of a Crusader for Women's Rights and Family Justice.**

Respectfully Submitted,

(Original signature on file)

Carolyn F. Moore
Secretary at meeting

June 25, 2003

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 13, 2004 MEETING OF THE WOMEN AND THE LAW SECTION COUNCIL OF THE STATE BAR OF TEXAS IN AUSTIN

Call to Order/ Announcements

Judy L. Ney, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m., welcomed those attending, and determined that a quorum was present. A list of members attending in person and by telephone is attached, along with a list of those whose absence was excused.

Teresa Oxford moved, with a second by Suzanne Duvall that the following members, who contacted the Chair prior to the meeting with an explanation of their absence, be excused for good cause: Mara Blatt, Lisa Hernandez, Misty Ventura, Ronnie E. G. Harrison, and Linda Butter. The motion passed.

Kristie Brasfield announced that the 11th Annual Conference – Texas Minority Counsel Program will be in Dallas on September 25-26, 2003. She said that Anne C. Weisberg of New York will be speaking on issues affecting women's career advancement.

Ney announced the following:

- that she will send Ventura a plaque for her service as the Section's Chair during the 2002-2003 year;
- that Ventura's baby girl, Ava Lucile Garderet, was born on June 12, 2003, the date of the Section's Annual Meeting;
- that the New Mexico State Bar sent the Section its latest journal, which features women's issues;
- that Carmen Samaniego is one of 40 women invited to Washington D. C. by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to discuss issues effecting women in probate and estate planning;
- that anyone on the council wanting to participate on the Council of Chairs' four task forces (technology, membership, e-filing, and service enhancement), or on the project to help law students, should contact her; and
- that council members should check the Section's roster containing their address and phone, and should let her know of any changes now and throughout the year.

Secretary's Report

Duvall moved, with a second by Samaniego, to approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Section in Houston on June 12, 2003. The motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Ney said that as of July 31, 2003, the Section had \$1999.55. She stated that she did not believe that the amount reflected dues from members for this State Bar year. Rustay said that

she had asked all firms who agreed to donate funds to the Section for its annual meeting in Houston to send those funds to the Hernandez, treasurer; however, she did not know if those funds were reflected in the treasurer's report. Ney stated that she would contact Hernandez about the dues and the donations.

Avo Butler moved, with a second from Oxford, to table further discussion of the treasurer's report until the Section had more information from the treasurer. The motion passed.

Proposed Policies

Deborah Ingraham left the room, at Ney's request, while the council discussed emeritus status on the council. Ney suggested that the council consider, at a later time, the possibility of amending its by-law to permit all former presidents and chairs of the Section to become emeritus members of the council, without voting privileges. She said that their knowledge and experience would be valuable to the Section and that the current by-laws allow the council to appoint distinguished members of the Section to be emeritus voting members of the council.

Carolyn F. Moore moved, with a second from Butler, that Ingraham be appointed emeritus voting member of the council until the next annual meeting. The motion passed.

Ingraham returned to the meeting room and graciously accepted the appointment.

Newsletter

Lisa Smith asked to have information for the newsletter by Friday, September 19, 2003. She needs a report from the chair and a few lines of information from council members about local women's bar associations for the Around the State Column.

After much discussion on whether to continue having the newsletter sent to members in paper form or by e-mail, the Council decided that the Section's next newsletter, which should reach members within six (6) weeks, would be sent in paper form. It will have a sentence or two explaining that the Council is exploring with the State Bar the feasibility of sending the newsletter by e-mail to those who prefer e-mail and by paper to those who prefer hard copy.

Smith agreed to contact staff at the State Bar to find out if the Bar can arrange to have the newsletters sent by e-mail, and to determine the cost savings, if any, of sending most newsletters by e-mail, while still sending some copies in paper form.

Membership Report

Ney explained that according to State Bar Reports, the Section is currently classified as a small section and it's membership (420) represents only 2% of the lawyers of Texas. At one time, the Section had more than 500 members. D'Metria Benson agreed to contact Kathy Casarez at the State Bar for a list of Section members and a list of last year's members who have not yet paid dues. She will send the list of members to all council members by e-mail. She will organize the list, by county, of those people who have not paid dues and send each council member a list of people to contact about renewing membership. Council members should contact the people listed, asking for them to renew membership. In addition, council members should try to determine why former members decide against renewing membership and send that information to Benson.

Ingraham and Kathy Cannon agreed to attend the new lawyers' induction ceremony in Austin on November 17, 2003, to hand out information about the Section (brochures and membership forms) to newly licensed lawyers. They will try to compile a list of lawyers who seem interested in the section. They will explain that lawyers will not be assessed dues from the Section during the first year following licensure.

Pro Bono Report

Ney asked the council to read Harrison's report on the results of the Section's pro bono project. Because of the tremendous efforts of Harrison, the Section raised \$1350.00 at the State Bar Annual Meeting to give to Women's Advocacy Project.

Ney brought book bags to sell to Council members who could not attend the annual meeting, saying that Harrison hoped to raise additional money so that the Section could send a total of \$1500.00 to Women's Advocacy Project.

Chronologist's Report

Duvall said that she would interview Barbara Lin in Dallas. She is a 1976 graduate of Southern Methodist University who has been instrumental in getting law firms to hire women. Ingraham volunteered to interview Judge Alma Lopez of San Antonio.

Benson suggested that Mary Ellen Hicks should also be interviewed.

Web Site Report

Ingraham has prepared a draft paper on how a member of the council can keep the web master informed on what items need to be placed on the Section's web site. She suggested several additions to the web site, including:

CLE events page should advertise CLE events of various organizations;

Newsletter page should have an index for finding information from past newsletters;

By-laws and Council list need to be updated; and

Membership form page should be in a form that prospective members could fill out and return to the State Bar on line.

She recommended that the Council continue to work with Arron who is the current web master.

Old Business

Moore, a board member of Texas Women Lawyers (TWL) agreed to keep the council informed on activities of TWL.

Ingraham, a member of the Supreme Court's Gender Bias Task Force, agreed to be the Section's liaison to the task force.

New Business

Ney asked that each council member chair a Section committee and also serve on another committee. The committees are the following:

- Annual meeting
- CLE
- Newsletter
- Web site
- Membership
- Chronology
- Pro Bono/ Fundraising
- Awards Committee
- Nominations Committee

CLE Project

Gina Benavides agreed to contact State Bar President Betsy Whitaker about Whitaker's promise at last years' local bar leaders seminar to have a conference of all women's bar associations. Benavides will explain that the Section would like to help Whitaker and Kim Askew, Chair of the State Bar Board, who also agreed with Whitaker's promise, develop, plan and implement the conference as soon as possible.

Samaniego agreed to contact Amy Larsen of the State Bar to solicit help in conducting a continuing legal education seminar that could be a live presentation or a telephone conference and should have a theme that could be on a substantive or current events issue that affects women.

Once Benavides and Samaniego make their contacts, they will inform Ney of the outcome so that Ney can get a consensus of the council on an approach to this year's continuing legal education event, if any.

Annual Meeting

Oxford said that she is considering a program to recognize local women bar associations and/or to have a panel of three or four lawyers to discuss whether women's issues are still relevant. Council members suggested titles such as "Defining the New Women's Movement", or "New Women, Old Issues" and suggested that the continuing legal education event and the annual meeting have a similar theme. Samaniego will help Oxford with planning the annual meeting.

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will be **by telephone, beginning at 6 p.m. on Monday, November 24, 2003**. In addition, a meeting in

Austin is planned for March 6; however, that date is tentative.

The meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

(original signature on file)

Carolyn F. Moore
Acting secretary

September 14, 2003

AWARD WINERS

This year the Women and Law Section honored Justice Alma Lopez with the Sarah T. Hughes award while conferring the Ma'at Justice award upon Carolyn Moore. Both received their awards at the State Bar of Texas' Annual Meeting last June.

The Sarah T. Hughes award honors the accomplishments of women who have achieved outstanding recognition in their professional area and who, by doing so, have paved the way for success for other women attorneys. The award honors women attorneys who have influenced other women, opened doors for women lawyers in settings that were traditionally closed to women, advanced opportunities for women lawyers and who have served their profession or community in a manner that has benefited the legal profession.

This year's Sarah T. Hughes award recipient made history by becoming the first Hispanic woman named to be Chief Justice of the Fourth Court of Appeals. Prior to becoming Chief Justice, Justice Alma Lopez served on the Fourth Court as a judge. Justice Lopez graduated from St. Mary's Law School in 1968 and practiced in San Antonio in the areas of family and immigration law. Justice Lopez was appointed to the bench in 1993 by Governor Ann Richards. Since that time, Justice Lopez has remained very active in community affairs in San Antonio. Justice Catherine Stone, a fellow justice on the Fourth Court and a personal friend, described Justice Lopez as always being "just herself" despite her many accomplishments.

"Alma is never concerned with status, she is always just herself," said Justice Stone.

Several years ago, Justices Stone and Lopez served as judges at a St. Mary's Law School function and spent time with law students. After observing Justice Lopez—and her

characteristic style of brightly colored clothing, high heels, and large jewelry—one young woman remarked to Justice Stone, "If she can do all that she has done and still be herself, that makes me feel like I can do anything."

The Women and Law Section also awarded its Ma'at Justice Award this year to the Honorable Carolyn Moore of Lubbock. The Ma'at Justice award symbolizes truth, order, righteousness and the emergence of order out of chaos. Such an honor is particularly appropriate for Ms. Moore who serves as a hearing officer at the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission. Ms. Moore, a graduate of Texas Tech Law School, has practiced law since 1979. After the creation of the worker's compensation commission, she began a career as a government lawyer, finding particular satisfaction in helping others. Ms. Moore remains very involved with professional organizations addressing women's concerns, professional development, and public service. Ms. Moore serves on several Boards, including the Texas Women Lawyers.

Despite her many achievements and the gains that women have made in the legal profession during the past two decades, Ms. Moore remains committed to progress for women in law.

"There are so many women in law school and getting jobs in big firms today. I hope that they are getting them and keeping them for all the right reasons," Moore said, noting that the glass ceiling remains an important obstacle to overcome.

Moore's advice for women to improve the quality of law and legal services affecting their lives is simple: to have a voice in the political process.

"The most important thing that women can do is to vote."

AROUND THE STATE

Austin

On May 13 the Travis County Women Lawyers' Association (TCWLA) celebrated its 25th Anniversary at its annual awards luncheon. A rousing rendition of "happy birthday" was led by Nancy Hohengarten and retired District Court Judge Scott McCown. Nancy B. Rapaport, Dean of the University of Houston Law Center and guest speaker, shared her thoughts with attendees on "Leadership and Character."

Recipients of this year's Women's Law Awards included: MariBen Ramsey for public interest; Mary Dietz for litigation; Janet Monteros for contribution to the minority community; the Honorable Jan Patterson for outstanding achievement; Allison Wetzel for government service; Reeves & Brightwell for firm/organization/government entity; Cynthia Bast for pro bono and, finally, Nancy Hohengarten received the president's award for her exceptional contributions to TCWLA and the TCWL Foundation for the last five years. This year's scholarship awards went to Summer Benford, attending the University of Houston Law Center in the fall, and Tiffany Lowe, a second year law student at the University of Texas.

Attendees also celebrated the formation of the TCWL Foundation. The Foundation, created in December 2002, works to support, promote and encourage activities for the furtherance of justice and equal opportunity for women, families and children. With the funds raised over the last year, the Foundation was able to award seven grants to non-profit organizations in the central Texas area. This year's grant recipients included: Children's Advocacy Center, Family Eldercare, Jane's Due Process, Political Asylum Project of Austin, SafePlace, Texas C-Bar, and Women's Advocacy Project, Inc.

San Antonio

The Bexar County Women's Bar Association had two exciting events scheduled for October. On October 26, 2003 BCWB celebrated with the 2003 Bench Brunch. This annual event recognized women in the judiciary and the legal field throughout the state and raises funding for deserving charities that care for women and children. The BCWBA expects approximately 800 legislators, judges and attorneys to join on October 26th at the Westin La Cantera.

On October 18, 2003 the BCWBA again sponsored the BCWBA Pro Bono Wills Clinic. This project is in its seventh year and provides senior citizens and people with limited income with important probate documents at no cost.

On November 5 and 6, 2003, the BCWBA is sponsoring a two-day CLE on the Violence Against Women Act, "VAWA," at the Center for Legal and Social Justice. The women's bar will be partnering with the Center for Legal and Social Justice and Texas Rural Legal Aid to educate attorneys on how to represent an individual in a VAWA case. After the training, attorneys are provided the opportunity to take a pro bono case. No one operates without a net. There are mentors available to volunteer attorneys to assist them throughout the VAWA representation.

The reason for a two-day CLE is three-fold: 1) VAWA was recently amended by the passage of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act of 2000, 114 Stat. 1464, Pub. L. No. 106-386 (Oct. 28, 2000) (aka "The Trafficking Act"); 2) INS was recently reorganized into the Department of Homeland Security with a new set of directives, and 3) Texas Rural Legal Aid personnel will be more actively involved in representing these new VAWA cases and will be conducting part of the training.

BCWBA will be taking names for those interested in participating in the training program, and/or taking on a case. If you are interested in rising to the challenge, please contact Angela Sanchez at (210)299-2315.

The Bexar County Women's Bar Association is pleased to announce the winners of the Belva Lockwood Awards. Elizabeth J. Lindell is the 2003 Belva Lockwood Outstanding Lawyer and Amber M. Liddell is the 2003 Belva Lockwood Young Lawyer. Ms. Lindell and Ms. Liddell received the Awards at the 21st Bench Brunch held on October 26, 2003, at the Westin La Cantera.

The first Belva Lockwood Awards were presented in 1985 by the Bexar County Women's Bar Association. The awards recognize women lawyers who have made outstanding contributions to the community, to the legal profession, to the status of women and to the projects of the Bexar County Women's Bar Association and Foundation.

Elizabeth J. Lindell graduated in 1985 from St. Mary's University School of Law. She has worked as a briefing attorney for Justice Preston Dial and for the law firm of Davidson and Troilo. She currently works at Soules and Wallace. As a lawyer she has distinguished herself as a litigator with an ability to handle cases ranging from the simple divorces to high-stakes, multi-party litigation.

Amber M. Liddell is a 1996 graduate of St. Mary's University School of Law. As Staff Attorney for the Civil District Judges of Bexar County, Amber has developed the San Antonio Pro Se Assistance program, a program created to assist those proceeding through litigation without an attorney. She coordinates all aspects of the Parental By-Pass Notification hearings.

Lubbock

Lubbock County Women Lawyers Association held a joint meeting with the South Plains Family Law Association on Friday, September 12, 2003, to hear a speech by Robert Miller. Miller, a lawyer from Big Spring, described a case that he tried, unsuccessfully, to get the U.S. Supreme Court to hear. Miller's client was ordered to pay child support, while being denied visitation, with three children who are not his biological children and one child who is his biological child. Miller learned that he was not the biological parent of the children after he was divorced. Miller told lawyers to ask male divorce clients if they want to have blood tests before a final decree is entered to determine if they are indeed the biological parent of children of the marriage.

WORTHY OF NOTE

In the interest of maximizing dollars, the Section is thinking of changing from paper to an email version of the newsletter. Even so, for those who would still like to receive a paper copy through the mail, we would be happy to oblige. We would hate to be penny wise and pound foolish, so please let us know if you feel strongly one way or the other by dropping us a note at laddalisa@earthlink.net.

Great Reads: On Law, Life, and Literature

Non-fiction

1. **Texas Tornado: The Autobiography of a Crusader for Women's Rights and Family Justice**, Louise Ballerstedt Raggio and Vivian Anderson Castleberry
2. **Lazy B: Growing Up on a Cattle Ranch on the American Southwest**, Sandra Day O'Connor and Hollis Alan Day
3. **Caring for Justice**, Robin West
4. **In My Mother's House: A Memoir**, Kim Chernin

Fiction

1. **The No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency**, Alexander McCall Smith
2. **The Seneca Falls Inheritance**, Miriam Grace Monfredo
3. **Absolution by Murder**, Peter Tremayne

Humor

1. **The Sweet Potato Queens' Book of Love**, Jill Conner Browne

SLEAZEBALL ATTORNEYS, AGONIZED CLIENTS, AND HOKEY STUFF YES, LAWYERS CAN BE FUN!

The typical law firm web site is much like the typical legal seminar—much too serious and way too dull. But Powers Phillips, P.C., a woman-owned Denver law firm, has twisted out of that mold with a lively web site that presents the firm's serious side in hilarious web pages, such as *Sleazeball Attorneys*, *Agonized Clients*, and *Hokey Stuff*. The firm—self-described on the web site as "...somewhat peculiar in that six of its lawyers are, to put it most politely, uppity women, who through various shenanigans and underhanded schemes control the firm"—occasionally publishes the *Two Bitches From Hell Reporter* (think Thelma & Louise). They also want a world in which women and men work together in an easy going, good humored equal partnership, as likely to be led by women as by men.

Visit their web site at <http://www.ppbfh.com>, and remember, just because we are lawyers doesn't mean we can have a sense of humor!!

STATE BAR OF TEXAS
P.O. Box 12487
Austin, Texas 78711-2487

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