

NYWBA'S FIRST 75 YEARS ~ SEEKING THE FAIR AND EQUAL ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

As can be seen from the profiles of our Founders, Presidents and Advisory Council members, the NYWBA has an incredibly rich and vibrant history. During the 75th Anniversary Dinner, the NYWBA will debut a special slide show with many photographs and documents from our first 75 years. This and other information about our history will be available in a special new section on our website (www.nywba.org/History). We are dedicated to remembering and honoring our history, and we would love to see additional articles, photos, documents, and other archival materials from our members and friends. Please contact the NYWBA at History@nywba.org or 212-490-8202 if you have any historic photos, memorabilia or other archival materials.

NYWBA is Formed (1934-1935) - The New York Women's Bar Association was formed in 1934 after several of our founders were denied membership by the New York City Bar Association. When Hilda G. Schwartz (later Judge Schwartz) applied, she was turned down and told, "We have no restroom facilities for women." Our 1935 Certificate of Incorporation, filed on Ms. Schwartz's blue backs, contained all of the provisions found in the City Bar's Certificate, including all of the "purpose" provisions of a full service bar association - with a single additional provision, which reads, "To define and elevate the status of women."



Three of NYWBA's Founders: Lillian Kooperstein, Hilda G. Schertz and Florence Perlow Shientag

NYWBA's First Membership Reception (1936)

The NYWBA held its first annual reception on May 25, 1936, welcoming 50 new women lawyers. The event was at the George Washington Hotel, as women were then not welcome at any bar association facilities.

During World War II, the NYWBA was very active. Among other accomplishments, it started a legal clinic for military personnel and their families who could not afford counsel, and it worked with other bar associations to provide legal advice on complex legal issues caused by the war. Demand for the legal clinic was so great that its hours were expanded to include Saturdays and evenings.



NYWBA Past Presidents, including Lillian Kooperstein, Isabel Joffe, Judge Florence Perlow Shientag, Frieda Lorber, and other NYWBA colleagues, circa 1942

Although she graduated near the top of her class at NYU Law School, Fannie Klein was told in 1942 by a prospective (male) employer, "The boys are away at war, and we're scraping the bottom of the barrel." Ms. Klein went on to become an accomplished litigator and expert on court reform, the first female Professor at NYU Law School, and a President of the NYWBA.

"Men-Only" Bar Associations Begin to See the Light (1937)

In 1937, the New York City Bar allowed the NYWBA to hold its second reception at its building, and more than 200 women gathered for a triumphant celebration of the first time in sixty-eight years when women were allowed in that facility on equal terms with men. The following May, the City Bar voted to accept women members, and then-President Stein expressed the hope that "other bar associations which still stubbornly keep out a large group of lawyers because of their sex will do likewise." Many of our Founders were among the first group of thirteen women sworn in as City Bar members.

Seeking Parity in Judicial Appointments

On May 18, 1947, during the NYWBA annual luncheon, Magistrate Anna M. Kross charged that there was discrimination against women lawyers in the courts of this area. A *New York Times* article quoted Magistrate Kross: "There has never been a woman on the Federal district court bench," she said, "or the surrogate's court. Surely the latter, which was formerly known as the court for widows and orphans, is a place where women would be ideally suited to hold office." She added that in Queens County there never has been a woman lawyer on the court bench or in the district attorney's office. Additionally, it was reported that a nation-wide committee had been formed to fight for the principle of jury service for women in all states on an equal basis with men - in fourteen states, women cannot serve on juries and in fifteen others the right to serve is optional.



May 12, 1956 22nd Annual Luncheon, New York Women's Bar Association



The NYWBA was the major force behind the decision to establish the Women's Bar Association of the State of New York in 1980. NYWBA Past President Joan Ellenbogen was WBASNY's first President, and many NYWBA members have served as WBASNY Presidents, Officers and Directors.



NYWBA Silver Anniversary Luncheon, May 1959 - Hon. Beatrice Cass, Hon. Anna Kross, incoming President Lucille M. Gannon, Norah K. Donovan (past President, 1953-55), outgoing President, Norma Z. Paige, Hon. Margaret M.J. Mangan, and Hon. Justine Wise Polier (l-r). (The woman on the far right and the women in the foreground are not identified)

NYWBA on Domestic Violence

The NYWBA co-sponsored the Second Annual Conference on the Legal Rights of Battered Women in 1982. Participants represented thirteen counties and included assistant district attorneys, legal services and legal aid attorneys, law students, probation officers, social workers, and volunteers in shelters and on hotlines for battered women. Throughout the 1980's, when clinics or other programs for battered women were practically nonexistent, the Association continued to train attorneys to provide these services, often pro bono. The NYWBA and WBASNY have been leaders on the issue of domestic violence for decades.



At the 2010 WBASNY Convention (May 21, 2010), Hon. Arlene Hahn presents WBASNY's inaugural Judith S. Kaye Access to Justice Award to Hon. Jacqueline W. Silberman, former Statewide Administrative Judge for Matrimonial Matters and long-time member of the NYWBA Board of Directors



NYWBA hosts Annual WBASNY Convention in Washington, D.C. (2000) - Seated (l-r): Past Presidents Angela Tese-Milner, Barbara Ryan, Hon. Florence Perlow Shientag, Hon. Betty Weinberg Ellerin, and past Presidents of both NYWBA and WBASNY Myrna Felder, Joan Ellenbogen, and Martha E. Gifford. First standing row: Elizabeth Bryson (Convention Chair, later President), Myra Freed, Naomi Sheiner, Ann Pincess Berman, Hon. Patricia Nuñez (Convention Co-Chair), Tina Sernick (Convention Co-Chair), Lori Segal Oppenheimer, Sandra Modell Hirsch, Lisa Sokoloff (later President), Toby Pilsner (past President), Marian Burnbaum. Back row: Hon. Barbara Jaffe, Kay Marmorek, Gerry Fifer, Marjorie Martin, Lisa Bauer, Heather Martínez Zona (later President), Hon. Sherry Klein Heitler, Marcia Goldstein (past President), Christine Harman, Karen Greve Milton (then President).

JALBCA (1992) - The Judges and Lawyers Breast Cancer Alert is an important part of the Association's history. It was formed in 1992 by lawyers and judges who wanted to focus the legal community's response to the breast cancer epidemic among women and to provide information and resources to women in the community. This commitment continues to this day, with NYWBA members serving as JALBCA Co-Presidents, on the JALBCA Board, and as JALBCA project leaders.



NYWBA Past Presidents Beth Bryson, Mikki Golar and Barbara Ryan, then-NY Chief Judge Judith Kaye and WBASNY President Mindy Zlogatura at JALBCA's Annual Symposium on Breast Cancer Issues, October 2004

Passing the Gavel



Presentation of the Lillian Kooperstein gavel, passed from President to President since 1941, to incoming President Edith L. Fisch on May 23, 1970.



2009-2010 President Donna M. Praiss presents the Lillian M. Kooperstein gavel to President-Elect Gretchen Beall Schumann.



NYWBA & WBASNY Past Presidents and Representatives at NYWBA 70th Anniversary Gala (2005). (Everyone in photo was an NYWBA President unless otherwise indicated)
Seated first row (l-r): Myrna Felder (NYWBA and WBASNY), Beverly Gross, Mortimer Lorber (for Frieda Levin Lorber), Joan Eisman (for Julia Perles), Mary Cowell Ross, Norma Z. Paige, Esther Willison (for Fannie Klein), Hon. Betty Weinberg Ellerin; Seated second row (l-r): John Schwartz (for Hon. Hilda Schwartz), Hon. Deborah Kooperstein (for Lillian Kooperstein, Marcia Goldstein, Andrea Hyde, Diane Wilner, Hon. Karla Moskowitz, Irene Sullivan, Madeline Stoller; Standing (l-r): Sheila Birnbaum, Nancy Louden, Anne T. Schwab, Harriet Newman Cohen, Diane Abeloff, Stephen Hoffman (for Doris S. Hoffman), Martha L. Golar, Bobbi Sternheim, Hon. Andrea Phoenix (WBASNY), Susan Bender (WBASNY), Martha E. Gifford (NYWBA and WBASNY), Mindy Zlogatura (WBASNY), Christina Kallas, Laurie Berke-Weiss, Anthony Gair (for Harriet Gair), Barbara Ryan, Angela Tese-Milner, Phyllis Koffman, Heather Martinez Zona, Elizabeth A. Bryson

For more information on the NYWBA's history, go to www.nywba.org/History.