

Connecting with the Legal Community

One bit of wisdom we've been hearing from the speakers at our Women's Initiative Speaker Series is that their careers are what they made them. These extremely successful women lawyers didn't sit back and wait for their careers to take shape; they actively pursued their goals. And that didn't mean that all they did was sit at their desks 24-7 completing assignments. Instead, they became involved in outside organizations, even when their busy lives did not afford much time for them. Their participation in these organizations delivered big benefits, not just in getting their names out there, and earning respect from their peers, but in helping them build their personal and professional networks.

I am well aware that a successful career in law requires long hours, and quality time with family and friends can leave little room for anything else. But picking one or two outside groups to join is really worth the effort. Aside from the personal satisfaction one can achieve from "giving back," there are more tangible benefits that arise.

I'll give you an example. A few years ago, I was accepted to the NYC Bar's Committee on Women in the Profession. My participation in that bar committee has boosted my career in unexpected and significant ways. I met many women in-house lawyers who would otherwise not likely have crossed my path and who have given me the opportunity to pitch for business. I have had several speaking engagements at City Bar events. And, I have connected with other women lawyers and professionals whom I call on for all kinds of information (and who call on me). I know others here have had similar experiences with their own extra-curricular memberships.

There are numerous bar and professional associations on the lookout for lawyers from big firms who will contribute their time and resources to committees, task forces and projects. And there are plenty of other organizations that would welcome your participation, including other types of not-for-profits and community groups. Each of you has something valuable to contribute to these organizations, and each of you can benefit from membership (whether through "building your strategic network" or becoming more recognized in your chosen milieu or by otherwise expanding your horizons). I urge you to join one or two – see where you can take them, and see where they can take you.

Stacey J. Rappaport, Chair
Milbank Women's Initiative

U.S. Coast Guard Captain Melissa Bert Speaks at Women's Initiative Luncheon



*Nicole Leyton Rosser, Associate, Tax;
Stacey J. Rappaport, Partner, Litigation;
Captain Melissa Bert; Mel Immergut, Chairman*

Captain Melissa Bert, who was responsible for port security, marine safety, search and rescue, and law enforcement along the ports and coastline of Southern California after the 9/11 attacks, spoke at a Women's Initiative luncheon in February. Captain Bert is now a Military Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, and was introduced to her rapt audience by Mel Immergut, who serves as a member of the CFR.

Captain Bert first experienced the Coast Guard as the daughter of a Coast Guard officer. She graduated from the Coast Guard Academy, earning her commission and serving at sea. After a second tour, she went to George Washington University Law School for her J.D., and since then has had an extraordinary career with the Coast Guard on both operational and legal tours. She terms the Coast Guard "scrappy and nimble," describing situations in which the Coast Guard serve as first responders, where they "simply can't wait for orders." For example, in 2001, Captain Bert was an operations officer in California. She described how quickly the Coast Guard mobilized, and how 9/11 changed the way the Coast Guard and border security operate. It was a time, she said, of "removing the white picket fences."

Captain Bert also spoke about the Coast Guard's efforts to add more women to its ranks and retain the women who start their careers there. She added that relationships with private institutions, like Milbank, provide important learning opportunities for the Coast Guard in developing initiatives to recruit, retain and advance women.

Meet Trusts & Estates Practice Group Leader Georgiana Slade

Georgiana Slade has this advice for associates: make your career what you want it to be. That has been her own mantra, all the way from the Spence School in Manhattan to her position as one of the leading trusts and estates lawyers in the country. In an interview with Andrea Kelly and Dorothy Heyl, Georgiana (she pronounces it with all four syllables) explained what drives her career, with characteristic seriousness and a touch of self-deprecating humor.

At Duke University, where she was a Latin American studies major, she spent a semester at a marine lab



Georgiana Slade

Third Circuit Judge Maryanne Trump Barry On Her Career



David Stoll, Partner, Trusts & Estates; Dorothy Heyl, of Counsel, Litigation; Judge Maryanne Trump Barry; Stacey J. Rappaport, Partner, Litigation

There were no women judges in the District of New Jersey when Maryanne Trump Barry began her legal career as a federal prosecutor in the early 1980s.

"Back then, a woman was noticed," she told the large audience that gathered to hear her March 1 presentation for the Women's Initiative Speaker Series. In her thoughtful and beautifully delivered remarks, Judge Barry referred to the black skirt suit, white blouse and string of pearls she wore to her court appearances when she was a prosecutor. She looked the part, and succeeded in a largely male world.

Now a Senior Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, Judge Barry pointed to her hard work and determination—and a little bit of luck—as the basis for her success. Although she is the daughter of Fred Trump and the sister of Donald Trump, Judge Barry noted that she was not "to the manor born." Her parents were immigrants, her father initially a construction worker and her mother once a nanny. She learned from them to "go head to head with fear," a strength that served her well in all aspects of her life.

"Lean into your career," Judge Barry advised, and find a sponsor. "The right mentor will give you instant credibility." She is proud to have been one of a small handful of judges who were nominated by presidents from both parties: Ronald Reagan appointed her as a district court judge in 1983 and Bill Clinton appointed her to the Court of Appeals in 1999. "Timing is everything," she remarked. "If you're visible and you're good, despite what anyone says, you've made your own luck."

Ruminating on her challenges and achievements, which include her mastery of trying complex criminal cases, Judge Barry pointed to maintaining the collegiality on the Third Circuit as one of her biggest accomplishments, but reserved the highest spot for the raising of her son. Her guiding principle is that "no exercise is better for the heart than reaching down to lift up another person."

Leading the Way

The Women's Initiative transforms traditional training programs and activities into leadership, networking and mentoring opportunities for Milbank women. Last year, we worked with Carol Frohlinger, principal, Negotiating Women, Inc. and author of "Her Place at the Table," to bring her workshop series to Milbank. Launched in October 2011 and continuing through 2012, this series focuses on developing leadership skills through strategic thinking about one's career. Seventeen Milbank partners were trained to facilitate these small group workshops on the following topics: "Managing Complicated Conversations," "Getting Feedback You Can Use," "Positioning Yourself for the 'Right' Assignments," "Establishing Meaningful Mentoring Relationships," and "Stepping Up to Leadership."

In addition to the tactical guidance these workshops provide, they each present the opportunity for our women lawyers to connect with peers from other practice groups and develop professional relationships with the partners who lead the workshops. By design, each partner pair works with the same group or groups



Carol Frohlinger
Photo Credit: The Glass Hammer

of women throughout the series.

In the inaugural session, associates were reminded of the importance of maintaining relationships both internally and outside of Milbank and the value of having a professional network. Participants assessed their current network and

focused on how to use and expand these networks to advance their careers.

Earlier this year, we hosted the second module of the series focused on honing communications skills and, specifically, strategies to successfully navigate difficult, but necessary conversations. The current module stresses the importance of soliciting meaningful feedback and how to make giving and getting feedback easier for both sides. We've heard great feedback on our sessions so far, and look forward to our future sessions.



Lawyers Who Sing

Nicole Vasquez Schmitt and Katrina Copney (pronounced Cope-nee), both come from musical families. And both have mothers who sing. Nicole's mother was once part of a trio with her sisters who performed on occasion with the famous McGuire Sisters. She serenaded Nicole and her siblings with catches of opera. Katrina's mother plays piano and once had the range of the late Whitney Houston.

Nicole is a fourth-year litigation associate who grew up in Wheeling, West Virginia. She went to college at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh to study vocal performance. At the time, her much older brother and sister, Juan (a singer/guitarist) and Erika (a singer), wrote and played Latin-inspired music in a duo, called Sauce, and asked her to join. "We were sort of like Fleetwood Mac," she says nostalgically. "One male and two female singers."



Nicole Vasquez Schmitt

In her senior year at Carnegie Mellon, Nicole's dream of becoming a professional singer was shattered when she developed nodules on her vocal cords. During the slow recovery from surgery, Nicole became a booking agent for bands, and got the idea that she could become an entertainment lawyer. She went to study law at Hofstra University in New York.

Nicole hasn't looked back from her career switch to law ("the best decision of my life") and she still sings, as the Litigation Department well knows from her remarkable karaoke performances. In fact, on some Sunday nights you can hear her sing with her brother and sister in Pittsburgh (where Juan and Erika live), and see her mother smiling in the front row.

Katrina is a second-year litigation associate. When she first took the stage at a Milbank karaoke party for summer associates, she went with Ike and Tina Turner's "Proud Mary." An alto whose voice is more comfortable in the lower range, Katrina could do both parts, and she knew the words without looking at the screen. This was old territory for her, as it was a song she first belted out in her middle-school chorus.



Katrina Copney

When Katrina was five, her mother asked her to sing a gospel solo at Brooklyn Temple, the Seventh Day Adventist congregation privileged to have Katrina's grandmother as Minister of Music. Accompanied by her stepfather, Katrina timidly began to sing, but only managed to whisper one line.

She eventually got her chops in the chorus of I.S. 78, where the repertoire included show music and hits from the 1970s and 80s. A high point was singing Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*.

By ninth grade, Katrina was an eager member of her grandmother's choir, and frequent soloist in the gospel/spiritual tradition. High school, in Atlanta, Georgia, also presented a whole new style of music. She joined both the Concert Choir and an a cappella group, the Madrigal Singers, and came to love the harmonies of medieval music. The Concert Choir also gave her an opportunity to sing challenging classical pieces.

Two weeks before she was to begin at Harvard Law School, the once shy little five-year-old who was afraid to sing in church, surprised everyone, and perhaps even herself, when she tried out for *American Idol*, singing "People Make the World Go Round," to a full stadium and the first-round judges. Katrina dismisses it as whim, just something to do with a friend who was a more serious contestant. But how many of us would have the guts—and voice—to try that?

After Hours



Last month, Cathy Marsh organized a dinner for the women associates in the London office at Bar Battu, a wine bar on Gresham Street near our London office. Seated from left to right are Cathy Marsh, Kirsty Cargill, Chioma Benjamin, Caroline Cowie, Nike Johnson, Shujun Tian, Michelle Mersey, Felicia H. Ofori-Quaah, and Stacey Rappaport, who was in London on business.

Georgiana Slade

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researching the effects on the local fish egg population of an oil spill by Exxon. Her finding was that chemical dispersants did more damage to the fish eggs than the oil itself. She seems surprised and frankly put out that her undergraduate research didn't stop the same kinds of dispersants from being used following the recent BP oil spill. She shrugs, "They just think it looks better if people can't see the oil slick."

Georgiana later graduated from Duke Phi Beta Kappa and summa cum laude with a B.A. in Latin American studies and a minor in Spanish. She started at Harvard Law School the fall after graduation—no gap years for her. With advice from her informal mentors, Carroll Wainwright, who was a Milbank partner, and Ted Terry, a partner at Sullivan & Cromwell, Georgiana began law school with an interest in Trusts & Estates.

When it came time to choose the firm at which she would summer, Milbank stood out from the others because of its stellar reputation in the area. During her 2L summer at Milbank, Georgiana rotated through Trusts & Estates, Litigation, and Banking. In 1985, she started as an associate at Milbank in the Trusts & Estates Department.

When asked which lawyers have taught her most, she answers immediately: Alexander Forger and Jonathan Blattmachr. Forger was the Firm's chairman at the time, and an inspiring model. By watching him closely,

Georgiana learned her winning way with clients. Blattmachr, a famed trusts and estates tax lawyer, taught Georgiana the hard stuff of law, including how to analyze difficult tax puzzles. He also taught her how to promote herself in the profession. Both partners encouraged her to be proactive and early in her career gave her invaluable experiences not often available to junior associates.

If you think you are years away from building your client base, consider this advice from Georgiana:

- Do a good job at what you do and you will get noticed;
- Become active in a bar association and develop a national reputation; and
- Become an expert at something.

Of course attracting clients is just the first step. To keep building her client base, Georgiana carefully cultivates client relationships. She assiduously follows up with clients and entertains them in a way that provides a valuable, unique service.

Her advice to associates for building client skills?

- Watch and observe how Milbank partners and opposing counsel interact with clients and evaluate what works and what does not work;
- Volunteer to attend client meetings, even if you can't bill for them; and
- Get involved in pro bono and treat your pro bono clients as well as you would any other client.

We want to hear from you. You can write to us at: milbankwi@milbank.com

The mission of Milbank's Women's Initiative is to create a foundation that supports and promotes an environment rich with opportunities for our women lawyers to build strong careers and achieve their full potential.