

# FAWL CHRONICLES

## FAWL MEMBERS AT RUNNYMEADE FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE ABA MAGNA CARTA MEMORIAL



Judge Mattie Belle Davis



Rebecca Bowles Marks



Anna Krivitsky



Anna Brenner Meyers



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Did you miss the American Bar Association, National Association of Women Lawyers, and National Conference of Women's Bar Association's Annual Meetings held in Washington, D.C., in August? Me too. I recently checked the Internet and determined that I missed a lot by not attending. For instance, United States Supreme Court Associate Justice **Ruth Bader Ginsburg** received the Arabella Babb Mansfield Award at NAWL's 2002 Installation and Awards Luncheon on August 10. The ABA Commission on Women in the Profession presented its 12th Annual Margaret Brent Women of Achievement Awards on August 11. (I'll always remember attending the 1996 Margaret Brent Luncheon when Justice **Rosemary Barkett** received the award upon FAWL's nomination! Congresswoman **Patricia Schroeder** and soon-to-be Secretary of State **Madeline Albright** were also 1996 award recipients.) **Dawn Siler-Nixon**, of the Hillsborough Association for Women Lawyers, who is FAWL's NCWBA representative, was sworn in on August 9 as the NCWBA President for 2002-03. Plus, the ABA Litigation Section sponsored a "Summit on Keeping Her in Her Place: New Challenges to the Integration of Women in the Profession."

"Isn't this column supposed to be about FAWL's history, and, if so, what's all that got to do with FAWL's history?" you ask. Good question. Here's the answer.

Back in July 1957, when there were less than 200 active women members of The Florida Bar, of which only a handful were FAWL members, five FAWL members traveled to London for the NAWL and ABA Annual Meetings. Those five adventurous women were Judge **Mattie Belle Davis**, who was then President of FAWL; Past President **Rebecca Bowles Marks** (1954-55); Past President **Anna Brenner Meyers** (1951-52); **Gladys Irene White**; and **Anna Krivitsky**.

Try to envision 1957 and what a thrill it must have been for these women to travel abroad! They met British women lawyers and the only woman "Recorder," which is a judicial post. The FAWL members attended a dinner given by NAWL in the House of Commons dining room to honor their British colleagues, and the Right Honorable **Clement Davies**, a Member of Parliament, conducted them on a tour that included the House of Lords. The five world-travelers were honored at a tea given by the American Women's Club in London. Other memory-making events included a stirring address by Prime Minister **Harold MacMillan**, who was introduced by the United States Ambassador **John Hay Whitney**; a reception given by HER MAJESTY, QUEEN

ELIZABETH II, at Buckingham Palace; and a closing dinner at which Winston Churchill spoke. They attended dinners given by the four Inns of Court and a trial in Queen's Bench, with Mr. **Justice McNair** wearing a white wig and red robe and the Barristers wearing white wigs and black robes. They toured the Royal Courts of Justice, commonly referred to as "The Law Courts," and joined ABA President **Sinythe Gambrell** in Runnymede, 26 miles outside of London, for dedication ceremonies of the ABA's Memorial to commemorate the signing of the Magna Carta.

The American Bar Association Memorial: In the late 1950's, Egham Urban District Council gave the American Bar Association a one-acre piece of land next to the National Trust land at Runnymede. The ABA built the memorial shown here on this land as a tribute to the signing of the Magna Carta, which was seen as the origin of the principle of 'Freedom under Law.'

But wait, there was more to do. Anna Brenner Meyers, Anna Krivitsky, and Mattie Belle Davis participated in the ABA post-convention activities in Dublin, Ireland. The Honorable Society of Four Courts, the General Council of the Bar of Ireland, and the Incorporated Law Society of Ireland entertained the



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ABA delegates at a reception in the Four Courts Building on August 1. United States Ambassador and Mrs. Scott McLeod entertained the ABA members, including the FAWL members, during the afternoon of August 2, and they were guests of Irish Prime Minister Eamon De Valera at a State Reception in Dublin Castle that evening.

But wait, there was still more! Gladys Irene White and Mattie Belle Davis traveled to Italy for the ABA post-convention activities in Rome. They attended a reception given by the judiciary and lawyers at the Palace of Justice on August 3, and had an audience with **Pope Pius XII** on Sunday morning, August 4.

In the words of Mattie Belle Davis, "All the NAWL and ABA activities in London, Dublin and Rome... were wonderfully enriching experiences." Personal enrichment aside, however, the fact that five women from Florida traveled abroad in 1957 to attend the ABA and NAWL Annual Meetings speaks volumes regarding their commitment to the legal profession and to FAWL's goal of improving the status of women lawyers. They were a visible sign to their American and European colleagues that women were entering the legal profession and that they wanted to be included in mainstream bar activities and attain positions of power. They were bold and courageous women, willing to assert themselves in public and to put their money where their mouths were. And they had fun in the process!

While the 1957 ABA and NAWL Annual Meetings might have been a bit more exciting than those held this past August in Washington, D.C., the opportunities to travel to exciting locales and meet women and men of achievement continue to exist. The 2003 ABA, NAWL and NCWBA Annual Meetings will be held during the week of August 7-13, 2003, in San Francisco. Consider following in the footsteps of FAWL's founding members and continuing FAWL's strong tradition of being involved in the legal profession at the national level. ■

**NOTE:**

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