



# Central New York Women's Bar Association

## KAREN DECROW MEMORIAL CELEBRATION

JUNE 22,  
2014  
AT 3PM

CRAFTSMAN  
INN,  
FAYETTEVILLE,  
NEW YORK



## Remembering Karen DeCrow

Karen has devoted her adult life to promoting gender equality and protecting civil liberties. In the 1960s Karen became active in the National Organization for Women ("NOW"). She served as President of its Syracuse Chapter and in 1974 Karen won a hotly contested election to become National president of NOW. Under Karen's leadership, women gained equal access to all male Ivy league schools, NASA, the United States military academies and various public accommodations (including NYC's famous McSorley's bar). Also, through Karen's efforts, the EEOC expanded its investigations to include sex discrimination, legislation was passed to prohibit pregnancy discrimination and to mandate parental leave, and the three major television networks included women and minorities in front of and behind cameras. When Barbara Walters was hired as an anchor by ABC, she sent Karen a thank you letter. Drawing from her journalism background, Karen also worked with traditional women's magazines to encourage them to show women in more enlightened roles and to inspire women to have and value careers. Through litigation, Karen promoted gender equality by securing diaper changing facilities at airports for men, developing non-sexist curricula in schools, and securing the right of females to participate on an equal basis in school and club athletics.

Karen consistently challenged the ways women and men view their roles in society and in the family. In her own words, Karen's ultimate vision was "a world where the gender of a baby will have little or no relevance to future pursuits or pleasures."

Karen was born in 1937 in Chicago, Illinois. She attended Chicago's public schools and graduated from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. After graduating from Medill, Karen began her literary career as a fashion and resort editor for *Golf Digest*. For the next decade, Karen worked as a writer and editor and became active in the women's movement. In 1969, Karen returned to school, enrolling in Syracuse University College of Law. That same year, Karen ran as the first female candidate for Mayor of the City of Syracuse. In 1972, Karen graduated from the College of Law, the only female to graduate with her class.

Karen has also had the pleasure of meeting the first US female astronaut and the first Russian female cosmonaut, and she was a guest at the White House of Presidents Ford, Carter and Clinton.

*Excerpt from Judge Karalunas' intro of Karen as the Onondaga County Bar Association's 2008 Distinguished Lawyer*



The first memories I have of really getting to know Karen began at the founding of the Women's Bar Association. Of course, I knew who she was previously, but I didn't know her. We had brown bag lunch meetings at the old community room of the Marine Midland Bank Building. My first impression was that she was so different from what I expected—a sense of humor and graciousness. Originally the idea was to form a women in law group to include paralegals, not a bar association. That of course changed when Karen met Joan Ellenbogen from the New York City Women's Bar. We then met at the Genesee Inn to form our association and elect officers. Karen was the most nurturing person. She declined to be elected president of what became the CNYWBA and did not hold that office until a number of years later. Instead,

with Karen's encouragement, Bea Krupkin was elected president and I was elected vice president.

At that time, the road was not easy for women attorneys who had been admitted in the mid seventies and were anxious to contribute to the profession and to advance in the practice of law. In Syracuse, there was only one midsized firm with a woman partner, none in the larger firms, and very few women in the ranks of associates. The Onondaga County Bar Association was the same. No women on the board, and few on committees. Many meetings were held at the University Club, and sometimes in rooms where women were prohibited. Bonnie Levy tried to attend one such meeting in the mens card room and was promptly kicked out of the club. The men on the committee did nothing to support her and continued their meeting. That was the catalyst for the formation of "The Onondaga Five". Minna Buck, not yet a judge, Lois Kriesberg, Christine Scofield and I met with Karen at her home on a Saturday morning to strategize on how to address these issues. Karen led us to the decision to run a slate of officers and candidates for the Bar Board that fall. Through her organizing we got petitions signed to run against the slate. We also insisted on attending Bar Board meetings during the fall as observers. When the Bar got wind of what we were doing they put Beverly Michaels on their slate. I have never seen so many people at a Bar association meeting for the election of officers. We did not win. However Beverly was elected. In January I was appointed to fill a vacancy on the Board, and the spell was broken. This led to women on the judiciary committee which screened for judges. Karen later served on the OCBA Board as a member. Years later we were awarded the WBASNY Founders Award for our efforts, an award I proudly display in my office to this day.

One of the most pleasurable periods I spent with Karen was the time prior to and including her installation in the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls. She delighted in all of the festivities at the Clarence Hotel the night before and at the ceremony. We had arranged for a large number of people to attend, and for Barbara Burnett to come all the way from Arkansas to surprise Karen. Karen appreciated her friends. Karen always wrote thank you notes, or sent copies of things she saw in the paper, and sometimes would give little gifts just for the fun of it- a book, a stuffed toy. To know that she received the recognition she so deserved at the NWHF, and to see her delight in the event was a great pleasure to the rest of us.

Karen loved opera, and music in general. I would always see her at the local chamber music concerts. Two summers ago, she helped organize an event with Justice Ginsberg in conjunction with the Glimmer Glass Opera in Cooperstown. Karen had been there many times before with her friends. This time Eileen Buholtz, Barbara Walzer and I drove her to Cooperstown, went to Justice Ginsberg's speech, had lunch and picture with Justice Ginsberg at the Otesaga and attended the performance of Aida at the Glimmer Glass. We picked Karen up early in the morning and headed down the back roads through Cazenovia where we stopped for coffee at McDonald's. Karen claimed never to have been to a McDonald's before. Listening to her stories and her humor on the trip down and back that day made the trip. Though she wasn't a great driver, she was a back seat driver on many occasions. (On the trip she related the story of having been stopped by a trooper who thought she might have had too much to drink all because she was driving too slowly on the road near her home). She was a brilliant lawyer who didn't know how to take care of a traffic ticket. And we loved her.



Women of my generation often take basic gender equality for granted. The fact that we have had the right to vote for less than 100 years or that until much more recently it was permissible to list want ads for jobs in gender exclusive categories, are things that are easily forgotten when we are all busy rushing headlong into careers and depending on husbands or partners to carry out their half of the housework in order to make those careers possible.

The June 6, 2014 passing of Karen DeCrow, a founding member of the Central New York Women's Bar Association, is an opportunity to review the extraordinary ways in which DeCrow worked as an activist to address the ways, both small and large, in which women have not been treated equally.

In 1969, DeCrow ran for mayor of the city of Syracuse, becoming the first mayoral candidate in the history of the state.

Between 1968 and 1970 DeCrow acted as lead plaintiff, in cooperation with attorneys Faith A. Seidenberg and Rosemary Pooler, in actions against discriminatory practices of the Rainbow Lounge, located in the Hotel Syracuse, and McSorley's Ale House in New York City. In DeCrow v. Hotel Syracuse Corporation (288 F. Supp. 530 [N.D.N.Y. 1968]), DeCrow sought to extinguish the practice of the Rainbow Lounge refusing to serve unescorted women. However, Judge Edmund Port found that there was no authority under which he could grant relief because the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was only addressed to keeping establishments of public accommodation from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion or national origin and that there was no state action so as to invoke the protection of 42 U.S.C. 1983 or the Equal Protection Clause.

In the two Seidenberg v. McSorleys' Old Ale House, Inc. (308 F.Supp. 1253 [S.D.N.Y. 1969]; 317 F. Supp. 593 [S.D.N.Y. 1970]) decisions, Seidenberg and DeCrow first withstood a Motion to Dismiss and then were successful in a Motion for Summary Judgment. The action was based on refusal of service at McSorley's, which went further than the Rainbow Lounge and not only declined to serve unescorted women, but boasted about not serving women at all in its 114 year history. In deciding the Summary Judgment Motion, Judge Walter R. Mansfield, who described Seidenberg and DeCrow as "two determined ladies", found that the running of a bar requires a liquor license and that such license meant that McSorley's was acting under color of state law, and women were being denied equal protection pursuant to the Fourteenth Amendment. Judge Mansfield found that there was no rational reason for the discrimination, noting "Outdated images of bars as dens of coarseness and iniquity and of women as peculiarly delicate and impressionable creatures in need of protection from the rough and tumble of unvarnished humanity will no longer justify sexual separatism".

DeCrow served as president of the National Organization of Women [NOW] from 1974-1977. During that period of time, NOW, under DeCrow's leadership, took a number of important actions. NOW helped to defeat a proposal by the NCAA to narrow the scope of Title IX, which guarantees certain rights of women to have equality in school athletics and other areas of education. In 1975, NOW called all members to take to the streets to protest violence against women in what were the first "Take Back the Night" actions. In October 1975 NOW sponsored "Alice Doesn't Day" which was a women's strike to draw attention to the many unnoticed services women provide.

In 1982, DeCrow became involved, as a named plaintiff, in a federal action, Abortion Rights Mobilization, Inc. v. Regan (544 F. Supp. 471) that addressed the disparity between the limit on political activity of certain tax exempt pro-choice groups versus the tax exempt status of the Catholic Church, despite its involvement in political activities surrounding the issue of abortion rights. The case eventually made its way to the Supreme Court (United States Catholic Conference v. Abortion Rights Mobilization, Inc., 487 U.S. 72 [1988]) where the Court made a decision on an issue of contempt and then was remanded to the Second Circuit (Abortion Rights Mobilization v. Baker, 885 F.2d 1020 [1989]), where ultimately the Second Circuit determined that the taxpayers did not have standing.

In a 2003 case, Orendorff v. Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Lodge No.96 (195 Misc.2d 53), DeCrow revisited the issue of where women were allowed to socialize when she represented a woman who was denied membership in the Rome Elks. The court made its determination on a procedural issue and didn't reach the substantive issue. The parties later reached a settlement in which the Rome Elks Lodge agreed to admit women on the same basis as men and plaintiff Orendorff agreed to withdraw her own application for membership.

These cases and achievements of Karen DeCrow are only a brief handful of what she did to champion the cause of women. Unfortunately, I made the mistake of not getting to know Karen better during the time our paths overlapped while working on the board of the CNYWBA and am therefore left only with what I can pick up as a researcher of her life. Nonetheless, I am inspired by her life to take risks to further the causes she worked so hard to champion and hope that others are similarly inspired.

Remarks by Elizabeth deV. Moeller

Karen DeCrow was the recipient of several prestigious awards. For example, in 1985 Ms. DeCrow was given the Ralph E. Kharas Award for Distinguished Service in Civil Liberties. In 1998, Ms. DeCrow was awarded the 1998 New York State Woman of Achievement/Distinction Award by Governor George E. Pataki. In 2002, Ms. DeCrow was honored with the Northwestern University Service to Society Award. In 2004, Ms. DeCrow was a recipient of the New York State Women's Bar Association's Joan L. Ellenbogen Founder's Award. In addition, in 2003, Ms. DeCrow received the Post Standard Achievement Award.

**Ms. DeCrow is listed in:**

*Who's Who in America*

*Who's Who in American Women*

*Who's Who in American Law*

*Who's Who in the World*

*Who's Who in the East*

*Who's Who in New York*

*The Writer's Directory*

*The Directory of Distinguished Americans*

*Who's Who in US Writers, Editors and Poets*

*The International Authors and Writer's Who's Who  
Contemporary Authors*

*Two Thousand Notable American Women*

*The International Who's Who of Professional and Business Women*

*The World Who's Who of Women, the Foremost Women of the Twentieth Century*

*Community Leaders and Noteworthy Americans, Personalities of America*

*200 Future Leaders of America (Time 1974)*

*50 Most Influential Women in America (Newspaper Enterprise Association 1975)*

*Most Important Central New Yorkers of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Syracuse Herald American 1990)*

*2000 Intellectuals of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*



## Ms. DeCrow's Domestic Speeches Have Included:

Sex Roles in the Media

Can We Have Our Cake and Eat It Too

Dick and Janeisms: Sexism in Education

The Rebirth of Women

Can the Nation Survive Without Ending Sexism

The Participation of Women in the Shaping of American History: The History of Women and the Law

Gender Free Feminism and Mental Health

Woman, the Whole Person

Violence Against Women

Who Pays and Who Cares? Custody, Support and Gender Free Law

The First Amendment and Book Banning

Men's Changing Roles in the Family: Legal and Social Implications

Feminism and Fatherhood

Why Women Fear the Marketplace and Why the Marketplace Fears Women

The Role of the Feminist Revolution in Shaping Parental Leave and Child Care Policy Combating Censorship of the Arts

The Feminist Movement: Have We Ended the War Between the Sexes

Pornography and Feminism

Balancing the Scales of Justice: Realizing Our Potential in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



## Books Authored Include:

*University Adult Education* (co-authored with Roger DeCrow, American Council on Education, 1967)

*The Young Woman's Guide to Liberation* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1971),

*Sexist Justice* (Random House, 1974)

*Women Who Marry Houses: Panic and Protest in Agoraphobia* (with Robert Seidenberg, M.D., McGraw-Hill, 1983)

Ms. DeCrow has written countless articles that have appeared in publications including the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, the *National Law Journal*, *Women Lawyer's Journal*, the *Civil Rights Quarterly*, *Ingenue*, *Adult Leadership*, *Vogue*, *Mademoiselle*, the *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, the *Boston Globe*, the *Miami Herald*, the *International Herald Tribune*, the *Houston Chronicle*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, *Newsday*, *Penthouse*, the *Syracuse Post Standard*, the *Syracuse Herald Journal*, the *Pittsburgh Press*, the *Rochester Times-Union*, the *National NOW Times* and the *Syracuse University Magazine*. In addition, since 1985 Ms. DeCrow has written a regular column in the *Syracuse New Times*. Ms. DeCrow's literary works have earned her numerous awards including several New York Press Association Award and The Syracuse Press Club's Professional Recognition Award for Best Newspaper Column.

Ms. DeCrow was also a recipient of the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from the State University College at Oswego. In conferring the degree on Ms. DeCrow, the College wrote:

You stand as an inspiration to others. Your work on behalf of human rights and civil liberties is exemplary. As an attorney and author you are held in high regard as a leader in the worldwide movement to create gender equality. As President of the National Organization for Women, you have been in the forefront of activism for women's rights. Your dedication to social equality emboldens the spirit of all who seek human rights. Your personal, intellectual, and moral dedication to this important work is exceptional. For your outstanding leadership as an advocate for equity and for your effective writing focused on equal rights for all people, the State University of New York is proud to confer on you the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters.

## Defending the Value of a Liberal Education

By, Karen DeCrow



Recently in an interview, a business executive was asked if he thinks the MBA is important. Yes, he said. But what he really looks for in candidates: people

who read novels. When asked why, he said they have a broad and deep view of events and people.

Thus, the value of a liberal education.

A restrained way to put it, the humanities are what makes us human. No matter what is happening in life or in the world-war, natural disaster, poor health, pain, the death of loved ones-if existence is filled with art, music and literature, life will be fulfilling, a joy.

From 1961 to 1964, I was fortunate enough to work at a think tank in the Kenwood neighborhood of Chicago. As a writer and editor, I reported in a publication about the thinkers.

Our offices were in a former mansion; I worked in what had been the ballroom. As I sat typing my copy I imagined the dancers waltzing.

Here is the kind of thing I wrote about: "University of Chicago Self-Study." In May 1957, University College, the adult division of the University of Chicago, began a two year examination of every aspect of its own operation-a thorough, relentless, pitiless self-scrutiny brilliantly conceived and executed by the University College staff with the guidance of a distinguished advisory committee and with financial assistance from the Fund for Adult Education.

Included in a history of adult education at the University of Chicago, which from the days of its founder, William Rainey Harper, has been one of the great pioneering institutions in university adult education. Sol Tax, Dean of the Extension Division of the University, has contributed a preface outlining the present organization and program of University Extension.

Our think tank published the study.

We were decades ahead of our time. Called The Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults, we were known in the world of higher education as CSLEA. Established in 1951 with a grant from the fund for Adult Education, we worked with universities seeking to initiate or improve programs of liberal education for adults. We were located near the University of Chicago. Eventually CSLEA moved to Boston.

The purpose of the center is "to help American higher education develop greater effectiveness and a deeper sense of responsibility for the liberal education for adults. We established, in that mansion, a golden age.

We published notes and essays on the philosophy and purpose of adult education; research reports on studies and surveys in adult education; reports on methods and practices in adult education; and books. The scholars in our project traveled internationally to explore how education was being extended beyond the childhood school years. Educators working in the field-such as in the Danish folk schools-come to CSLEA to meet with us. The genesis of the popularity today of the Elderhostel program is CSLEA.

Dr. Alexander Charters, a former vice-president of Syracuse University, was chair of the board of CSLEA.

In large part because of Dr. Charters, Syracuse University has the largest collection of adult education materials in the world. These materials include, but are not limited to, the archives of CSLEA. The collection is at Bird Library.

Lisa Belkin writes in the "New York Times Magazine" (March 5, 2006) that across the country developments are springing up that encourage adults to engage in "lifelong learning". There are dozens of campus-linked retirement communities in the U.S., many consisting of town houses and apartments clustered near an alma mater. Most accept any college, not just someone with a degree from the particular university.

This intrigues me. I enjoy practicing law too much to even contemplate retiring, but I often think about engaging in serious study of the history of art, of

the intricacies of classical music. I could write a fugue, or perhaps, learn to play the cello.

Dr. Charters went to Hamburg, Germany in 1997, beginning a journey to share the information at Syracuse University with educators around the world.

For Dr. Charters, this international trip was a continuation of a long, pioneering career in adult education. He was among the first to be inducted into the International Adult and Continuing Education Hall of Fame at the University of Oklahoma.

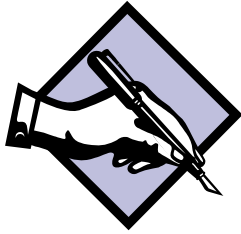
As we learn and re-learn the pleasure of the humanities, it is not necessary that the creative spirits who are engaging us were happy themselves. A new biography, "Benjamin Britten: A Life for Music," by Neil Powell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013) documents what an unhappy person this musical genius was. He composed his first piece when he was five years old, and was one of the most prolific composers, not only in England, but in the world. He was also sad, depressed, in terrible health and often experienced anger and rage.

Vincent van Gogh, who probably taught us more about color and its meaning than any other artist, was well known to be miserable, and spent years of his life in a mental institution.

Here is what he wrote to Joseph Jacob Isaacson, an art critic, in 1890:

"The effect of daylight and the sky means there are endless subjects to be found in olive trees. For myself I look for the contrasting effects in the foliage, which changes with the tones of the sky...as the bronzer foliage takes on more mature tones, the sky is radiant and streaked with green and orange, and then again, further into autumn, the leaves take on violet tones something of the color of a ripe fig, and this violet effect manifests itself most fully in the contrast with the large, whitening sun within its pale halo of light lemon. Sometimes, too, as after a shower I've seen the whole sky pink and orange, which gave an exquisite value and coloring to the silvery gray-greens."

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*Editor's Corner*

Have something you would like to share with the membership of CNYWBA? Maybe you have encountered an interesting legal issue, have pictures of a CNYWBA event to share, are involved in a local event, discovered a fun new networking activity or discovered a tool to help you fulfill all of your many roles in life. Please send submissions to: [emoeller@djjacirandoesqs.com](mailto:emoeller@djjacirandoesqs.com)

## CENTRAL NEW YORK WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION

A CHAPTER OF THE  
WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

P.O. Box 408, Syracuse, New York 13201-0408



The mission of the Central New York Women's Bar Association is to promote justice for all, regardless of sex; to advance social, economic and legal status of women throughout the law; to expand opportunities for women and to raise the level of competence and integrity in the legal profession.

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**Sugarman**  
LAW FIRM<sup>LLP</sup> 