

# Female lawyers gain job options

By Alice Collins  
staff writer

Karen Colby Weiner — lawyer and feminist — would encourage qualified women to enter the field of law today despite current employment figures which indicate jobs are scarce.

One reason: female attorneys have gained access to a wider variety of jobs than they had in earlier years when most went to work for the government, a large law firm or business, or "the solo practice of family law," according to Ms. Weiner.

The doors of small- and medium-size law firms and business corporations, which once resisted, are now open to female attorneys. This has opened up all legal fields of practice to women, she said.

Another reason: salary differences between male and female attorneys "is minimal at this point because attorneys, in particular, are too aware of the civil rights act to allow that (inequality in salaries) to happen," she added.

MS. WEINER, 37, an attorney since 1977, specializes in banking and real estate law as an associate in the law firm of Dickinson, Wright, McKean, Cudlip & Moon. She's worked in both the Bloomfield Hills and Detroit offices of the firm.

In an interview in the Bloomfield Hills office of the firm last week, Ms. Weiner discussed the growing number of women attorneys in Oakland County, her personal decision to enter the law and her work to bring about equal rights for women in her field.

She is the new president of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan (WLAM), a 750-member organization that watches the state's legal profession attempting to insure equality for women and minorities.

WLAM REVIEWS legislation and screens judicial candidates "to make sure we don't get judges on the bench who are sexist and prejudiced against women litigants or attorneys," said Ms. Weiner.

"My HUSBAND was supportive in that he wanted me to do whatever I wanted to do," she continued. "And

diced against women litigants or attorneys," said Ms. Weiner.

"We review legislation to make sure we don't have any law that treats persons differently on the basis of sex," Ms. Weiner was a retired speech therapist, married to an attorney, the mother of three young children and 39 years old when she decided she wanted to become a lawyer. Three years later she received a law degree, magna cum laude, from the University of Detroit.

A breakthrough for women attorneys has come with the opening up of the small- and medium-size firms which had been closed to women, said Ms. Weiner.

Spokesmen for those firms, said Ms. Weiner, "were always quick to say they would hire women if they could, but that their clients might not be satisfied being represented by a woman."

"NOW THEY'VE opened up much more," she said. More women owning their own businesses is also leading to the hiring of more women attorneys, she added.

Recently compiled statistics show 4,114 attorneys in Oakland County. Among them 356 are women or about 9 percent, said Ms. Weiner. There are about 1,729 female attorneys currently practicing in Michigan.

The state's female attorneys are concentrated primarily in Oakland, Wayne and Ingham counties because of the greater numbers of government jobs available in those areas, she said.

"I feel law is a great field for women today," added Ms. Weiner. She decided to enter law school at the age of 30 after being at home six years and having three babies. "I'd originally intended to just stay at home and raise my family," said Ms. Weiner.

But she decided to return to a career "instead of having a nervous breakdown."

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DICK KELLEY/staff photographer

Karen Colby Weiner, an associate in the law firm of Dickinson, Wright, McKean, Cudlip & Moon of Bloomfield Hills and Detroit, is the new president of the Women Lawyers Association of Michigan.

I think he was actually excited about us being the same field."

Her husband, J. Lavin Weiner, is a partner in the law firm of Weiner, Hauser, Wartel and Roth of Southfield.

It hasn't been easy taking care of three children, going to school and then pursuing a career, she said.

"We all sort of work together to get things taken care of," she said. "She says she's not a 'superwoman,' the designation popularly given to working women who continue to take care of all the homemaking chores."

"Maybe I tried that at first," she said, "but it was impossible. It's a relief not to have to try to do everything."

"Now I accept whatever assistance I can get. And I have to be realistic about sources. My husband has always been very sharing," she said.

MS. WEINER describes herself as a feminist. She is a strong supporter of the Equal Rights Amendment and

now has "very serious doubts about its passage."

"With the wave of conservatism in the country, a lot of anti-ERA feelings have come along as excess baggage," she said. "But this is not a liberal or conservative cause. It's a just cause."

"Women are not going to be able to sit back and expect the government to take care of equality. Government's not going to do it," she said.

She became involved with the women lawyers' association, she said, because "it was a means I saw within my field to bring about changes and equality."

She joined Dickinson, Wright, McKean, Cudlip and Moon after serving two years as law clerk for Michigan Supreme Court Justice G. Mennen Williams.

In addition to heading the women lawyers' association, she chairs a state bar committee working to increase the percentages of women and minorities in the profession.

# Kinkerdoos

## Woman's small project just keeps growing

By Judith Berne  
staff writer

A small barrette, a rosette of lace eyelet, two contrasting satin bows, a novelty button and what have you got — a "Kinkerdoo."

That's Ricki Burleigh's label for the hair decorations she manufactures and sells through suburban specialty stores, primarily for children.

Burleigh, who has lived in North Africa and knows 10 languages, is now a West Bloomfield mother of three.

She originally made the Kinkerdoos to adorn the hair of her daughter Sabrina, 3. They were modeled after a design she first saw in California craft shows.

"When I realized people in the streets were stopping me to buy them out of her hair or begging me to make them for their children, I realized this was a very marketable product," she says.

HER IDEA: to hire handicapped and non-English speaking people, women at home with small children where a second income was needed and retired persons to make the Kinkerdoos, under her supervision.

"I decided since these are really relatively easy to make if one knows simple hand sewing, I would like to find people who really need work to do the sewing for me," she adds.

"My quality control is important; but I am also very patient, am willing to teach and train."

Despite telephone calls to a number of organizations, she was at first un-

able to locate enough home-bound persons to do the work.

Then Dan Allen of Michigan Rehabilitation Services got in touch with four handicapped women who have had trouble holding jobs. They either weren't ambulatory, or didn't have the self-confidence or transportation for a regular job, she says.

"RICKI IS THE ideal employer," Allen says. "She is willing to work with someone who is slow."

Currently, Johanna Rybak of Pontiac, who is retarded, is one of Burleigh's main sewers. "I can work all night. I really keep going," Rybak says.

Other sewers include Barbara Bernard of Clawson who broke her back in five places; Karen Waterman of Ferndale who suffers from acute fibrosis and also has a toddler to manage; and Mayer and Rita Gluzman of Troy. The Gluzmans are Russian immigrants who are learning English.

Indu Sein, from India now living in West Bloomfield, is a professional seamstress whom Burleigh hires when she needs more samples.

Recently the Jewish Vocational Service, a non-sectarian vocational rehabilitation and job placement agency, indicated interest in having some of its clients make "Kinkerdoos."

BURLEIGH'S current problem is typical of many small businesses which start out as "cottage industries."

She needs capital to move forward. She was denied a small business loan which would have allowed her to go after bigger orders.



JOHN STANO/staff photographer

Ricki Burleigh and Johanna Rybak work on making the hair decorations called Kinkerdoos sold through suburban specialty stores.

# Attorney has a 'mother in the law'

By Shirlee Iden  
staff writer

"Marla Parker and Mother, attorneys at law."

Sound like someone's fantasy? If so, it's a dream that could come true some day.



MINDY SAUNDERS/staff photographer

Arlene Parker (seated) was admitted to the practice of law in Michigan recently by a motion made by her daughter, Marla (standing).

Motions, examining witnesses, preliminary examinations are all in a day's work for attorney Marla Parker.

What was extraordinary was to stand in the Oakland County courtroom of Judge Gene Schnelz and sponsor her mother, Arlene J. Parker,

for admission to the practice of law in Michigan. Both are Southfield residents.

"I told the judge and those assembled that I was appearing on behalf of my mother to move that she be admitted to the bar," she explained.

"And I said this gives new meaning to the phrase mother-in-law since now I truly have a mother in the law."

Ms. Parker said it is normal for attorneys to sponsor new lawyers and sometimes they are family members. "But it's rare for a daughter to make the motion for her mother."

Customarily, the sponsor speaks of the qualifications of the person being admitted to the bar. This was not difficult for Ms. Parker.

"I AM so very proud of my mother," she said. "I know firsthand how hard undergraduate school was and she had to tackle that with all her other responsibilities. And then to go on to law school, I'm really proud of her."

"Her perseverance in working toward her goal are the qualities an attorney needs. This is not simply a personal triumph for her and the family, but a real inspiration for all women."

Present for the ceremony were Mrs. Parker's other children, Barbara, 22, an artist, and Andrew, 18, a University of Michigan sophomore, as well as her own parents, Florence and Rudolph Leon of Lauderhill, Fla.

Marla Parker was admitted to the bar herself just last November. A University of Michigan graduate, she attended law school at Wayne State University.

Presently, she is employed as an associate in the law firm of Faintuck, Shwedel, Wolfman, McDonald and Zipsper.

"I always had an interest in being an attorney, mostly because I'm people-oriented," Ms. Parker said. "The law is a way of being effective with people and their problems. You really feel like you're doing something for clients and moving their lives along."

Her mother's decision to go into the legal profession came later in

life and at a difficult time for her personally.

"My husband, Gilbert, suffered a serious stroke in 1971," she said. "He was in the hospital an entire year before his death and I was with him there every day."

"DURING THAT year of his illness, I had to reevaluate my life. I decided I must go back to school. When I did that after his death, I decided the law was a positive way of helping people and that became my goal."

A native Detroit, Mrs. Parker had logged a few college credits before her marriage at Wayne University. Her intention was to become a social worker. Instead she married and had the three children. In 1968, the family moved to Southfield.

After her return to WSU, Mrs. Parker earned a bachelor's degree in political science WSU and was admitted to the University of Detroit law school.

Mother and daughter were law students at the same time grappling with the reading, the research and final exams.

Mrs. Parker said her greatest difficulty was coping with exams and important research and then having to switch gears and go to some function for one of her children. "But I never missed anything important," she said.

ONE OF her best law school experiences was working in the Urban Law Clinic at U. of D. where she got first-hand experience in the courts and working with clients.

"Having your client know you're their best friend is important," she said.

Since graduation, she has been clerking for a law firm. Now she is job hunting.

Marla Parker and mother have some legal discussions at the dinner table, but mostly, they try to relax and forget it.

Both plan to get experience in many facets of law, perhaps to specialize at some later time.

And as for that fantasy of a law firm with the two of them as principals, Marla said: "Why not? As long as I'm the senior partner."

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