

# Oakland County woman in national limelight

By CAROL HASKIN  
 "I grew up with the press," said Elizabeth Hughes Gossett of Bloomfield Hills, "but it was never like in Washington 10 days ago. Then the lights were on me."

In Mrs. Gossett's youth, the cameras were aimed at her father, former Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes.

Two weeks ago Mrs. Gossett found herself in the national limelight as president of the newly-formed Supreme Court Historical Society's board of trustees.

Congress and the White House have had historical societies for years, but

somehow the task of preserving the history of government's third branch had gone unassigned. Chief Justice Warren Burger, an enthusiastic antique collector, organized a campaign for a Supreme Court Historical Society several years ago. The society was finally incorporated under District of Columbia law last November.

MRS. GOSSETT was asked to be a member of the board when the society was first formed in March. In July the members elected her president.

Her function in the organization is, she explained, "administrative, as any president of any organization is."

She will preside over the society's scholarship and fund-raising activities.

The primary purpose of the society is educational, Mrs. Gossett said, and there are already a number of projects in the planning state that will be executed as soon as funds become available through public contributions.

THE JUDICIARY is probably the least publicized and least understood branch of the United States government, Mrs. Gossett said. Still, 600,000 people visit the Supreme Court building each year to see how the American judicial system works on its highest level.

To increase understanding of the judicial function, the society plans to hire and train guides to escort groups through the Supreme Court building and explain proceedings and exhibits.

"There will be more and more to see there I hope," Mrs. Gossett said, describing the society's aim to build up a collection of historical memorabilia through gift, loan or purchase of items belonging to former justices.

In order to locate such items, the society will trace the descendants of the 100 justices the Supreme Court has

had to date. No list of these descendants is currently available.

IN ADDITION to historical acquisitions, the society plans to increase existing scholarship on the court system. Current members of the Supreme Court and other prominent individuals in the judicial system will be interviewed and the discussions recorded to form chapters of a continually-expanding oral history.

Mrs. Gossett said the society hopes to have funds available to make film and television documentaries on the court.

Through publication of yearbooks and newsletters, the society will disseminate information on the court system to scholars, historians and the general public.

MRS. GOSSETT said her election was "a bolt out of the blue," but, in fact, she has had a long association with the Supreme Court.

Her first contact with the court came at the age of three when her father left the Governor's Mansion in Albany, N.Y., to become an associate justice.

"When I went down to Washington as a little girl, it was a sleepy old southern town," she recalled. "Slow moving and quiet — I even remember horses and carriages. But it was exciting even then."

It was exciting especially for a little girl who was bounced on the knee of the gigantic President William Taft.

"I was scared to death of him, got right down and ran to my mother crying, 'Oh what a biggy man!'"

JUSTICE WILLIAM O. Douglas is the only member of the court who remains from her father's term as Chief Justice, but Mrs. Gossett said she is friends with all current members of the court, primarily through her husband, William T. Gossett, former vice president and chief counsel of Ford Motor Co. and American Bar Association president until 1960.

From an early age, Mrs. Gossett had great interest in the court and her father's work.

"I was always very interested in all those things—terribly impressed and devoted. I thought I was going to be a writer or a lawyer."

She hasn't given up her literary aspirations, and is toying with the idea of compiling a volume of reminiscences about her father.

FOR THE present, however, she anticipates that much of her time will be devoted to the administrative tasks relating to the historical society.

One of the society's first actions following incorporation was to send out 40,000 pamphlets on its goals and functions to members of the legal profession, heads of state bar associations, delegates of the American Bar Association, interested lay persons and historians to encourage membership and participation in the society.

Memberships can be purchased on an annual or lifetime basis, with differing fees for students and adults. All members will receive the society's yearbook and various publications throughout the year.

Membership information can be obtained by writing The Supreme Court Historical Society, 1829 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006.

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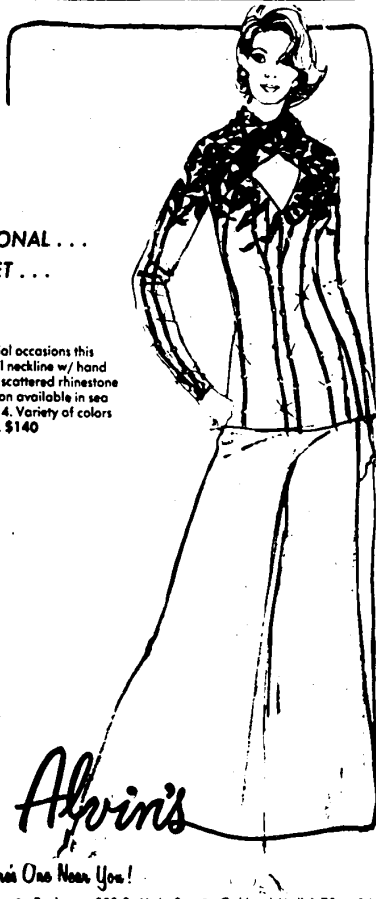
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