



A JUDGE FOR ALL SEASONS

CAROLYN DIMMICK

THE ORAL HISTORY OF WASHINGTON'S FIRST FEMALE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

LEGACY PROJECT

History through the people who lived it

THE WASHINGTON STATE
HERITAGE CENTER

Carolyn Dimmick

Research by John Hughes, Lori Larson, Dick Allen and Bob Johnson

Transcription by Lori Larson

Interviews by John Hughes

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Hughes: It's December 11, 2008. I'm John Hughes with the Office of the Secretary of State. We're with U.S. District Court Judge Carolyn Dimmick at the new Federal Courthouse in Seattle. In 1981, she became the first female member of the Washington Supreme Court.

Well, judge, I want you to know without any idle flattery that you look great ... and you're much prettier than you were in this picture from 1981 (holding up the first page of her biography in Charles Sheldon's history of the State Supreme Court).



Carolyn Dimmick's first portrait as a member of the Washington Supreme Court in 1981

Dimmick: Oh, well, the hairstyle has changed you know.

Hughes: Before I forget this, it says here at the end of Professor Sheldon's biography of you — right before the biography of one of my favorite people, Justice Jim Dolliver —

Dimmick: Mine too. He was in law school with me at the University of Washington ... He was vice-president and I was secretary of the Student Council.

Hughes: Retired Supreme Court Justice Charles Z. Smith, the subject of our most recent oral history, was also in Law School with you.

Dimmick: Yes he was. But he graduated in 1955. I graduated in 1953.

Hughes: Is it true that Dolliver, who sat next to you on the Supreme Court bench on your first day in 1981, passed you a note that said, "Which do you prefer: 1) Mrs. Justice; 2) Ms. Justice; 3) O! Most Worshipful One or 4) El Maxima"?

Dimmick: I don't remember. (smiling)

Hughes: Sheldon says you responded, "All of the above."

Dimmick: Probably true then.

Hughes: It sounds like Jim Dolliver's personality doesn't it?

Dimmick: It does.

Hughes: Well, it says in our research that there's a biography that someone named Susan Cook did with you. Supposedly it's in the State Archives. We can't find it.

Dimmick: I don't recall that at all.

Hughes: Well good. Then I'm starting fresh.

I just finished interviewing Adele Ferguson, the longtime newspaper columnist. I asked her about her date of birth and she said, "There are three things you should never ask a woman: her age, her weight, and her salary." So, with all apologies, for the record, please give us your full name and date and place of birth.

Dimmick: Carolyn Joyce Reaber Dimmick. I was born in Seattle, Washington, October 24, 1929, The daughter of Maurice and Margaret Reaber.

Hughes: Reaber. I was going to ask you how to pronounce that correctly.

Dimmick: "Ray-bur." My dad was Danish, a hundred percent Danish. And when his father came here they changed the name from Riebe to Reaber, thinking it sounded better.

Hughes: Ellis Island did that a lot. In fact, Justice Smith's father's name was Delpino – Juan Delpino. And at the Florida equivalent of Ellis Island they decided that he should be John Smith. So your dad fared better than that. And Joyce, J-o-y-c-e?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: And Reaber is spelled?

Dimmick: R-e-a-b-e-r

Hughes: Tell us about your parents.

Dimmick: My mother was the daughter of Sophia Donnelly.

Hughes: Is that D-o-n-n-e-l-l-y?

Dimmick: Yes. And my grandmother married Howard Taylor, who was English. My grandmother Sophia was Irish, and we have a castle in Donegal. My daughter and I and my

granddaughter are going for a visit. We just finalized the airplane tickets. We're going to go in March to our old castle, which is now being converted into a wonderful first-class hotel. We saw it a couple of years ago when it was still in the ruins. We took a picture with the ruins and all, standing in front of it. And then they refurbished the whole thing. I mean it had burned out twice in our lifetime.

Hughes: What fun.

Dimmick: And so we're going to go back to Donegal and look at our castle again, just the three of us.

Hughes: So there's Danish, Irish and English in this gene pool?

Dimmick: Yes, that's it.

Hughes: And your mother's maiden name was Taylor?

Dimmick: Yes. Margaret Taylor Reaber.

Hughes: Did you know your grandparents?

Dimmick: Oh yes.

Hughes: Tell us what they were they like.

Dimmick: Well, my mother's mother had a degree from the College of Mines in Missoula, Montana. Her husband was an engineer, a road engineer. He worked for King County at one time. And my other side, my dad's father, straight from Denmark at age 9 with his parents, had no formal education beyond that. He went to Illinois and worked in the mines. But he became a famous piano tuner and violin maker.

Hughes: Here in King County?

Dimmick: Right here in Seattle. They would call him down from the Sherman & Clay piano store to tune up all the pianos whenever a maestro came to town. His name was Christian Reaber. He lived to be 94, 95.

Hughes: So there's a lot of longevity in this gene pool?

Dimmick: Oh yes. My mother also was 94, 95, when she died. And my grandmother and my aunt were all that age. But my dad was 82 when he died.

Hughes: Tell us about him. He was American born, right?

Dimmick: Yes he was. My dad, Maurice Chrisitan Reaber, was a master mariner, he had

gone to sea and he was a master mariner. He had been in World War I.

Hughes: What did he do in World War I?

Dimmick: Well, I don't know for sure. He ended up in Germany is all I know because he has a German sword. He was in the Navy.

Hughes: How do you get to be a master mariner, which in essence is a ship's captain?

Dimmick: That's right. You go to sea, and you take the tests. In fact, when he died he was one of two of the oldest master mariners Pilots' Union members in the city.

Hughes: What kind of vessels did he captain?

Dimmick: Big ones. In fact after World War II, he took all the UNRA (United Nations Relief Act) vessels over to Japan. The pilots took them over there and back. And then in later years he fished and got ships. But my earliest recollection was when he had a boat called the *Dart* and he got the mail contract from the federal government to go to Juneau, Alaska, and take the mail around to the fox farms. So we lived in Juneau for four years doing that contract.

Hughes: Did you say "fox," like furry critters?

Dimmick: Foxes that run on the coast, yes. Fox farms. So we lived in Juneau for four years. I remember when we were on the boat with my dad, he was afraid my brother and I might fall overboard. I was about 4, and he had chicken wire around the back of the boat. I was feeding the seagulls and pretty soon there was a big flock – maybe hundreds. Dad said that was not a good thing to do!

Hughes: Did he need a college education or a maritime academy degree to get to be a master mariner?

Dimmick: No. He had a couple years of college. Then he was in the Navy. Then he just worked for the Alaska Steamship Company.

Hughes: So his job required him to be away from home quite a bit then.

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: What kind of a person was he?

Dimmick: Wonderful guy. He was just so easy going and Danish. I think he had a little depression because they always called them "dour Danes," you know. I think he had a little

bit of that in him. But he was the easiest of parents.

Hughes: As opposed to mom?

Dimmick: Yes. (laughing)

Hughes: Were there other siblings?

Dimmick: I had one brother, Raymond.

Hughes: Older or younger?

Dimmick: He was older. He was a chemical engineer who got his degree from the University of Washington. But he died of cancer some time ago.

Hughes: Tell us about your mother.

Dimmick: Well, my mother, Margaret Taylor Reaber, was terribly English, very proper, very bright, and expected a lot from us. One time she said to my brother and me, "Both of my children are misfits." She said, "Carolyn, you are too social. Raymond, you are too studious." And she added, "Neither one of you can spell." And we both said, "Well, we're going to have secretaries." (laughter)

Hughes: What a great comeback.

Dimmick: And we did! We both had secretaries.

Hughes: Were you always called Carolyn as a girl?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: No nicknames?

Dimmick: That was it.

Hughes: So mom is a highly educated lady. How does she meet the Danish ship captain?

Dimmick: On the ship, when she was 20 going up to Nome, Alaska. She met him going up and then when the ice broke and she was coming down at the end of the year, he brought her ship back down. Then he asked her out, and they went dancing and swimming around here.

Hughes: Sort of the *Titanic*, where you've got Leonardo meeting Kate — but with a lot happier ending. What was your mom doing going to Alaska?

Dimmick: She was teaching school in Nome. She'd grown up here in Seattle, and her first teaching job was in Toppenish, Washington. And then she went to Nome.

Hughes: Where had she gone to school?

Dimmick: The University of Washington. Well, she had gone to some other school first. She had gone to Montana.

Hughes: And her degree was in general studies as a teacher?

Dimmick: I don't think they even had a major at the time. She was a teacher. And she wrote a thesis and got her degrees and all that. She was very young. She started at 15. She said, "There's nothing else to do." So she studied. Well, I found other things to do.

Hughes: So she was just an extraordinarily smart lady?

Dimmick: Yes, she was.

Hughes: Apart from sort of critiquing her children's proclivities, did she have some pet peeves? Was she a stickler for great English and expected people to do their homework?

Dimmick: Oh, of course. But you know in those days we didn't have a lot of homework. I don't remember a lot of homework, did you?

Hughes: No, and I grew up in the 1950s, and it seemed like it was a lot easier than what I've seen lately in schools.

Dimmick: I think so. My grandkids now, my goodness, they are just working like mad.

Hughes: It's interesting isn't it? We talk about the good old days, walking to school in the snow and all of this schoolwork drudgery, but I thought the rigor my children faced in school in the 1990s was a lot more demanding than anything I had.

Dimmick: Certainly. And with the grandchildren it is even more.

Hughes: And all the hoops that you have to go through now to get into college.

So, your mother is a college-educated woman and a teacher in her teens?

Dimmick: Yes. And she became an author. She wrote a lot of stories.

Hughes: What kind of stories?

Dimmick: Well, she wrote real romance – true romance, those kinds of romance stories and articles. And she never used a woman's name. She used a man's name because you could never get anything published as a woman.

Hughes: What was the name she used?

Dimmick: Chadwick Holland.

Hughes: That's a wonderful name. It has a Miss Marple-ish flavor to it. I'm really impressed by your mother, and what she did in her time.

Dimmick: She was amazing.

Hughes: Do you have any of her Chadwick Holland mysteries?

Dimmick: Yes, I have a stack of them.

Hughes: Did she make any money writing them?

Dimmick: Like \$50 a story. What was more interesting about my mother was she was entering (writing) contests. Nowadays the contests are just ridiculous, in my opinion, because there's so many of them. In those days you had to have a little talent; you had to write a poem or do this or that. She won a set of Danish Princess Silverplate and gift certificates. And she was on a talk show one time and they wanted to know the date of Flag Day, and she knew it right off. She knew everything – a steel trap.

Hughes: I like everything about your mom that I see here in this family picture when you joined the Supreme Court in 1981: The way she's holding her purse. The look in her eyes, like she's saying, "This is *my* daughter, and this is what I expected. Carolyn was too social, but I knew she'd amount to something, and here she is." And your dad is wearing a vest, and he looks like a proud Dane.

Dimmick: That's it. Any good reason to dress right up... An old sod.

Hughes: So what was life like in the Reaber home growing up?

Dimmick: Dad's gone quite a bit; mother's writing stories. She didn't like housework. She didn't like cooking.

Hughes: So who cooked?

Dimmick: Well, she did. I mean it was very plain food, no sauces and all that kind of stuff. Like my daughter now is really into cooking.

Hughes: That's another thing that's different today: Everyone's a "gourmet."

Dimmick: But it was fine. I went to work at the *Seattle P-I* and worked there all through school. The war came along. My brother had been working at the *P-I* in the Circulation Department and he got a job in the mail room because everybody was going off to war. So I took his job in the Circulation Department, from 4 to 9. I was the first person who did a

job-share in my memory. I worked 4 to 9 every night. But six or seven days a week was just too much for me, so I asked the boss if I could job-share with my girlfriend, Sylvia Rustad. Then I worked Monday, Wednesday and Friday and Sylvia worked Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Then on Sundays we worked together for a whole day.

Hughes: Did this start in high school?

Dimmick: High school, yes.

Hughes: So you're a newspaperwoman, judge. You've got ink in your veins.

Dimmick: Yeah. (smiling)

Hughes: So what was that like hanging around the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* during the 1940s? It was right downtown wasn't it?

Dimmick: It was downtown – right across from Frederick & Nelson, Sixth and Pine.

Hughes: Sure, with the "It's in the P-I" globe on the roof.

Dimmick: No, the globe wasn't there then when I started. (Editor's Note: It was hoisted atop the building on Nov. 9, 1948.)

Hughes: And what were your duties?

Dimmick: I answered the phone when people said, "I didn't get my paper." "Change the subscription." Pretty soon they were making me balance the blotter at night, which is papers in, papers out; it's got to end up the same.

Hughes: Was the Circulation Department at the *Seattle P-I* doing a good job in your era? Did you have a pretty good track record of complaints per thousand?

Dimmick: We didn't get a lot of complaints. But if somebody didn't get the paper we would call the paper boy or the route manager.

Hughes: Who was the circulation manager?

Dimmick: His name was King Mills. And then we had my particular boss, Marie Pearl.

Hughes: Was that fun, working there?

Dimmick: It was a lot of fun, especially 4 to 9 because everyone went home and you were just there.

Hughes: Did you ever mingle with the more glamorous news department?

Dimmick: Saw them in the ladies' room off and on.

Hughes: Emmett Watson, who became one of Seattle's most popular writers, was there as a young reporter and columnist.

Dimmick: Oh yeah, but I didn't know any of those people.

Hughes: Emmett had been at the *Seattle Star* during the war and then became a star at the *P-I*.

Dimmick: I knew Emmett many years later when I was in the Prosecutor's Office.

Hughes: But, let's take you back to your childhood: You're a girl growing up in the Depression in the 1930s. What was that like? Did your dad still have a job, or were those pretty tough times?

Dimmick: That's when he got that mail contract and we went up to Alaska when I was about five years old. He needed a job.

Hughes: What was Juneau like?

Dimmick: Very small town. But they had a swimming pool. We were able to use it twice in one year because the weather was always so bad.

Hughes: Or alternatively it was an ice rink!

Dimmick: And Mendenhall Glacier was *huge*. It is now shrunk down to the size of ice cube comparatively. And I can remember we had May Day and we would dance around the May poles. Stuff that they don't do down here.

Hughes: There's probably some reason that you can't do that now. It would be politically incorrect.

Dimmick: I don't know. And I know for some reason we were dressed up in Hawaiian outfits and my dad made us all little, I don't know what they called them but they were little Hawaiian tools and he made them on a lathe. So that was kind of fun. I have a picture of that somewhere.

Hughes: So when you were in Juneau you got to see dad more?

Dimmick: Yes. He would be gone three or four days. We had a big mansion there and my mother took in boarders from the Juneau Gold Mine. So we had four boarders there who became long-term friends of my folks.

Hughes: Boarders. That must have been an interesting thing in a household with kids.

Dimmick: Yes, but we were all downstairs and they were all upstairs.

Hughes: Were they all men?

Dimmick: Oh yeah. Working in the mine.

Hughes: Were there some characters there?

Dimmick: Yes there were. And one became a lifetime friend of my mother's and he became a writer as well.

Hughes: Who was that?

Dimmick: His name was Ed, and I can't think of his last name at the moment.

Hughes: What did he write?

Dimmick: Mostly travelogues. He traveled a lot and did a lot of things.

Hughes: So tell us about that first meeting between your parents. Was your dad a nice looking guy?

Dimmick: Oh yeah. Handsome, tall Danish guy.

Hughes: Mustachioed?

Dimmick: Oh no. Clean shaven.

Hughes: And mom?

Dimmick: Mother was darker than me – brown hair. Irish. Father was blond. I was a blonde.

Hughes: So she's an attractive young woman, and he's the ship captain.

Dimmick: He's not a captain at the time. He's a first mate.

Hughes: Was this kind of love at first sight?

Dimmick: I don't know. They didn't ever get into it with me.

Hughes: It's funny about that era. Your parents didn't talk about that sort of thing?

Dimmick: I didn't know anything about that. No.

Hughes: I'm trying to get a better fix on your mother. I get the flavor that dad was a more easy-going, warm kind of person. And mom was a lot more businesslike, and an intellectual kind of person.

Dimmick: Yes, exactly.

Hughes: I'd like to ask you about marriage preventing your mother from having a teaching career. Was it the notion that women ought to be home taking care of the kids and would be

taking a man's job if they went back to the classroom?

Dimmick: Well, I don't know what the theory was but I know that when the war came along they were using Rosie the Riveters and everybody went to work. So that changed everything, I believe.

Hughes: So did your mother go to work then?

Dimmick: No. She wasn't doing anything like that. She was just writing and staying at home, taking care of the kids. As I said, later she taught in community college and they extended her. She was still teaching at 75.

Hughes: What did she teach?

Dimmick: She taught English to the foreign born. She taught French. She taught math, she was very smart. She was a substitute teacher for a number of years in the high schools around here. You could be a substitute teacher by then.

Hughes: As a girl, what did you like to do growing up? Did you read a lot of books?

Dimmick: Oh, I read the Oz books. Remember the *Wizard of Oz* books?

Hughes: My wife collects them. She still loves her Oz books.

Dimmick: Sure, we all do. ... I don't know what happened to mine. They were left in Juneau, probably.

Hughes: Was there a movie theater in Juneau. Could you go to the Saturday matinee growing up?

Dimmick: I don't recall ever doing that in Juneau because I came down (to Seattle) in the third grade. I went to fourth grade down here.

Hughes: So you were there four years?

Dimmick: Kindergarten through the third grade.

Hughes: What elementary school did you go to here?

Dimmick: We moved back to Ballard and I went to Whittier Grade School. Then we moved up on Phinney Ridge and I went to Alexander Hamilton, then to Lincoln High School, on the other side of the Ridge, in Wallingford.

Hughes: Was that a real close-knit neighborhood growing up? The kids all walked to school?

Dimmick: Yes. Well, school was right across the street from me. John B. Allen was where I went for fifth and sixth.

Hughes: Do you recall vividly December 7, 1941—Pearl Harbor Day.

Dimmick: Not vividly. I know it happened, and I know that people were running around in the streets; and I knew some bad thing had happened. But as far as my feelings at the moment, if that's what you're asking, it's not like when Kennedy got shot. Everybody remembers then. The war was just the war.

Hughes: So you had just turned 12?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: And was your father too old to be in the service?

Dimmick: Yes. He had been in World War I. He was piloting ships during the war.

Hughes: The Merchant Marine, of course. And was your brother involved in the war?

Dimmick: No, my brother was 4-F. He had *very* bad eyes. In fact, he used to say if he gets up and it's foggy he knows he's forgot his glasses. (laughs) And that's when I started working at the *P-I* because he took another job, and I got his job.

Hughes: Were you conscious, working at the *Post-Intelligencer* during the war years, of the war headlines...

Dimmick: Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Hughes: Was there a lot of anxiety and fear?

Dimmick: You know there wasn't as much of that as there was later on in some of the other wars we've had. Oh, I should mention that during the war – it must have been the summer of 1942 – I worked in a Youth Farm Aid camp in Auburn. We picked berries, beans and peas. We were paid daily and lived there in a tent at the camp. We paid 60 cents a day “room and board.” By the end of the summer, after buying daily treats, I remember having cleared \$10. When I went back home, my folks bought me a \$25 war bond for \$18.75, and I went to Sears and bought some dresses with my earnings. Later, I received a certificate from Governor Arthur B. Langlie thanking me for my work “in the war effort”!

Hughes: What kind of girl were you in school?

Dimmick: Average.

Hughes: An average girl who likes to do average things?

Dimmick: Average, average, yes.

Hughes: Judge, with that glint in your eye I can't imagine that you ever really thought of yourself as just being average. Are you a person who just all of a sudden emerged from this chrysalis as a young woman and became a lot more than average?

Dimmick: Well, in high school, I took drama classes and appeared in two of the senior plays. I was "Lucybelle Lee from Tennessee." My father was there watching me at a Saturday night performance, and a drama professor from the UW he was familiar with told him, "Make sure your daughter takes classes from me." And my dad told me, "There's no way you're going to take drama from him because he got a divorce and hooked up with one of his young students." So that was the end of my future career on the stage.

But we just drifted along in those days. There wasn't a lot of pressure on us to do anything. We went down to Green Lake and swam, and I went to work with the *P-I*.

Hughes: That's a pretty bold kind of thing, though, getting a job downtown?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: You're 13 or 14 years old and you get this job. There weren't a lot of kids doing that.

Dimmick: No.

Hughes: Was that a really important thing to do in terms of family finances during the Depression, or was it just spending money for a teenager?

Dimmick: I think from that day on I always bought all my own clothes, and all my own books. My folks always paid my tuition wherever I went. They wanted me to keep going so they paid the tuition.

Hughes: How much was tuition?

Dimmick: Forty-seven dollars in law school, as I recall.

Hughes: Forty-seven dollars a quarter?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: I think Charlie Smith told me that he got a break because of the G.I. Bill and it was only \$37.50 for him. But you don't even want to know what it cost my wife and me to put a daughter through Gonzaga, even with good scholarships.

Dimmick: Sure, my granddaughter went to Forest Ridge. My other grandson is in O'Dea. They pay more there than we did for my entire education. And my granddaughter is now at

the University of San Francisco. She got a \$20,000 scholarship; we're still paying \$20,000.

Hughes: So what was high school like for you? You were working at the *P-I* and going to Lincoln High?

Dimmick: Yes. Class of 1947.

Hughes: Any other notables from the Class of '47 at Lincoln High?

Dimmick: Not that I recall.

Hughes: So in high school did you do classic things? You're on the swim team? You're a cheerleader?

Dimmick: Nah, I didn't do any of that. I was little "L." (Minor sports) I forget which sports we turned out for. But no, I was working all the time.

Hughes: That's funny. The girls didn't get to wear a big L, like the boys got for "lettering" in a sport?

Dimmick: We got little L's. There weren't a lot of activities for the girls.

Hughes: Among you girls, do you remember resenting that?

Dimmick: Our expectations were not anything other than what it was.

Hughes: But in Margaret Reaber you had a strong-willed mom. Did she routinely take you aside and say, "Carolyn, you don't want to just get married and have babies."

Dimmick: Oh yeah, oh yeah. Well, there was never any question that I was going to college. That was it. That was just it. And my brother was three years older and he was already that far ahead of me. And he was a straight A student all the way. I was average.

Hughes: What's average?

Dimmick: Well, B's, whatever. ... My brother was too studious. He was a stamp collector and he sat in his room and played with all these little stamps. And then he was straight A, and an engineer, chemical engineer, and I was just kind of going through life. I became a water skier. Actually a professional water skier. I guess when they pay you, you're a professional. We put on water ski shows.

Hughes: Where was that?

Dimmick: Seattle. We put on water ski shows called the Ski-Quatic Follies. It started out at Sand Point, and on Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington. This group became a troupe



Colleagues had this cartoon made when Judge Dimmick left for the federal court bench in 1985. The judge had been a semi-professional water skier as a college student

and we traveled around putting on shows.

Hughes: I hope you have some 8x10 glossy photographs of you water skiing.

Dimmick: There's some around some place. (Smiles)

Hughes: Water skiing. That's no small achievement; you need balance. So you were a pretty athletic girl?

Dimmick: I was able to stand up. (laughs) I did all right.

Hughes: Where did you learn to swim and learn to love water sports so much?

Dimmick: I learned to swim down at the Moore Pool in Seattle where everybody went.

The Moore Pool was down where the Moore Theatre is ... and where there's now all those fancy condos. The water skiing was just a fluke. I was working at the *P-I*, with a good friend, Betty Langham. She's now deceased with cancer last year. And she had two free tickets for a free water-skiing ride up at Sand Point. So we went up for the free ride and because we didn't fall off our skis, the fellows were really interested in us. So they put us in the Follies.

Hughes: Did you earn any money doing that? You said you were a semi-pro.

Dimmick: Well, I think they paid our way. I don't remember any dollars changing hands. But the managers of the Follies probably got paid for our appearances.

Hughes: Did both mother and dad inculcate in their daughter that you could be whatever you wanted to be?

Dimmick: Yes, definitely.

Hughes: How was that imparted?

Dimmick: It was just that my mother would say, "You know, you can go way beyond anything that I was able to do because I was being held back, and you've got the whole world ahead of you." Of course daddy just wanted me to be happy. Like I took flying lessons because I traded off answering the telephone for an airline, Kenmore Air Harbor. One of my brother's friends was a pilot there and so he got me the job answering the phone and doing stuff. In exchange, they gave me flying lessons. So one day my father is sitting home in Broadview, and an airplane goes down right in front of him on the Sound. I'm off that day. But by the time I got home that was *the* end of my flying lessons.

Hughes: How many flying lessons had there been.

Dimmick: Well, you had to have 10 to get a student license and I had about eight.

Hughes: Did you like flying?

Dimmick: It was great. It was a float plane. And that's what dumped right in the Sound in front of my dad's eyes.

Hughes: Did you ever land one?

Dimmick: I don't remember exactly what I did, but it was fun.

Hughes: So is that a major regret?

Dimmick: Well, I knew that was that. I mean you don't argue (with father).

Hughes: How old were you then?

Dimmick: Oh about 16. When dad said something, that was it because he didn't really exert himself unless it was something he was serious about. You could argue with mother all you wanted to, but when dad said "That's the end of your flying lessons" I said, "OK."

Hughes: Any inspirational teachers or mentors that you remember growing up?

Dimmick: Mrs. (Ella) Willard in high school. I liked her very much. And my friend and I used to go over and help her clean her house when she was having a party. She was a widow. Very nice lady.

Hughes: How hard was it to get into the University of Washington in 1947?

Dimmick: It wasn't hard at all; walked right in.

Hughes: You've got the money; they'll take you?

Dimmick: That's it.

Hughes: And your expectations? Did you think, “What am I going to be when I grow up?”

Dimmick: I was taking sociology, and economics and business. And I thought I would probably be a social worker.

Hughes: Most memorable professors?

Dimmick: One named Michael Hogan, which had been our background name, you see. Michael Hogan was our big Irish ancestor. I think he taught English in Parrington Hall. The classes were huge – 200 or more people. And we had the legendary Giovanni Costigan. You must have heard of him.

Hughes: A great history teacher and social activist. (Editor’s note: His debate with William F. Buckley at the height of the Vietnam War in 1971 packed Hec Edmundson Pavilion.)

Dimmick: Giovanni would know everybody’s name in the class by the first week. And I was walking down The Ave one time. He rode a bike, and he came around the corner on his bike and he says, “Oh, excuse me, Miss Reaber.” You know. Just like that. He knew *everybody’s* name.

Hughes: What classes did Giovanni Costigan teach?

Dimmick: He taught the History of England, which was a prerequisite for Law School.

Hughes: About that time on campus and in the Northwest there was a lot of controversy over leftist activity. Were you conscious of that?

Dimmick: I was later on because of the Canwell Hearings (on Un-American Activities) and that kind of thing. And (Sen. Joseph) McCarthy of course, nationally.

Hughes: Did that make an impression on you?

Dimmick: Not too much. That wasn’t foremost in my brain at the time.

Hughes: What was foremost in your brain?

Dimmick: I don’t know. Just surviving day by day.

Hughes: Were politics actively discussed in the Reaber household? Did your folks talk about FDR or about Willkie, Truman and Ike?

Dimmick: Yes, my folks were very Republican because it was kind of *laissez-faire*. My dad was always a small business man and wanted to be left alone. So they were Republican. I remember my grandfather, Christian Reaber, also a Republican, and they would be arguing

and my mother would say, "How can the two of you argue on the same side?" ... My father by then had been running a small business. He bought a boat moorings down on the Canal. And he was always trying to remove the worn out houseboats. He had to get permits all the time through the city and it was driving him nuts trying to get them.

Hughes: This is the 1940s?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: So did politics matter to you as a college student?

Dimmick: No, it wasn't a big deal. I mean I wasn't a Young Republican in college or anything like that. I didn't get involved in politics until I got my job with the (King County) Prosecuting Attorney's office. Well, I was in the Attorney General's Office before that, working for Don Eastvold, who was running for governor, and that's when politics became interesting.

Hughes: Let's go back to when you're a junior at the University of Washington. You're still undecided on a major. You're thinking about sociology or social work or something like that.

Dimmick: Right.

Hughes: And if you jump ship and go to law school you can get your B.A. after one year of law school.

Dimmick: And I talked to my adviser, who was very much against it.

Hughes: Who was that?

Dimmick: I do not remember his name. It may come to me later.

Hughes: But he was against it?

Dimmick: He thought it was a waste of a good spot in law school. He said, "You know you're going to get married." It was the old saw again: "Why would you go and take a place that a man would have?" And I always felt, "He should see me now!" I worked my whole life. But anyway, he said, "Well if you're going to go, you're going to have to take these requirements." And so I had to take a lot of history. I had to catch up with two or three history classes and a psychology class, and a few other things that he made me take. But what decided me to go to law school was I took a business law class. Economics and business; that was my minor. And I *loved* it. I just *got* it. I *got it* really well.

Hughes: What was there that you really liked?

Dimmick: I liked the little stories, and I liked that they had an ending, and I liked that the facts determined the outcome. The only low grade my brother ever got was in Business Law because he's an engineer and he wanted everything black and white and he couldn't see how it could be different here and different there, depending on facts.

Hughes: You'd found your niche.

Dimmick: So I *really, really* liked Business Law, and that's when I went and talked to my adviser about going to law school and getting a whole year of this fun class.

Hughes: What were the prerequisites to get into law school?

Dimmick: You had to have maybe a three-point (grade-point average), and you had to have at least the History of England and some psych classes.

Hughes: Did you need recommendations, and letters of reference, and that sort of stuff?

Dimmick: No, we didn't need anything. We just walked in the door.

Hughes: So there were seven women in the beginning?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Did you know all these girls?

Dimmick: I did. After we were herded together in the little bathroom there we knew each other. Sure. (laughs)

Hughes: Was there any kind of "us-against-them"?

Dimmick: *No.*

Hughes: How many female graduates were there in the Class of '53 at the UW Law School?

Dimmick: Three

Hughes: What were Seattle and the UW like in 1953? A lot smaller town than now?

Dimmick: Yes, and of course my sphere was small. I got on the bus and went to school from Alexander Hamilton, to Lincoln High School, to the University for six years. And I just got on the Five (Phinney) bus, changed at 45th Street and went. And then I would get a bus and go downtown and work at the *P-I*. Then I would come home.

Hughes: The buses must have been pretty good.

Dimmick: They were. And then my last year in law school my folks moved out to Broadview, and then I got a car and drove to school and work.

Hughes: Do you recall how much you were earning at the *P-I*?

Dimmick: Well, I started at 60 cents an hour.

Hughes: And when you left what had you moved up to?

Dimmick: I don't remember, not very much.

Hughes: Sixty cents an hour. Well, that 60 cents an hour probably went quite a ways, if you were paying \$47 a semester to go to law school.

Dimmick: And I wasn't even paying that; my folks were paying that.

Hughes: Were books a big expense in those days?

Dimmick: Not as bad as they are now.

Hughes: It's incredible, isn't it?

Dimmick: It's terrible. And we used to turn them in, you know, and get money back again. I don't remember any great expense for anything in those days. I was able to *always* have money.

Hughes: What was the most rigorous, fascinating thing in law school for you?

Dimmick: Surviving the tests. (laughs) You know they gave us those tests by number. And they'd post the grades.

Hughes: There was never a name attached to the test. You were just a number so the grading was all blind?

Dimmick: Theoretically. ...Those professors knew what they were doing.

Hughes: Did you type your tests?

Dimmick: No, we did the long-handed blue books.

Hughes: Charlie Smith said that he typed his.

Dimmick: Yes, he was able to do that. There was a special room you could type some tests in, but none of us did it in my class.

Hughes: Charlie was a champion typist.

Dimmick: Oh, I *know*.

Hughes: Charlie Smith is a man of parts, isn't he? He takes shorthand like a champ. He types like a champ. He's a pianist.

Dimmick: I know. It's just amazing.

Hughes: Are you musical?

Dimmick: No. But my father was. My father played classical piano. Because his dad, remember, was a violin maker, and his mother played the cello, so they had a trio.

Hughes: Did he play at home?

Dimmick: Yes, he had a Parlor Grand and he played the piano at home.

Hughes: And that didn't whet your appetite?

Dimmick: I took piano lessons but I wanted to play *Cow Cow Boogie* and *In the Mood*. I wasn't in for classics, so it didn't work out.

Hughes: *Cow Cow Boogie* and *In the Mood* are great songs.

Dimmick: I know it!

Hughes: I have my uncle's diary from World War II when he was in England with the 8th Air Force. It's filled with annotations like, "Saw Glenn Miller in London. Loved *String of Pearls*."

Dimmick: Big Bands, all the Big Bands.

Hughes: Were there Big Bands and dances that you got to go to?

Dimmick: We didn't have the Big Bands around here. We went to the high school dances and the college dances, but not like they had in L.A. or down in those big cities. My husband talked about having done some of that because he was in the War.

Hughes: Cyrus Dimmick?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Was he called "Cy"?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: We'll get back to the war years later.

The Spring 2007 edition of the *UW Law* magazine (University of Washington School of Law) features you and former Justice Smith. Smith says he found the Law School faculty to be wonderful. And he says that to this day if a classmate calls on the phone they can recognize one another's voices. Tell us what was it like to be in law school at the UW from 1951 to 1953. Did you know Smith and some of the other future Supreme Court justices in school?

Dimmick: I knew some of them in passing over various years. I knew Jim Dolliver, of course, because we were on the Student Council together.

Hughes: Tell me about that.

Dimmick: Well, somebody was president of the Student Council, and Jim was vice-president and I was secretary one of those years. ...

Hughes: Did you know a fellow named Rod Dimoff?

Dimmick: Roderick Dimoff. Yes I knew him.

Hughes: Justice Smith tells the story that Dimoff ran for president of the student body and played his cello on the steps of Suzzallo Library.

Dimmick: That's exactly what he did. And we all were backing him up, you know.

Hughes: I called him yesterday to confirm the story. He sounded like an interesting fellow. He's still a lawyer in Seattle.

Dimmick: Very, very interesting fellow. He was so young, way younger than the rest of us for some reason. I think he was probably a boy genius to get there early. But he reminded me of a very young person.

Hughes: So among those fellows of your era at the UW – the contemporaries, future justices Jimmy Andersen, Jim Dolliver, Keith Callow, Robert Brachtenbach, Bob Utter and Smith – who did you know best?

Dimmick: Well, I knew them in the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office. All of us worked there. I knew Charles Smith very well there. I would say he was the one I knew the best all along.

Hughes: So what was the atmosphere like in Law School?

Dimmick: Law School was fine. We were a little intimidated. As I said earlier, we started with seven women in my class. Only three of us graduated. For various reasons. I don't say they all flunked out or anything. I think the professors were kindly and didn't seem to pick on us, except a couple of them.

Hughes: "Us" in general, or females?

Dimmick: Females and minorities. Jack Tanner (an African American who in 1978 became the first African-American federal judge west of the Mississippi) was in school off and on with me. And we had the impression there was one professor who was trying to flunk out all minorities. And at the time women were minorities. So one professor warned me not to

take the last class – so I didn't take Practice & Procedure. But anyway, it was fine. We were all in it together. We had Saturday classes, so we didn't have much of a life. It was all law school.

Hughes: Were there some natural kinds of bonds among the women in that class.

Dimmick: They shoved us into that one little ladies room so we had to know each other fairly well. (laughs) We had like seven lockers and one bathroom for all of us.

Hughes: Did you make some good friends from that class?



Carolyn Dimmick with her law school class at the University of Washington in 1953. She is in the front row, third from right.

Dimmick: I did, I made some wonderful friends.

Hughes: To this day?

Dimmick: Well, Dulsi Young was a woman who did graduate. She's now deceased. And Eleanor Edwards graduated with her husband. He's now deceased, but she's still practicing law. ... Law school was kind of a blur to me because I worked at night for the *Seattle P-I*.

Hughes: You were elected to the *Law Review*, but you couldn't do that, as I understand it, because you were working at the newspaper?

Dimmick: Yes. I decided not to take the *Law Review*. I would continue to work instead.

Hughes: There's a comment in Charles Sheldon's biography that you found out that you

didn't need math as prerequisite for law school, so that opened the door. If that's so, we're kindred souls, because there's one whole lobe in my brain that doesn't do math ...

Dimmick: (laughing) That's correct. That's correct. And then the minute I got in there, they had a legal accounting class – the first thing out of the bag. It was the first time they'd ever offered it and it was a required subject. And I thought, "This is false premise, getting me into law school and then put me in legal accounting."

Hughes: Were there any notable incidents you thought were chauvinism, circa 1952? Were they were really throwing up roadblocks, like "Who do these girls think they are?"

Dimmick: Well, yes, the one professor. But other than that, not much. I had a very close friendship with Professor Harry Cross. After my first year, he called me and wanted to get to know me because I did so well on one of his tests. And he was kind of my mentor then, through the years, and when I was going to leave law school after my first year, he counseled me. I went there for one year to get my B.A. That was my intention.

Hughes: If I recall correctly, you could leave (the general university) in your junior year, go to the Law School and get a B.A. after one year of Law School.

Dimmick: That's correct, and that's what I did.

Hughes: Do they still do that?

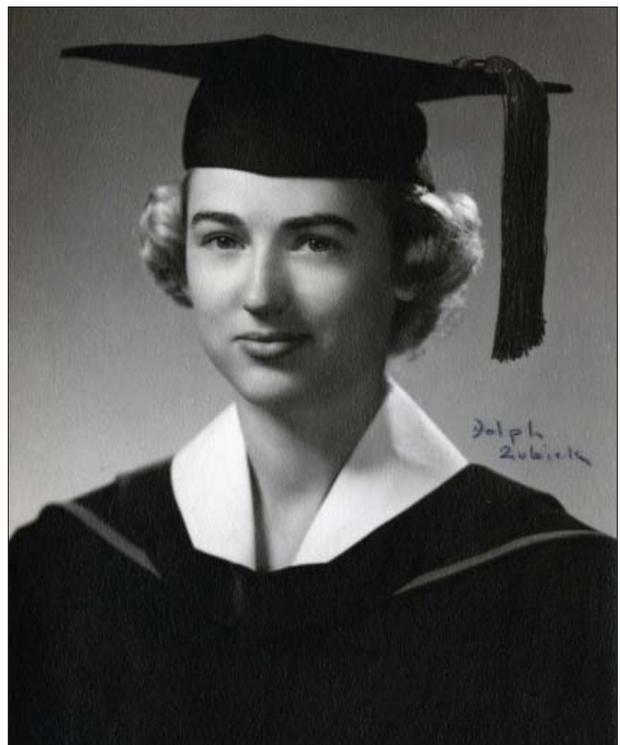
Dimmick: No, you have to have a degree to get into law school now.

Hughes: So, in essence you could get a law degree in seven years as opposed to eight.

Dimmick: Yes. Well, seven and a half because we had to go to summer school the first summer.

Hughes: Looking back do you think the University of Washington Law School prepared you well for your career as a prosecutor and a judge?

Dimmick: Sure. Well, I managed to fumble



University of Washington Law School graduation photo, 1953

through. I never met a legal job I didn't love. Whether I was prepared in advance or on-the-job training ... you just did what you had to do and you learned how to do it and did it.

Hughes: What was that eureka moment for you? You didn't go into law school really thinking you'd be an attorney, so what was it that really clicked?

Dimmick: Well, I'll tell you what happened: The assistant dean, Don Wollett, called me in to see if I was going to leave at the end of the year. And I said yes, I planned to get my (B.A.) degree. And he said, "I want you to go down and meet my wife, she works in the Prosecuting Attorney's Office." Her name was Mary Ellen Morton. So I go down and have lunch with her. She brings along Betty Howard, who was with the King County Prosecutor's Office at the time.

Hughes: How old was Betty – maybe in her forties?

Dimmick: I think she was older than that. In any case, Mary Ellen brought Betty with her. So Betty said, "Come on to court with me." It was a default divorce calendar and I saw those lawyers sitting there and talking to the judge, not even standing up, just real informal, casual, on this default divorce calendar. You've got to have a divorce proctor who interviewed the woman, or whoever is getting the divorce, to decide whether they've got the residency and whether the children are provided for. That's *all* the prosecutor did. So, when I got through with that I was dumbfounded. I had *never* been in court before, ever. Had no lawyers in my background except anciently. So afterwards Betty said, "Well, you could do that."

I said, "Well, I could certainly do it better than they're doing it."

So she says, "You might as well keep going to law school. What are you going to do?"

I said, "Well, keep working at the *P-I*."

She said, "Nah, keep going to law school."

So I did. And she was then my mentor *forever*. She went to my house for Christmas Eve for the last 50 years until she died.

Hughes: What kind of person was she?

Dimmick: She was wonderful. She was a big, rough woman. We used to call her "The Barracuda." Her husband got that name for her.



Judge Betty Howard, seated center on ottoman, at a Christmas party at the Dimmick home in the 1980s with some of the female lawyers she had befriended and mentored over the years. Carolyn Dimmick is in the back row, fourth from left.

Hughes: Long before Sarah Palin.

Dimmick: And he was the “bull” – Bull Howard – and she was The Barracuda.

Hughes: What did Bull do?

Dimmick: He was a lawyer, and they had practiced law together until she went on the bench.

Hughes: She must have been one of the state’s first female judges.

Dimmick: Well, Evangeline Star was the first around here, and then Betty.

Hughes: Who was Evangeline Star?

Dimmick: Oh, you should look her up. Evangeline Star was the first woman judge in the district court, and she kept running for superior court and never made it, although she had a terrific following among the women. But you were never going to get a man to vote for a woman for superior court judge. So she was a district court judge and she was noted for weddings. She would take a recess from the bench and go in her room and perform a wedding ceremony.

Hughes: Back in law school did it ever enter your mind that the judiciary would be in your future?

Dimmick: No, it never entered my mind. It just fell into my lap, to tell you the truth. I loved the Prosecutor's Office. That was my favorite job. It really was.

Hughes: Being an attractive young woman and having worked at the *P-I*, you sure got a lot of ink.

Dimmick: I got a lot of ink!

Hughes: Every little step in your career. And the headlines were always these classic things like, "Pretty Blonde Water Skier takes Bar Exam."

Dimmick: I know!

(laughing)

Hughes: It was just classic 1950s stuff.

Dimmick: Yes, I did get a lot of ink. And one of my friends said, "Do you call up the paper whenever anything is happening?" And I said, "I really don't."

Hughes: OK. Let's get you out of Law School. Charlie Smith says that when he graduated from law school in 1955 no Seattle law firm would even entertain the thought of interviewing a Negro.

20 5* Mon., Sept. 21, 1953 *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

Pretty Blonde Water Skier Qualifies As Attorney

3 Women Pass State Bar Tests

Carolyn Joyce Reaber, 23, blonde and beautiful Seattle water skier, will be sworn in as an attorney-at-law this Monday. At least, she hopes to be, because as an assistant state attorney general she has a court case scheduled for trial in Goldendale on Tuesday.

Miss Reaber, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Maurice C. Reaber, 808 W. 125th St., is one of three Seattle women graduated from the University of Washington Law School last June who learned over the week end that they had passed the state bar examinations.

P.-J. EMPLOYEE—

Seattle-born Miss Reaber was a part-time employe in The Post-Intelligencer's circulation department from the time she was a sophomore at Lincoln High School until she became a University senior.

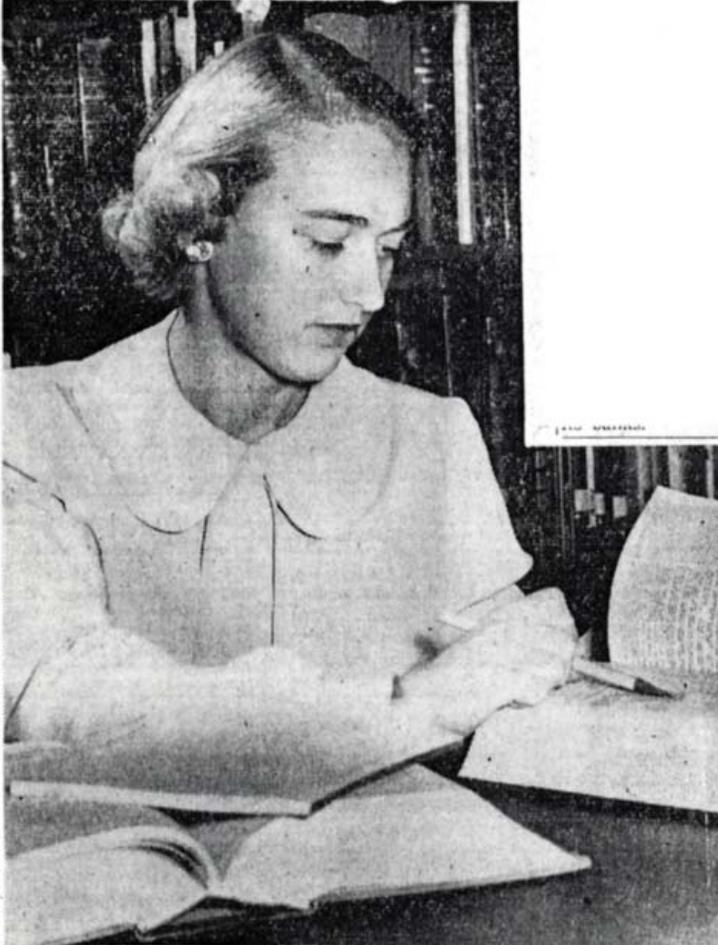
Miss Reaber said Sunday she became a lawyer because she doesn't like mathematics. She noticed no math courses in the law curriculum, so she took up the study, never intending to finish it.

"The first quarter they gave me a course in legal accounting," she said. "I almost died."

She liked law so well by this time, however, that she refused to quit till she got her degree.

After she completes her 1-year appointment as an assistant attorney general, begun last month, Miss Reaber hopes to enter private practice in Seattle. She hopes to specialize in admiralty law.

Last Friday, the day she waited for the bar examiners to announce whether she had passed or not, was the worst day in her life, Miss Reaber said, a lot worse than the day she went up Hell's Canyon Rapids on water skis with a movie camera trained on her.



CAROLYN JOYCE REABER
New Lawyer Studies For First Case

Dimmick: Or a woman. We all did public service. We all went to the Prosecutor's Office, the Attorney General's office.

Hughes: So it was just out of the question to think of getting into a law firm? You wouldn't even think that you could get an interview?

Dimmick: Never even attempted.

Hughes: You could be the brightest thing –

Dimmick: It didn't make a difference. The one who finally got there was Betty Fletcher. And the reason she got in a big firm is because she was in *Law Review*. She was at a *Law Review* banquet and one of the partners of a big firm was sitting next to her and said, "What are you going to do?" She said, "I don't know. Can't get a job" And they offered her a job. She went. Before that we only had two other women (in law firms). Women practiced with their husbands. Mary Ellen Krug Case was in the Schweppe Law Firm, labor law. When we came out, the deans didn't even encourage us to apply anywhere. You know, the law firms would say, "We can interview two or three people. Send them on down." No women were ever sent anywhere. I got the job in the Attorney General's Office through the dean's office because Don Eastvold decided he would take one (grad) from Seattle and one from Gonzaga, as law clerks.

Hughes: Two females?

Dimmick: Just people. The dean said, "Why don't you apply for that." So I said, "OK."

Hughes: Would it have been a real feather in your cap, in terms of getting a foot in the door for a job, if you had done the *Law Review*?

Dimmick: I don't think so.

Hughes: Tell us about the *Law Review*. Was that pretty prestigious?

Dimmick: It was very prestigious, but I didn't realize that at the time. It didn't make any difference to me. I never would have thought I was going to be practicing law anyhow. But the *Law Review* was just more work. I had to do caseloads; I didn't need to do extra work. I had my hands full. People told me I was crazy. It would be important to my career. But it didn't seem to matter.

Hughes: You're kind of a go-with-the-flow kind of woman aren't you?

Dimmick: Sure, yes.

Hughes: We were talking earlier about life just being sort of a crap shoot, you just wonder why things happen. It's interesting.

Dimmick: I'd say they dropped into my lap, more or less – all my jobs.

Hughes: So you've been blessed in your life. You've worked hard, but you've had some good luck, too?

Dimmick: Right place, right time, right sex. Sure, you bet.

Hughes: And you're thankful for that?

Dimmick: Yes, I've enjoyed it. I'll take it where I can get it. You bet.

Hughes: Funny how paths keep crossing. I first met Don Eastvold in the 1960s – speaking of Big Bands – when he had married Ginny Simms, the popular singer from the 1940s who was fronting a restaurant and night club at Ocean Shores.

Dimmick: That was way after he'd been attorney general.

Hughes: Yes. He was at Ocean Shores, and lobbying for local-option gambling. I don't know whatever happened to the Don and Ginny thing.

Dimmick: They went to California, and then Ginny eventually died, and then Don died within the last few years.

Hughes: She was a good singer.

Dimmick: She was ... They moved to Palm Desert, or Palm Springs. We saw them one time when we were down there.

Hughes: Eastvold was a champion debater at the Law School in '48.

Dimmick: He was in law school with my husband, who was in the Class of '48. And they went in the service together, as I recall. And the story about Don Eastvold during the war was that he always needed money. He'd be lying in his bunk, and he'd think about something. He'd get some guy to do this. He contracted with the stationery store to print the soldiers' names on the top, and then he sold them around. But he had other people doing the legwork. He'd be lying in his bunk making money.

Hughes: That's a great story. ... But you didn't know Cyrus Dimmick back in '48.

Dimmick: No. I met him when I went to the Attorney General's Office (in 1953).

Hughes: Eastvold at 32 was the state's youngest ever attorney general. What kind of person was he? He became very controversial, in due course, as you know. Did you have an interview with him to get this job as an assistant attorney general?

Dimmick: I don't think I interviewed with him. I think I interviewed with Bernie, his right-hand man.

Hughes: Bernie who?

Dimmick: Bernard G. Lonctot.

Hughes: What nationality is that?

Dimmick: I have no idea.

Hughes: Is he a Caucasian person?

Dimmick: Yes. I don't remember meeting Don Eastvold. I went down, and was interviewed, and got the job. That's all I know.

Hughes: Did Eastvold have any kind of quota system like King County Prosecutor Chuck Carroll, like, "I've got one Negro and one Asian and one woman"?

Dimmick: I don't think so.

Hughes: Did Eastvold think, "Well there's a pretty, bright girl, I'll hire her."

Dimmick: I think that might have been it. (laughs) I think that was probably it.

Hughes: Eastvold's father was the president of Pacific Lutheran University. And they got into a *real* donnybrook over Ocean Shores' lots and investing PLU's money and the like. What did you do for the Attorney General's Office in 1953?

Dimmick: One of my jobs was habeas corpus out of the penitentiary. I handled habeas corpus. And I also handled work for the state forestry department in the slash-burning statutes. We went down and sued the big forestry companies for leaving slash around and causing forest fires.

Hughes: You got to do some grown-up kind of "guy" things that weren't just women's work.

Dimmick: Exactly. I went down and argued in little towns all along the way, and got in front of the Supreme Court and did some habeas corpus.

Hughes: Tell us about that.

Dimmick: Well, I was right in the Temple of Justice, right where the Supreme Court was.

And the attorney general represented a lot of cases in front of the Supreme Court.

Hughes: It's 1953. You're 24, just out of law school, and you've got a *real* job as assistant attorney general, and you're arguing cases before the Washington State Supreme Court.

Dimmick: Right.

Hughes: Who was on the court then that made a real impression on you? Did you think at that time, "Hmmm, nice marble. Maybe someday"?

Dimmick: No, no. Never occurred to me.

Hughes: But there you are. You're really finding your way, and it's not nearly as daunting as you thought. Now you're an attorney.

Dimmick: Passed the Bar exam. Got a job.

Hughes: Passed it first time?

Dimmick: Yes. As a matter of fact, I was hired before the Bar exam as a law clerk. I was to get \$250 a month, then \$350 when I passed the Bar. Well I thought, "I'll go to work after I pass the Bar." So I went down to California to visit my brother, who was living with a bunch of airline pilots and having a good time. I got a call from Bernie Lonctot saying, "Don wants you to come to work now." I said, "But I haven't gotten the results of the Bar yet." He said, "Well, you'll get more money when you come. But you're a law clerk so come to work." So I went up there and got started.

Hughes: How long did that take (to get the results of the Bar exam)?

Dimmick: Months, and months because we wrote in blue books, somebody had to read all the stuff, you know.

Hughes: Are Bar exam essays and tests different today, judge?

Dimmick: I don't know. I've never checked into it. They can probably do it on computers now.

Hughes: Was it a high-pressure experience?

Dimmick: The Bar? *Yeah*, three days of tests. We were all sitting in this big huge room on the University of Washington campus.

Hughes: How many of you were there?

Dimmick: Maybe a hundred. I don't remember. I've blotted it out.

Hughes: How did you think you did?

Dimmick: Well, I figured it was just like any other test. It's a crapshoot. You just don't know.

Hughes: Are you a good test taker?

Dimmick: I did learn some things from the bigger boys in law school. You don't have to know the answers. You've got to know the *issues*. ... So always before I took a test I would go get the restatement of the law, of the class that I was just studying for and I would have a big bold print of what the issues were. Then I would keep that in my head so I was able to raise the issues. I think I did pretty well on tests.

Hughes: So by then you're pretty confident. You know you can make it.

Dimmick: Well, you're never confident when you take the Bar because it's three years of education they're testing you for in three days. So you never know. You take a Bar refresher course and you say, "Did I learn that?" You know, "Ah, did I ever take that class?" No, nobody's ever confident going into the Bar.

Hughes: Were there memorable cases during your time as an assistant attorney general?

Dimmick: No, I don't think I ever had any of those goodies. I just had "sue Weyerhaeuser; pick up your slash." That kind of thing, or resist somebody trying to get out from the penitentiary on habeas corpus. That kind of thing.

Hughes: Did you form any early impressions about criminal behavior?

Dimmick: Not then. I got more of that when I was a prosecuting attorney.

Hughes: It's funny, how things always seem to overlap when you're researching history. I'm interviewing you right on the heels of interviewing Charles Smith, and you're contemporaries who had similar experiences early on in your careers.

Dimmick: Yes, we worked for Chuck Carroll for a number of years.

Hughes: I want to get to that. But back to Attorney General Don Eastvold: Did you have any real contact with him as a young assistant?

Dimmick: He was roaming around the state; wandering (to test the waters) for governor, and that kind of thing. I saw him in the office some times, but Bernie Lonctot was the

man who ran the office. He was a friend. And that's where I met my husband. He was the assistant attorney general. Cy had been to school with Eastvold at the UW. He was one of the higher paid guys in the office. He had a department. I was just an assistant attorney general at will, you know.

Hughes: Was Cy Dimmick a friend, a confidant, of Don Eastvold?

Dimmick: Yes, he was.

Hughes: Tell us about your future husband. What kind of guy was he?

Dimmick: A golfer.

Hughes: A golfer. (laughs) *And* was he a bright, young, good-looking guy? He's an assistant attorney general.

Dimmick: Big, tall, good-looking guy.

Hughes: What nationality is Dimmick?

Dimmick: He was Irish – Irish combination. You know, English/Irish ran all together because the king of England gave the English a whole bunch of Irish property and they all went and co-mingled.

Hughes: Well, we Welsh still resent a lot of that, you know?

Dimmick: So do some of the Irish.

Hughes: So you met Cy Dimmick. Was that love at first sight?

Dimmick: No, you just get to know somebody, work with them year after year, and all that.

Hughes: Where had Cy grown up?

Dimmick: Olympia. He went to Olympia High School and Saint Martin's College.

Hughes: And what's his background?

Dimmick: He was raised in a logging camp. His dad was a logger. His mother taught and cooked in the logging camp with his sister.

Hughes: Really? Out in Olympia?

Dimmick: Out in Dewatto on Hood Canal or some of those places. I remember the stories.

Hughes: Did Cy ever work in logging as a young man?

Dimmick: He worked in the plywood mills in Olympia. He was in the National Guard and then he got a scholarship to Wazzu. (Washington State University). And then he got a knee

injury in football the first quarter, and then they dump you out. They don't protect you. So then he went back and went to St. Martin's (College) and then he was drafted and went in the war for a number of years. Then he came back and went to law school on the G.I. Bill. I didn't know him then. I didn't know him until the Attorney General's Office.

Hughes: His obituary (in 2006) said he "received numerous medals, including the Purple Heart." What did he do in World War II?

Dimmick: Germany. He was on the Remagen Bridge. You've heard of that.

Hughes: I have. The last bridge over the Rhine. Our guys captured it in the winter of 1945.

Dimmick: That's right. And he was also in the Normandy Landing with the Army.

Hughes: What rank?

Dimmick: He was Sergeant Dimmick and then he got busted to private for something, I don't understand exactly. (laughing) He was sergeant for a long time. But he started out and ended up as a private.

Hughes: I see some mischievousness in Cy Dimmick's eyes in these family pictures.

Dimmick: Exactly... We've got a box of medals this thick of all of his achievements.

Hughes: So how many female assistant attorneys general were there in 1953?

Dimmick: There was only me in the main office. Phyllis Dahlman was an assistant attorney general in another department, in another building. I knew her because she was a year ahead of me in law school.

Hughes: Eastvold's ambitions at 32 were to be governor. Were you required to campaign for him?

Dimmick: No, we didn't have any of that sort of thing.

Hughes: Did he make Cy do that sort of thing, with Cy being farther up the food chain?

Dimmick: No, not really. I think he (Eastvold) was out getting money for advertising, that kind of thing. I mean it's statewide. There's not a lot that we could do. Nothing was required of us.

Hughes: How big was the attorney general's staff back then?

Dimmick: Well, we had attorney generals assigned to various state agencies, and they were all in other buildings.

Hughes: Did they have a Seattle office as well?

Dimmick: Yes, workman's compensation. And that's when I transferred up and took that.

Hughes: Oh, you transferred to Seattle. Had you been dating Cy Dimmick by then.

Dimmick: Yes. So I transferred up here, and then I went to work as a prosecutor for Chuck Carroll ... I was tired of Olympia by that time. And I just wanted to get back to Seattle.

Hughes: Olympia in that era was pretty much a real small town.

Dimmick: Yes. And I had an apartment with one of the women who graduated a couple years ahead of me. And she smoked in bed and burned the place up.

Hughes: Holy cow!

Dimmick: I got out, she got out. We were on the top floor. Nobody was hurt. But that kind of depressed me. So then I moved into a little garage basement of some house. And then I thought, "I'm getting out of here."

Hughes: Your roommate is smoking in bed and nearly burns the place down, and you're fleeing in the middle of the night in your nightgown and bunny slippers? That would be a little disconcerting.

Dimmick: So then I decided, "I'd like to go to Seattle." So I transferred up.

Hughes: It's 1954. So were you serious about Cy by then?

Dimmick: I probably was.

Hughes: When did you and Cy Dimmick get married?

Dimmick: In September of '55.

Hughes: When do you leave to go to work for Charles O. Carroll in the King County Prosecutor's Office?

Dimmick: In 1955.

Hughes: But you were a single woman when you started?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Justice Smith said he got a job with Carroll even though Chuck had already filled his quota of Negroes – one.

Dimmick: Yeah! He had Herbie Stephens.

Hughes: Was there a quota for females?

Dimmick: Well, as luck would have it he wanted a divorce proctor. He wanted a woman for that job. And that's what Betty Howard was at the time. So I became a divorce proctor.

Hughes: Tell us what a divorce proctor does.

Dimmick: Well, you interview women who want divorces, or men who want divorces, and you make sure their residency is the state of Washington and if they've got children, how

Blonde U. Grad New Divorce Proctor

Carolyn J. Reaber, a blonde young woman whose appearance hardly squares with the public conception of what woman lawyers look like, became divorce proctor of King County Wednesday.

Prosecutor Charles O. Carroll appointed her to his staff to succeed R. Stuart Thomson, who is being transferred to criminal trial work.

Miss Reaber, five feet 2½ inches tall, is nevertheless armed with all the legal license necessary to tangle in the courtroom with any giant of the profession. She was graduated from the University of Washington Law School in June, 1953, and shortly thereafter was admitted to the bar. She became an Assistant State Attorney General and served in that post until last December.

Miss Reaber, 25, is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. M. C. Reaber of 808 W. 125th St. She was born in Seattle. For several years, while attending Lincoln High School and the University, she worked as a clerk in the Circulation Department of The Post-Intelligencer.

Her duties as divorce proctor will consist principally of protecting the interests of children, and ascertaining that grounds for divorce exist.



CAROLYN J. REABER
County's New Divorce Proctor
—(Post-Intelligencer Photo.)

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* announces that Carolyn Reaber has joined the King County Prosecutor's Office in 1955

much are they going to get? "Have you worked this out?" That sort of thing.

You have to have an interview with everybody wanting a divorce.

Hughes: You're the go-between.

Dimmick: Well, it was default divorces, so it's only one side that I talk with. And then we go to court and they have these long calendars. Like I told you earlier, the guys were sitting down there talking to the judge while I'm standing up and doing a good job.

Hughes: Was that the kind of job that a young woman got in the Prosecutor's Office?

Dimmick: Yes. Then when I got married Chuck made me take Cy's name because he thought it was unseemly for a single

woman to be doing that work, even though he *hired* me to do the work because he needed a woman at the moment.

Hughes: How did you come to get this job with Charles O. Carroll?

Dimmick: I walked across the street and applied.

Hughes: Did you get interviewed by the prosecutor himself?

Dimmick: Sure.

Hughes: What was he like? Tell us about Chuck Carroll.

Dimmick: He was frightening. He was very intimidating. A big football player, you know. A *big* guy. And I think I had told him I wanted to go over there. I think Bernie Lonctot, the deputy attorney general, talked with him. I'm not going to get into why I decided to go, but I went. I think Bernie called him about me, and I went over and talked to him.

Hughes: What would Bernie have said to characterize your work as an assistant attorney general? Were you well thought of in the office? You'd done a good job?

Dimmick: I think so.

Hughes: What was the hallmark of your work?

Dimmick: What do mean "hallmark"?

Hughes: Well, your attention to detail? Good arguer?

Dimmick: *Won the case.*

Hughes: And, after all, "That's how we keep score."

Dimmick: I went in and talked to Chuck. And he hired me. That's all I know.

Hughes: They didn't give you any kind of classic male advice, like "Don't get pregnant too soon"?

Dimmick: *No.*

Hughes: "You are not going to have babies and leave me in the lurch?"

Dimmick: He didn't care. There's another one. Somebody else can always do it.

Hughes: But the divorce proctor – was that a grease-the-skids kind of job to keep the wheels of justice rolling? Did you draw any conclusions from being a divorce proctor in 1955?

Dimmick: ... I would have an interview... We had to have grounds for divorce in those days. If a woman came in with a black eye we had grounds. And I suppose irreconcilable conflict, differences, or whatever – the catch-all phrase – worked fairly well. But anyhow, by the time I talked to them it was pretty set that it was a default. The other side had already given up. It wasn't contested. I just had to be sure that there was inclusion, that the kids were taken care of.

Hughes: Do we still have divorce proctors in superior court?

Dimmick: I don't think we do. You can get a divorce with a court commissioner in the superior court. I don't even think you go in front of the judge any more.

Hughes: Did you draw any conclusions as a young woman in that era, and now as an older woman who has been in the judiciary, about divorce?

Dimmick: Well, having been married for 50 years, before my husband died, I figured I didn't need a divorce.

Hughes: I'll say. Congratulations on that long marriage. When did Cy die?

Dimmick: About three years ago (2006).

Hughes: Had he been ill?

Dimmick: Yes. He was hooked up to a ventilator for three years.

Hughes: I'm so sorry.

Dimmick: Emphysema and COPD, and whatever that was.

Hughes: I didn't ask you enough about Cy. So you resolved to get married. You said he was a golfer sort of whimsically. What kind of fellow was he?

Dimmick: Well, it's pretty hard to describe.

Hughes: Gregarious, good attorney?

Dimmick: Good attorney.

Hughes: He was in private practice all those years.

Dimmick: He was with Savage for a while – Dimmick, Simpson & Savage. And then he went out on his own in Lake Forest Park. He wanted to stay in the Attorney General's Office, but a Democrat came in in 1957 and so he was out. O'Connell came in so Cy was out.

Hughes: John J. O'Connell. But Cy was Irish, too. O'Connell should have liked that.

Dimmick: That didn't work. He was too close to Eastvold. So that was that. And then he went into private practice.

Hughes: Is it tough on the spouse of a judge to be a practicing attorney? Are there some tight-ropes to walk there?

Dimmick: You just don't go in front of my court.

Hughes: How long did you stay working for Charles O. Carroll in the Prosecutor's Office?

Dimmick: I worked for him three different times because I would get a baby and then I would stay home for two years. And then he'd say, "I suppose you want your job back?" And then I'd go back to work. And then I'd get another kid and I'd leave. And he'd say, "I suppose you want your job back?"

Hughes: There's two kids right?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: And number one is born in 1958.

Dimmick: Yes. Taylor.

Hughes: And then?

Dimmick: Dana was born in '62.

Hughes: Are they attorneys now? Did they ever want to be lawyers and judges?

Dimmick: My daughter was a probation officer, and she did that for 10 years. Now she's a judicial assistant.

Hughes: And your son?

Dimmick: My son is handicapped. He was a pro golfer and was teaching golf, and then he got peripheral neuropathy.

Hughes: I'm sorry to hear that. Cy must have been a *good* golfer and it rubbed off on Taylor. ... I really liked a line that was in your husband's obituary. It said "Cy's real career was golf, and to say he was a serious player is like saying Dickens was a serious writer."

Dimmick: (Smiling) My son-in-law wrote that obit. His name is Bradley Scarp. He's a lawyer. But he took writing ... graduated from Seattle University. He's going to be writing books someday.

Hughes: I imagine that Cy Dimmick would have liked that line a lot.

Dimmick: Oh sure. (smiling) That's right.

Hughes: In Cy's obituary there's another wonderful line: Cy "once said that World War II was the biggest event in his life, except for his marriage to Carolyn."

Dimmick: That's right.

Hughes: Did your son-in-law write that, too?

Dimmick: Yes he did.

Hughes: In one of these clippings from your early career as a district judge, you tell a reporter that you were thinking about taking up golf. Did you ever do that?

Dimmick: I was *thinking* about doing it. I was resisting it forever. I can't believe I didn't really take it up.

Hughes: (Looking for the clipping) By the way, this picture from *The Washington High Bench* biography of you in 1981 makes you look very, very somber, when you really aren't that way. Is this the image you wanted portrayed?

Dimmick: I didn't care.

Hughes: What do you think of this book that Professor Sheldon did about *High Bench*? Have you read it?

Dimmick: Yes, I've read it.

Hughes: I'm sad that he's dead because I never had a chance to meet him. I thought the profiles of the justices were really well done, that he really did his homework.

Dimmick: He did. He came over and interviewed us one by one. And he did a lot of research without input of the judges. He did a lot of graphs and analyzed who voted for what. That kind of thing.

Hughes: (Still sorting through clippings) There's some great stuff here. One of the best parts of my job is that I get to work with some really great researchers. Here's an article from the *Queen City Suburbanite* of 1969.

Dimmick: Good grief. I don't even remember it.

Hughes: It features Al Rosellini and John Spellman having a debate in a cartoon on the front cover. And also an interview with Judge Carolyn Dimmick: You're sitting in your "attractive office" in the Northeast District Court building in Redmond. And they're talking to this "beautiful, vital woman." "One gets the feel of her competency," it says.

Dimmick: Gee, I never even read that article.

Hughes: And we learn of "her terrific interest in life. She runs to meet it. Behind her is a painting of her two children. ... There are other paintings in the room, and soft music is a background for conversation." And I love this part, "Her dress, her mannerism and her voice are all thoroughly feminine."

Dimmick: Who wrote the article?

Hughes: Mary Elizabeth Nicholas. I didn't know Mary Elizabeth, but I won't make fun of her because she's writing in her genre and in her era. And I sure wrote *a lot worse* stuff than that. She asks, "What do her children think of her being a judge?" "I don't think they have any real conception of just what the job is," you reply. My little boy has seen 'Laugh-in' a couple of times, so he does give me a 'Here comes the judge' now and then." Is that true?

Dimmick: Uh-huh.

Hughes: "Away from the office and court it is Mrs. Dimmick who enjoys interior decorating and antiquing. 'Junk-tiquing' really," she says, "just old furniture. I like to refinish it." Do you still like to refinish furniture?

Dimmick: No. (laughs) It's all gone.

Hughes: Here's the golf part: "She also likes water sports, swimming and water skiing, and says she is planning to take up golf, which her husband plays enthusiastically." Is that just so much boilerplate?

Dimmick: I don't remember *planning* to take up golf. Although I will tell you this: I did take a couple of lessons at Cy's request. And then I would go back to Charlie Mortimer, the pro over at Inglewood Golf Club, and Charlie would say, "You haven't been practicing." And I'd say, "No Charlie, I'm working. I don't have time to practice." And he said, "You know, I don't have time to teach you." I said, "It's a deal." And that was the end of it.

Hughes: That's funny!

Dimmick: I planned to take it up but it didn't take. Let's put it that way. If you could do it without having to practice I could have done it.

Hughes: Meantime, Charles Smith tells the story that if you worked for Charles O. Carroll during that era, a prerequisite was that you were active in the Republican Party. At Carroll's insistence, Smith became president of the Young Attorneys for Nixon. Did he have you out doorbelling too?

Dimmick: Not for Nixon.

Hughes: But were you *required* to be a Republican? What did you do?

Dimmick: What did I do? I *was* a Republican.

Hughes: You were?

Dimmick: Oh sure.

Hughes: Emotionally you were a Republican?

Dimmick: I was a Republican by that time, yes.

Hughes: But you *wanted* to be?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Well, Charlie Smith didn't.

Dimmick: Well, Charlie had a mind of his own. I didn't care. I just followed my family's footsteps. I was working for an attorney general who was a Republican, and a prosecutor who was Republican. What am I going to be? It made sense to me.

Hughes: But philosophically did you—

Dimmick: I never went into it that deep, except to understand about the problems my father had had as a small business man. So I felt *Laissez Faire* was a good way to go: Just leave us alone; keep the government out, and that kind of thing.

Hughes: Who were the Republican leaders of that era you admired? Dwight Eisenhower?

Dimmick: Oh sure, and we had Dan Evans and Slade Gorton (in the Legislature); we had good Republicans around here.

Hughes: But those certainly aren't textbook Nixon Republicans. Those are pretty mainstream progressives —

Dimmick: We all were. In the State of Washington we were never one or the other. We *always* got to vote for the man. Look at our senators who kept getting elected forever and ever — the Democrats, Jackson and Magnuson. So we went for the men, and I always have felt that way. But I never objected to being a Republican. In later years I've been quieter about it. I didn't have the feelings I had one time when I was young. And then of course in this job, which I've been in over 20 years, you aren't political.

Hughes: So during this time that you were going in and out of the Prosecutor's Office and having kids, although Carroll grumbled a bit, he was always willing to take you back?

Dimmick: Always. He was great.

Hughes: Did you find that juggling life in that era, between being a mom and working, was a real challenge?

Dimmick: It was hard because there was not a lot of daycare. There was not a lot of support for being a working mother so you relied on neighborhood people.

Hughes: Your folks were still alive and well during that era. Were the grandparents able to help out with childcare?

Dimmick: They were too far away. They were living in Broadview (across town).

Hughes: So you worked something out with neighbors or babysitters or that kind of thing?



More "ink" for the young deputy prosecutor in 1956

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Were you working full time?

Dimmick: Sure.

Hughes: And Cy was working full time too?

Dimmick: Uh-huh.

Hughes: So with the Prosecutor's Office did you graduate from being a divorce proctor to doing other things?

Dimmick: Criminal prosecution.

Hughes: Tell us about that.

Dimmick: Well, Tony Savage was my boss. I worked for Tony and we prosecuted murderers, rapists ...

Hughes: Anybody from that era who was particularly notorious that really made an impression on you?

Dimmick: Guy Rockwell, in 1960.

Hughes: "Guy" being pronounced the French way – "Gheee." What was Guy's claim to infamy?

Dimmick: Murdering his wife, Manzanita, and his teenage stepdaughter, Dolores Mearns. We tried to get him for murder. All we got him for was larceny. That's a long, long story. It's very interesting, though.

Hughes: Tell me about it.

Dimmick: He had an antique shop up here (in Seattle). And Dolores and Manzanita disappeared. He said they left him and she divorced him. He then quickly married Evelyn Emerson, the stepdaughter of a wealthy Seattleite named Clifford Winkler. Evelyn was also an antiques dealer, and she and Guy went off to California. In the meantime he had gotten \$10,000 from Evelyn's mother to buy some rare paintings and carvings. ... I don't remember all the details, but eventually we charged him with grand larceny.

Hughes: Speaking of habeas corpus – or at least having no bodies – did the remains of these two missing people ever show up?

Dimmick: No, but we had some bones in the Columbia River. We had the car with the mileage on it that could have gone there and back. We had a sewer in his basement that had remains of feet in there. We had quite a bit. Rockwell was arrested in New York. One of the detectives goes back there to talk to him, and he's all ready to talk and the detective says, "Why don't you just get a good night's sleep and I'll see you in the morning." The detective wanted to go out on the town. The next day Rockwell called his brother, who had called a lawyer in town and he wouldn't talk. That detective never got over that; he was demoted. And then when they brought Rockwell back here, we listened to hours of tapes where this guy is trying to get him to talk: "Come on, you said you would talk to me." He said, "Can't do it. Promised my lawyer I wouldn't talk to you." So as a result we couldn't get him on the murder. We charged him with grand larceny when he ran off with Cliff Winkler's daughter ...

Hughes: And did he go up the creek for a good long time?

Dimmick: Quite a good long time. But here's the story: Later he gets out and he goes down to California, and he works in a furniture store. Chuck Carroll, who's furious that we haven't been able to get him, sends one of his deputies down there, undercover, to work in that furniture store and try to befriend him and see if he can get any information.

Hughes: Did it work?

Dimmick: No, it didn't. But that guy was Ken Eikenberry, who ended up becoming Washington attorney general (in 1981).

Hughes: So you got to do some cool prosecuting work with cases like that.

Dimmick: Oh yeah, I became fast friends with the Winklers – Germaine Winkler, Evelyn’s mother, in particular. She was just a doll.

(Editor’s Note: Ann Rule chronicles the murder case in her book “Smoke, Mirrors and Murder,” Simon & Schuster, (ISBN-10: 1416541608)

Hughes: And Charlie Smith, meantime, is working on the Dave Beck case, building a case against the president of the Teamsters union.

Dimmick: I didn’t have anything to do with that case. We all had our little spheres of intrigue.

Hughes: Well, since you overlap and are good friends, tell me about Charles Z. Smith, knowing him over the years.

Dimmick: Well, Charles Z. Smith was a radio commentator for a while.

Hughes: Yes, KOMO. And on TV, too.

Dimmick: And I remember turning on the news when I got my appointment to the Superior Court in 1976 and he was just saying glowing things about me. (laughs)

Hughes: So you’ve been friends all these years?

Dimmick: All these years. Darling wife, cute kids; you know he’s just always been top notch.

Hughes: Did Charlie have a good reputation in the Prosecutor’s Office? Was there any racial stigma there?

Dimmick: No. I don’t think there was any against women or blacks or anybody else. Heck no. We had a Greek guy. We had a black guy. We had a woman. We had everything there was.

Hughes: That was Chuck Carroll’s boast: “I’ve got one of everything.”

Dimmick: Yes, we had one of everything: “Got an Italian, etc.” It worked well for Chuck because we would have to go to these things (to boost him politically). I’d have to go to the PTA meetings, and then he would introduce us, and then we’d have to make a speech.

Hughes: Charlie Smith says that Chuck Carroll wasn’t really good at speech making and that the deputies would —

Dimmick: *Always.* OK. Here's my bit: "How to protect your children from morals offenders." We would go to these PTA meetings and Chuck would introduce me as the deputy in charge and I would have to make a speech.

Hughes: How did you protect your children from morals offenders in 1958, judge?

Dimmick: Just be sure you know where your kids are, and what's going on, and if anybody touches them inappropriately you want your kids to know that that's a no-no and you should tell somebody.

Hughes: I grew up in the 1950s, and you were a legal professional in the '50s. Is there really more of everything today? Are there more pedophiles and other fruitcakes out there now?

Dimmick: Yes, and more drugs available, all over the place, and more alcohol.

Hughes: Someone once observed that even in the halcyon days of the 1950s that Lucy and Desi really weren't getting along that well. They had separate beds and all that, and things in America weren't all they were cracked up to be. Do you think there really is a lot more pedophilia today, teachers hitting on kids, etc.?

Dimmick: They're discovered more. I don't know. I would have no way of knowing if there is more now, but they're certainly coming to light and being publicized more than ever before.

Hughes: On your watch, early on, you were on the cutting edge of seeing more attention paid to those kinds of crimes, weren't you?

Dimmick: Yes, because I had the moral calendar and so if a child was molested, or a woman was molested, I would have a case.

Hughes: In that era, were you able to do increasingly more to help those victims get counseling?

Dimmick: I think so. That was one of our foremost interests – protecting the victim. Now they have a lot more than we ever did then. We had some services but not a lot.

Hughes: Did you find yourself interviewing young children, and women of all ages who had been victimized?

Many Tasks For Deputy

Blonde Barrister Assigned To Morals Detail

BY JEAN H. LUNZER

EACH THURSDAY is morals day in King County Justice Court. As a rule the prosecution is represented by a petite blonde who, frankly, doesn't look the part. Instead of being the stern Portia type person, Carolyn Reaber Dimmick is young, pretty and soft spoken. More like a "big sister" with her blonde hair swept into a youthful ponytail, she is able to put her young plaintiffs at ease as they relate frequently sordid details to Judge J. William Hoar.

Young plaintiffs, indeed, for the majority of morals offenses are against small children. It is Carolyn Dimmick's job as criminal deputy on King County Prosecutor Charles O. Carroll's staff to follow the cases through from the time charges are filed to the apprehension of the suspects, and disposition in court. Sometimes there are as many as 15 complaints to be heard in a single session.

SOME YEARS ago it was Prosecutor Carroll's belief a woman attorney was better suited to process cases of this type because children would talk more readily and frankly to them.

"The presence of a woman representing the prosecution sometimes has a surprising effect on the defendant," she points out. "He is usually pretty ashamed of himself, and I suppose, the psychological effects helps break down his defense. In some cases, however, the sexual psychopath, for instance, the defendant can't help himself. In cases like that he is treated in a mental hospital, rather than being sent to prison."

In addition to morals, Mrs. Dimmick handles other juvenile cases—the psychopathic delinquent, or the social misfit who can't get along either at home or in society.

"Not all morals cases involve juveniles," she adds, "if you can say any morals case is humorous, I should



—(Post-Intelligencer Photo by Stuart Hertz.)

CAROLYN REABER DIMMICK (MRS. CYRUS)

tell you about the suspect we've nick named 'Jack the Nipper'. He follows attractive young women on escalators and as they ride between floors, bites them on the derriere!"

She also told of the elderly spinsters who reported a neighbor for indecent exposure. Investigators reported the two homes were some distance apart. Quizzed on how they knew of the neighbor's misconduct they answered:

"We used our field glasses!"

In addition to her regular work as criminal deputy Carolyn fills many speaking engagements for her office. In cooperation with the juvenile protection committee of the P-TA the prosecutor's office is attempting to alert parents to the importance of

reporting offenses, no matter how minor, as a preventive measure for the future.

CAROLYN DIMMICK'S duties in the county prosecutor's office began in 1955 when she was named divorce proctor. This followed a year and a half in the state attorney general's office where Carolyn met her husband, Cyrus Dimmick, also an attorney.

They were married last spring.

Of domesticity Carolyn says:

"We have a house, so far, and I'm sure eventually we'll have a family. It seems to be quite the thing among younger women attorneys to rush right back to work after their children are born so I suppose I'll be another working mother."

Dimmick: Sure. I had all the preliminary hearings.

Hughes: Did those experiences resonate with you?

Dimmick: Yes, in fact the judge was Judge William Hoar. And when I would go home at night on a Thursday calendar, Cy would say, "Uh-oh, sex day in Judge Dirty Names court."

Hughes: Is that what it was like?

Dimmick: Yes, it was just terrible. We'd come home drained. It was bad.

Hughes: You did bring your work home, didn't you?

Dimmick: Oh for sure.

Hughes: So what was it like trying to be a mom during that era?

Dimmick: Well, you're very protective. ... Oh gosh, I took my kids to jail so they could understand what it was like. When we took them into the Kirkland Jail, of course the cops were so nice to my son. I took my daughter up to Juvenile Court, and put her up there for a while. She was wanting to go back and make cookies for the girls. It didn't sink in that they might some day be in one of those places!

Hughes: I guess your role-modeling did pay off. Instead of wanting to be delinquents your kids wanted to give the delinquents s'mores.

... So you didn't experience any notable discrimination in that office as a young woman?

Dimmick: No, I didn't.

Hughes: One article I read said it was Cy who suggested that you apply for a judicial post, a



Carolyn and her husband Cyrus "Cy" Dimmick in the early 1960s

district court job, in 1965.

Dimmick: Could be. I was at home with my daughter Dana.

Hughes: In private practice?

Dimmick: I was at home and I was doing private practice out of my husband's law office downtown. And I was also taking appointments from the Superior Court for guardian ad litem, up in the juvenile court. That kind of

thing. I think that the District Court judge slot came open in Kirkland, in the Northeast District. I think I called Chuck Carroll and asked him about it, and he said, "Yeah, you should go for it." ... He wanted his deputies to do well. Chuck wanted us all to go be judges and get on the Superior Court. He was a *good* mentor in that regard. I got to know him very well later on when he was retired, and at home, lonely. He'd have lunches. He'd invite all the old-time political figures, and for some reason I got to go, even though I was the only woman there. (Former governor) Al Rosellini would be there, and sometimes an ex-mayor would come along. It was very nice.

Hughes: What kind of person was Chuck Carroll?

Dimmick: He was a nice man, but he was a lonely man.

Hughes: Why was he lonely?

Dimmick: He'd lost a lot of his close friends. And then his wife died and he was living alone. He was lonely, and he had had some heart attacks. During the last few times that I was there to see him he had a caregiver with him.

Hughes: But he stayed in touch and said, "I'm really proud of you Carolyn"?

Dimmick: Yes he did. He'd call me up at night and I would go over and he'd have sandwiches brought in. He'd always have four or five people there, and if it was somebody's birthday he'd have a cake for them. This is the last couple years (of his life). (Carroll died in 2003 at the age of 96.)

Hughes: Any other really good friends and associates that you made during that era, working for Charles O. Carroll in the Prosecutor's Office?

Dimmick: Well, Barbara Durham, (a future Supreme Court justice), became a very good friend of mine.



A 1998 luncheon for former members of Charles O. Carroll's staff at the King County Prosecutor's Office. Carolyn Dimmick and Barbara Durham are side-by-side, sixth and seventh from left. Carroll is eighth from right.

Hughes: When did you meet Barbara? You were really kindred spirits, weren't you?

Dimmick: We were both District Court judges. She was on Mercer Island when I was on the Northeast District court.

Hughes: So it was 1965-1970; you were in your 30s.

Dimmick: Yes, and so was Barbara. Barbara was a little younger than me.

Hughes: That was a singular accomplishment for you two. There were only a handful of



Two good friends, Supreme Court Justice Carolyn Dimmick and King County Superior Court Judge Barbara Durham at a banquet in 1982. Durham would succeed Dimmick on the high court in 1985.

female judges in that era.

Dimmick: We were also on the King County Superior Court at the same time.

Hughes: Tell us more about Barbara Durham. Was she someone that you just knew you liked right from the beginning?

Dimmick: Yes, she was just very, very

bright, and very witty. I'd say, "Look, I'm going to have a party for Betty Howard. Get me some invitation ideas." And she'd get it down, "Better come to Betty's." Just off the top of her head. Very sharp, very quick.

Hughes: What kind of a judge was she?

Dimmick: We had just about the same philosophy all the way through. She was a good judge. She paid attention. She worked hard. We used to meet after work with Judge H. Joseph Coleman, who is now retired. Well, we met with quite a few other judges. The Superior Court was quite collegial. Four or five of us were closer than others.

Hughes: You know I have to say this again: Life is a crapshoot. Here you are alive and well (at 79) and looking 15 years younger than you are ... and Barbara Durham is dead at 60.

Dimmick: Fifty-nine. She hadn't had her 60th birthday.

Hughes: That's really sad.

Dimmick: I know. It was Alzheimer's. You could see it coming. *She* could see it coming.

Hughes: So could her colleagues.

Dimmick: *Everybody* could see it coming.

Hughes: What a tragedy.

Dimmick: Oh, I know. ... You think, "Why me? Why her?"

Hughes: Besides the fact that you're both women who happen to be judges, and I assume she has kids as well, you're philosophically –

Dimmick: She never had any children.

Hughes: So she doted on yours?

Dimmick: Exactly.

Hughes: So you're pals, and you're judges.

Dimmick: That's right.

Hughes: And you're philosophically kindred.

Dimmick: Exactly.

Hughes: You've been characterized as being someone with a lot of compassion for first-time offenders and people who've had some really bad luck, and for being hell on wheels when it comes to some recidivistic piece of crap.

Dimmick: They know me very well, don't they?

Hughes: So when you start thinking about the notorious murderer Charles Rodman Campbell and (the nature of his crimes) it's breathtaking, isn't it?

Dimmick: I had that Campbell case.

Hughes: I know. I'll get to it in just a bit. ... Did the King County commissioners appoint you to the District Court bench in 1965?

Dimmick: Yes. I got appointed by two Democrats and one Republican – and Chuck Carroll.

Hughes: Did politics really matter in getting the job? Some people write about it as if it did.

Dimmick: It probably does, but in that particular case it didn't. I think Chuck put the fix in. He knew everybody, and I got the job.

Hughes: So now you're there on the bench and you realize that you like it.

Dimmick: It's fine. It was a good job for a woman with kids because when your calendar is over you can leave. So I would be able to get home on some days quite early.

Hughes: What kind of cases did you hear in District Court?

Dimmick: Mostly traffic. A lot of small claims; a lot of small civil cases; a lot of drunk driving cases; a lot of traffic cases because I had State Patrol and the Sheriff's Office, plus the municipalities, the police forces; they were all out arresting people. So it was heavy on that.

Hughes: Did you form any opinions about driving-while-intoxicated cases?

Dimmick: Yes – you don't want to do it! And you know in the Prosecutor's Office we used to all go out and have drinks afterwards, and somebody would say, "Are you going to drive home?" And someone would say, "Well,

I'm too drunk to walk!" That kind of thing. It was kind of a joke. ... It was just kind of *not* the stigma that it certainly developed into.

Hughes: But on the bench, when you saw the toll it took

MRS. DIMMICK APPOINTED: Northlake Judge 'Boning Up'



—Times staff photo by Richard S. Heyza.

MR. and MRS. CYRUS A. DIMMICK and CHILDREN, DANA, left, and TAYLOR
New Justice Court judge typed a letter of appreciation

By BARNEY HARVEY
Mrs. Carolyn Reaber Dimmick, 35, spent part of today boning up on Justice Court procedures. She will take over as Northlake Justice Court judge Monday.

Mrs. Dimmick, an attorney, yesterday was appointed to the position by the Board of King County Commissioners. She succeeds Justice Court Judge Charles W. Johnson, 52, who is ill with cancer. He has resigned.

Mrs. Dimmick, whose husband Cyrus A., also is an attorney, said she has discussed Justice Court procedures with Robert Elston, Shoreline Justice Court judge and president of the Magis-

trates' Association of Washington, as well as with other Justice Court judges.

THE NEW JUDGE was a deputy prosecutor on Prosecutor Charles O. Carroll's staff from 1955 to 1962, except for a year's leave of absence.

Mrs. Dimmick said that upon learning of her appointment she sat down in her husband's Arctic Building law office and wrote the board a letter of appreciation.

Her husband and their two adopted children, Dana, 2½, and Taylor, 6, looked on.

"I'm very grateful for the commissioners' confidence in

me," she said.

Mrs. Dimmick, who was graduated from the University of Washington Law School in 1953, was with the state attorney-general's office for two years before joining Carroll's staff. For the past two years she has been in private practice.

Her new position will pay \$11,400 a year.

THE DIMMICKS, formerly of Broadview, recently moved to 15630 62nd Place N. E. in the Inglewood area.

The new jurist smiled at her attorney husband.

"Cy," she said, "You don't have to call me 'your honor.' Just call me 'judgie.' That'll be good enough."

The *Seattle Times* spotlights Carolyn Dimmick's appointment to the King County District Court in 1965.

Dimmick: Oh yeah, oh yeah, that was a whole other ball game then, when I saw that.

Hughes: Did you try to do anything in terms of —

Dimmick: You'd send them to alcohol education. You'd do all kinds of stuff like that; we had them report in.

Woman Wields the Gavel

BY KAY KELLY

The courtroom. Solemn, dignified. The dark, polished bench, attorneys' table, spectator seats. The discreet cough. The defendant's hesitant, low voice.

The sentence. First offender. Probation. Warning.

The judge. White-haired, 60, grave. A man.

But no.

Blond, attractive, young. Still grave, dignified. But a woman.

No, I don't wear a wig," she smiled. "Some do, of course. Women judges, I mean."

She wasn't referring to white, powdered legal wigs. She meant the ordinary, feminine wigs, so much a part of today's fashion scene.

Carolyn Dimmick is a surprise. And a treat.

She's pleasant, fun, fashion-conscious — witness the emerald green dress, nylons and shoes she wore in Kirkland's Justice Court Thursday — and a proud mother of two.

But she's also — according to colleagues — a very competent judge.

She's reluctant to talk about herself, reluctant to consent to publicity.

But why should Kirkland keep her to itself?

Mrs. Dimmick was appointed judge of the Northwest District Justice Court three years ago. The appointment, following an application which her husband



—P-I Photo by Dave Potts.

CAROLYN DIMMICK, ONE OF WASHINGTON'S THREE WOMEN JUDGES

She's fun, fashion-conscious and a competent court judge

—P-I Photo by Dave Potts.

CAROLYN DIMMICK, ONE OF WASHINGTON'S THREE WOMEN JUDGES

She's fun, fashion-conscious and a competent court judge

Mrs. Dimmick was appointed judge of the Northwest District Justice Court three years ago. The appointment, following an application which her husband encouraged her to make, followed experience in the Attorney-General's offices in Olympia and Seattle and the King County Prosecuting Attorney's office.

She retired to a part-time law practice after the arrival of her first baby. (Taylor is now 9 and Dana 5.)

Then came the news that she was one of Washington's three women judges.

She hears municipal, state traffic and civil cases in Kirkland, Redmond and Bothell. New offices, soon to be open, will center her state and civil calendar in Redmond, limiting Bothell and Kirkland's hearings to municipal matters.

Her appointment made immediate personal and professional changes in her life.

"Like all lawyers, I was used to dealing with only one side of the case," she said. "Naturally your own client is right. Suddenly I had to be impartial."

Extended knowledge of the law posed no problem. When necessary, lawyers present briefs on the legal points involved. Normally, Justice Court cases follow a similar pattern.

"Our business is becoming more and more specialized," she explained. "The majority of it is traffic, minor crimes, shop lifting. Our civil jurisdiction is limited to \$1,000 so that usually involves bad debts or minor auto accidents."

She is concerned about the number of petty larceny cases she hears.

"People shop-lift cigarettes, candy, steaks. When a woman slips a hair spray can into her handbag, she doesn't stop to think that it could result in getting arrested, fingerprinted, going to court, having husband, children and neighbors know, and having a criminal record for the rest of her life.

"It's the same with traffic offenders. Society tends to treat this as a joke. But again it can mean arrest, a fine or imprisonment and an FBI record."

What happens when Kirkland's judge breaks the speed limit?

"I've never had a ticket," she smiled. "I have always been very conscious of traffic laws. I wouldn't say I've never gone one or two miles per hour over the limit, but I've been extremely careful."

During working hours Judge Dimmick expects no favors — and no prejudice — because she's a woman. She's a judge.

But after work she's a wife, a mother, a woman.

"My appointment has affected me outside the courtroom only to the extent that I try to do what I would expect from the people who appear before me."

With her husband, attorney Cyrus Dimmick, she

entertains, goes to parties, dinners. She enjoys fashion — but not the extremes — and loves making crab soufflé.

As a woman, is she more lenient about courtroom attire?

"I have never commented on anyone's dress," she said. "But I am a little surprised when a woman wears slacks.

"However I think this is a throwback to the days when the district court justice was an off-duty butcher instead of a judge in a robe.

"This change occurred in 1963 when the whole of King County was re-districted. Judges began wearing robes and I think this is a good idea. It impresses the defendant with the dignity and seriousness of the whole affair."

It was then that fee justices went out. Before 1963 King County fee justices were paid for each case, and paid more if the verdict was guilty.

"We are now salaried judges, paid by the county," she said. "We get the same salary whether we hear one case or 50 and, of course, the verdict doesn't affect our salaries. But many people are still unaware of this change."

She said she feels the jurisdiction of the district courts will be increased to

help take the load off superior courts.

"Even since I have been appointed, I've seen a change in the number of lawyers taking the time to represent their clients in Justice Court.

"They used to send clients in on their own, saying if they were unhappy with the verdict they'd appeal it in superior court. Now they take the trouble to go and have it heard completely in Justice Court."

She said the district courts also are receiving increased help from legislators and county commissioners in upgrading the system.

"We now have a probation officer for the first time and we're organizing a program whereby citizens can volunteer their services as counselors and volunteer probation officers. The problem is being handled at the local level and this is good."

Is a woman judge more sympathetic than a man?

"I think I'm more sympathetic for a first offender," she said. "But if he comes back, no."

What was her friends' reaction to her appointment?

"I won't tell you!" she laughed.

Hughes: Charlie Smith was on the King County Superior Court bench at that time and —

Dimmick: He did more than anybody (to try and help people get straightened out). Charlie really did take upon himself *a lot* for his defendants.

Hughes: At that time, Schick Shadel Hospital in Seattle was emerging as a trendsetter in the treatment of alcoholism. Did you try anything innovative in terms of helping people who clearly had an alcohol addiction problem?

Dimmick: Well, we had certain lawyers who would handle a lot of those drunk-driving cases, and they knew their way around. Lawyers would present a program, and if it was anything at all reasonable we would go for it. But it was pretty much up to the lawyers.

Hughes: Were you seeing the first real emergence of drugs as a societal problem as well?

Dimmick: I wasn't seeing too much of that over where I was on the Northeast Court.

Hughes: So what cases during your decade as a District Court judge, really stick out?

Dimmick: Some of the small claims were funny because they would come to court without lawyers. I remember one case where a woman went into a shop that sold aquarium equipment, and it had posted one of these big signs, "Lovely to look at. Delightful to hold. If you break it, we mark it sold." Anyway, she's whipping around with her kid and she knocks off a small dragon that's supposed to go in an aquarium. So she runs for the door, and the guy yells, "You broke this!" So she grabs her kid, rushes out and locks the car door. He gets out and picks up a stick. She said, "Well it just slipped. It just slipped!" So he picks up a stick and says, "So did this just slip." And bangs her car. So they're in my court. She's suing for the damage to her car; he's suing for the damage to his dragon.

Hughes: This is Judge Judy stuff. What did you do?

Dimmick: Oh, I don't know. I can't remember what I did.

Hughes: On the bench did you ever have to really suppress the desire to cackle or otherwise laugh out loud?

Dimmick: Oh yeah, "Why am I here? It's just too much."

Hughes: Were there any emerging trends in traffic violations that you saw then?

Dimmick: Well, they reduced the Breathalyzer reading for intoxication. It used to be 1.5 and now it's .08; in increments they reduced it.

Hughes: 1.5. What do you think about that?

Dimmick: Well, what do you want me to think about it?

Hughes: I don't know. You were on the bench! (laughing)

Dimmick: I mean some people can drive at 1.5 and some people can't drive at .08.

Hughes: I did a story one time where I went to the State Patrol Academy and got drunker than a skunk.

Dimmick: Then take the Breathalyzer?

Hughes: Then they put you in a simulator and let you drive where you can't hurt yourself. Did you ever do that?

Dimmick: I didn't do that. But one time they gave us wine and then told us how many wines it takes to get your Breathalyzer that high.

Hughes: Well, it really does depend a lot —

Dimmick: On your size.

Hughes: Absolutely.

Dimmick: I was 110 and two drinks did it for me.

Hughes: Outside of the fact that being a District Court judge is a pretty good gig for a working mom, was it getting a little old after 10 years?

Dimmick: Oh yes. I said, "I can't do this. I can't keep this up."

Hughes: Justice Smith said that on the Superior Court bench, he really got burned out hearing all these stories about people "screwing" their kids.

Dimmick: And one thing about the Superior Court when we were there was that they gave you one case right after another, right after another. You'd have people in the back of the courtroom, lawyers, waiting to see if we wound up this case so they could get started at 3



Woman of achievement

NORTHEAST DISTRICT JUSTICE COURT JUDGE Carolyn Dimmick was honored last week as one of five "Women of Achievement" named by the Past Presidents' Assembly in this category, the profession of law. The awards were made Feb. 16, at a luncheon at the Washington Athletic Club, where the Redmond-based judge was given an engraved scroll. Also honored were Superior Court Judge Nancy Holman, District Court Judge Janice Niemi, former District Court Judge Evangeline Starr and District Court Judge Filis Otto.

or 4 in the afternoon. I mean it was just a horrendous case load. But I still liked it.

Hughes: You said in one interview I read that you didn't think it mattered much whether a judge is a man or woman except perhaps in Juvenile Court cases because quote, "Mother's have more experience and insight into kids, generally."

Dimmick: I think that's probably true, because we're with them longer, more often.

Hughes: Was that tough thing to see, all the dysfunction parading through the courtroom?

Dimmick: Well, I didn't get as burned out as Charlie Smith did. I think Charlie got his heart and soul into every case. And after having been 10 years on another bench before I went to the Superior Court (in 1976), you get a little more, and then a little more... You just realize you can't live with it every day or you're not going to make it.

Hughes: Was there a landmark moment when you really realized that was happening? When you saw some things that cut so much to your soul that you came home and talked to Cy and the kids?

Dimmick: Well, I did that often. I did that often.

Hughes: I imagine that's one of the good things about having an attorney for a spouse: He or she knows the ropes?

Dimmick: Well, he spent his time defending. ... Of course he never made any money because people are in trouble and they're in trouble because they don't have any money usually. He never sued anybody for a fee. Some people paid him; some didn't. But he felt that he could afford to do it because he had working wife. (chuckles) They called him the "gentleman lawyer" like a "gentleman farmer." He didn't really have to make a living at it, but he devoted his time to it.

Hughes: What did you two do for fun?

Dimmick: He played golf. I went to art galleries and junking with my girlfriends ... A lot of those kinds of things.

Hughes: What kind of art do you like?

Dimmick: My collection is Pacific Northwest artists. You know, Bill Cummings... (glancing around her office) I took them all home.

Hughes: Kenneth Callahan?

Dimmick: I don't have a Callahan. ... I like modern art now. I'm getting into it more and more. Like these are the great California plains painters. (glancing toward a painting)

Hughes: I was admiring that earlier. There was one in that genre on "Antiques Roadshow" just the other night.

Dimmick: I saw that one.

Hughes: That's really well done, and it's beautifully framed.

Dimmick: And I have another one at home that's even more spectacular. So I kind of like all of it I guess.

Hughes: The miniature over here (glancing toward an end table) – is that of your daughter?

Dimmick: Yes, that's my daughter, Dana. That's done by Lisel Salzer, the wonderful portrait artist and enamelist who fled the Nazis and settled in Seattle. (Editor's Note: Salzer died in 2005 at the age of 99) ... It's a miniature that she did on metal. It took her more than three or four or five times. She did a little bit and then she fired it, puts on enamel. Then some more.

Hughes: The lamp here reminds me of when I traveled in Asia. I really became fond of that Celadon, greenish pottery glaze. Have you had a chance to travel widely over the years?

Dimmick: Oh yes.

Hughes: Tell us where you've been?

Dimmick: I've been all over Europe. I've been all over the Far East. ... Japan, China, Hong Kong.

Hughes: Was that vacation or business?

Dimmick: All vacation. But I went to Europe several times with the Bar Association, starting in '69, '72, and on. They take you to Amsterdam and pick you up 30 days later in London, or vice-versa. And I traveled a lot with Betty Howard at that time.

Hughes: Let's get back to 1975 when Governor Dan Evans named you to the King County Superior Court. What prompted that appointment? Did you have an interview with the governor?

Dimmick: Jim Dolliver, his chief of staff, called me up.

Hughes: Had Dolliver been a good friend of yours since your college days?

Dimmick: No, I hadn't seen him over the years. But he called and said, "Dan Evans is going to appoint a superior court woman. Do you want the job?"

And I said, "I don't know."

And he said, "Well, do you or don't you?" Kind of like that.

So I said, "Well, OK."

I think I had an interview with the Bar Association. They had a standing committee on

judicial appointments. You know, all that hokey-pokey. I got the appointment. And then I went down to Nevada for a judges' school because I knew nothing about being a higher-court judge. I said, "Evidence? I don't know anything about evidence any more." All we had on the district court was traffic (cases) and minor things, so I went to judges' school immediately.

Hughes: Did Daniel J. Evans, the governor, ever really talk to Carolyn Dimmick about the job?

Dimmick: No, not then. He did later, but not then. Jim did the talking.

Hughes: And Jim in his cut-to-the-chase kind of way said, "Do you or don't you?" How I wish Jim were here with us today. (Dolliver died in 2004 at the age of 80)

Dimmick: Oh, don't !!

Hughes: What was it like to be on the Superior Court bench, to move up from District Court?

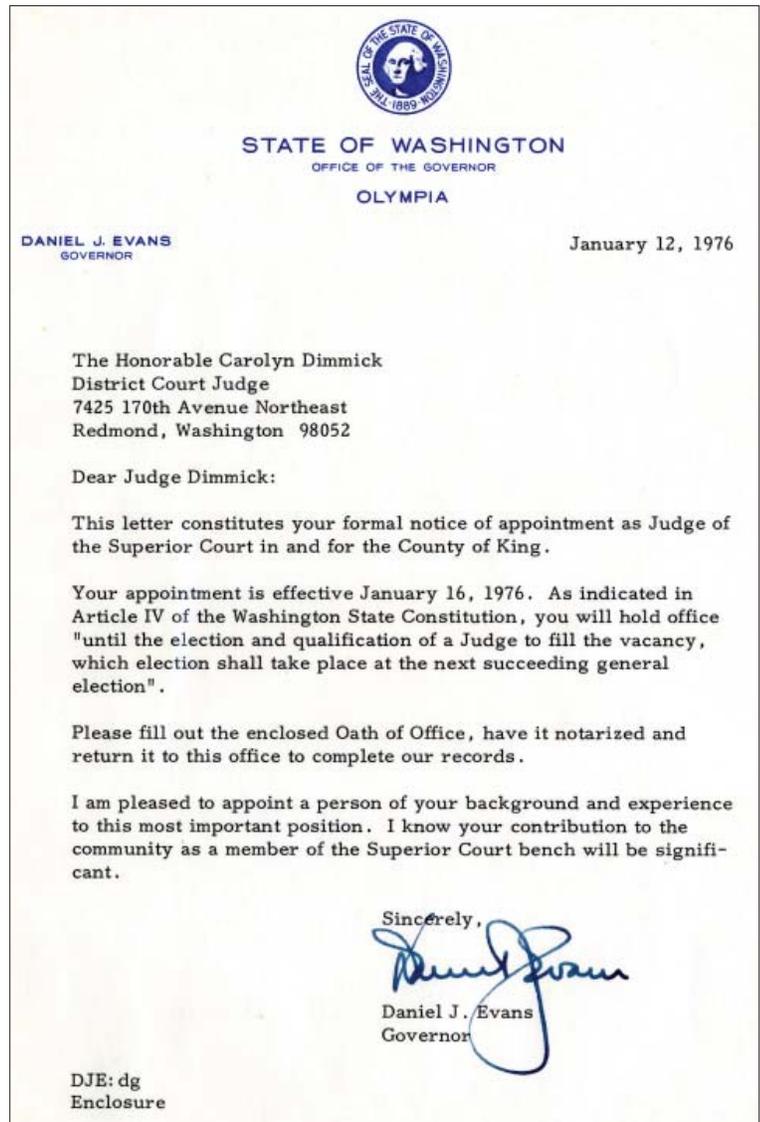
Dimmick: As I said, I felt insecure and went to college – went to class to learn all about what I had to do.

Hughes: Oh, I thought you were kidding.

Dimmick: I wasn't kidding! I went down to Nevada where they have a judicial college and took some classes.

Hughes: How long does that course last?

Dimmick: Maybe a week or two.



Variety in the Judge's New Job

BY MARY HOFFELT

One of the first times Carolyn Dimmick was featured in the newspaper, the Page One lead said she was "leaving a colorful and interesting job as a criminal deputy prosecuting attorney for the job of mothering a son."

Dimmick, appointed last week to the King County Superior Court bench, probably would be the first to say she believes "mothering" is a colorful and interesting job, too. She's given equal time to her home and career and sees nothing unusual about that.

Dimmick, who became the state's third female judge when she was named district court judge in 1965, is accustomed to press comments which have included incredulous gems like "she's fun, fashion conscious and a competent court judge" or "she loves making crab souffle."

When she's sworn in Jan. 16, Dimmick will be bringing years of legal experience to her new appointment. She said the only real breakthrough for women in the system over those years is that any qualified woman who wants to go to law school to-



—P-I Photo by Phil H. Webber

CAROLYN DIMMICK, KING COUNTY COURT JUDGE

"Public is concerned with violent crimes, property protection"

day can. "I'm not sure that was true when I started out."

Dimmick will be taking over the spot vacated when Judge Ward Roney retired Dec. 1. She said the difference between this and her former job in the Northeast district court will be the "fantastic variety."

"I need to be retrained in several areas," she said during a break between lectures at a Criminal Justice seminar sponsored for new judges. She'll be dealing with felonies for the first time, for example.

Dimmick believes the public is most concerned with crimes of violence and protection of property. She said she would welcome the day when victimless crimes — prostitution, minor drug violations etc. — are no longer prosecuted.

And she believes each case is unique and must be treated accordingly. She's not in agreement with the prosecutor's policy that all convicted felons automatically be incarcerated.

"It's my decision. I don't like mandatory provisions. There's an automatic sentence for the second drunk-driving offense and talk about

extending that sort of thing to other areas. I only ties the Judge's hands."

Dimmick has seen "judge shopping" — seeking out a lenient jurist — and doesn't like the practice but believes King County might have solved the problem.

"A person enters a guilty plea on arraignment and the judge is drawn by lot."

But Dimmick said a greater problem than in-tria-court judge shopping is the difference in punishing crimes from county to county. "Some of the more — shall I say, provincial — judges will send any felon to the pen."

"Perhaps we're more jaded in King County. Minor felonies might not impress us as much. Whatever the reason, I believe any judge must carefully decide the appropriate sentence for the crime and the person."

Feminists have argued that persons charged with rape should not be allowed to plea bargain — to negotiate the charge down to a lesser crime, such as assault.

"A crime is a crime is a crime," Dimmick

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Her old paper, the loyal *Seattle P-I*, announces Dimmick's elevation to the King County Superior Court bench in 1976.

Hughes: Was that really helpful?

Dimmick: Oh sure, it refreshes the things you knew and lost, or that you hadn't practiced. I mean, I'd been doing traffic and small claims, very minimal civil cases.

Hughes: What are some of the first big cases where you thought, "This is really interesting"?

Dimmick: Well, we were heavy on the criminal cases. I had some inkling of that because I had the small criminals where I was, so you get through that. Picking a jury was what I had to learn how to do because we didn't have jury trials in District Court. So you had to get comfortable with that, all the people in there,

Tough Dealing

From Page D-1

said. "And a person charged with rape in my court is handled like any person charged with a crime."

"But I do believe there should be a difference in treatment after a rapist has been convicted. We know why burglars burgle — they think it's a way to make a living. But rape — that's still a question and those men, especially repeaters, need special kinds of help."

"I think many women are too willing to lock them up and throw away the key. I believe in tough dealing — but also practical help."

Dimmick said in an earlier interview "it makes no difference whether a judge is a man or a woman, except in juvenile court, where a woman generally is more sensitive to

the defendant."

She elaborated, "No matter how equal men and women try to be, there is no equal distribution in running a family. I think kids just talk to their mother more often."

"I certainly have more insight to my 17-year-old son's peer pressures. My husband has more insight into his golf score."

"I'm not saying a woman is more patient or understanding. There's no great magic in being a woman judge in juvenile court."

"But I'm sure anyone who's experienced a problem has more insight into another's problem. My husband, as a father, would have an easier time with kids than a woman who has no children."

"It's as simple as that."

questioning the jurors. ... Running a courtroom was the hard part.

Hughes: Any memorable cases from that era?

Dimmick: They were all memorable when you pick them up and look at them again. But it's a blur when you don't think of one individual case. I had a lot of them. It went up and down.

Hughes: Well, judge, you have another claim to fame: Ed Donohoe, the legendary editor of the *Washington Teamster* newspaper, defended you in his "Tilting the Windmill" column. In the fall of 1978, you ordered striking Seattle teachers back to work. Peeved, the King



Dimmick on the King County Superior Court bench during arguments over the Seattle teacher's strike in 1978. *Seattle Times*

County Labor Council got in a purple snit and withdrew its endorsement of you even though your term as Superior Court judge didn't expire for two more years. Jim Bender, the executive secretary of the Labor Council, said the unions were upset because you not only signed a preliminary injunction ordering the teachers back to work, you declared that all public-

employee strikes were illegal. Shades of Calvin

Coolidge. When he was governor of Massachusetts in 1919 he declared, "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time."

Bender asserted, "That broad stroke was out of order ... She was trying to legislate." Then you came right back and said you were doing no such thing. "If they are going to fault judges for upholding the law," you said, "that's the way the ball bounces. It is common law that governmental employees cannot strike. Either the Supreme Court or the Legislature would have to change that."

Ed Donahoe, whose column was a must-read, wrote, "In defense of Judge Dimmick, she was among a dozen King County jurists who refused to attend a convention at Ocean Shores because the resort was on the unfair list, and she is considered one of the most intelligent and fairest persons on the local bench – attributes that seem to be in short supply these days."

Dimmick: Oh, good old Ed! I don't remember ever reading that.

Hughes: Did you know Ed pretty well?

Dimmick: Yes I did. He was a very good friend of a community friend of ours, Tom Keith. So we would all have coffee together and I got to know him. And of course I would go up to the Teamsters' luncheons all the time. ... He was a supporter of mine when I ran for the Supreme Court as well. So that was good to have somebody who was more or less thought of as being on the other side.

Hughes: In the wake of that, with Ed's intervention, did labor come back around and not rattle its saber?

Dimmick: I never needed it again. It didn't matter. (laughing) Apparently they must have because I was elected to the Supreme Court.

Hughes: The classic notion of you is that you're a law-and-order kind of person. Would you take exception to that?

Dimmick: No.

Hughes: Some attorneys, prosecutors and judges have told me it was really disconcerting to run into psychopathic, sociopathic kind of really –

Dimmick: *Bad guys.*

Hughes: Yes. Bad to the bone.

Dimmick: Sure it is because it's hard for you to fathom that somebody could really be rotten to the core. But there are people like that. They're just built that way. I mean if they took their brains apart I'm sure they were screwed up the wrong way. ... And there's nothing we can do to change them.

Hughes: During that era on the Superior Court bench, did you ever have someone make a threat against you or feel that you were in danger for being a tough-minded judge?

Dimmick: No I didn't. I had generic threats, but nothing that alarmed me ... I had one when I was on this court that came through the mail from an inmate saying, "My cellmate is going to get the judge and the lawyer on this case." And so the marshals went over and chatted with the guy and said, "If she dies of anything but old age, you're history." (laughing) But he was in there for contracting a murder case. Then he wrote me a note

that said, "I didn't mean you."

Hughes: Let's get you onto the State Supreme Court. You've been on the King County bench since 1976. Then in 1980, Supreme Court Justice Charles T. Wright died at the same time that Fred Dore was leaving a Court of Appeals slot to join the high court. Then there's this comedy of errors.

Dimmick: Right.

Hughes: Governor Dixy Lee Ray interviews you. It's at the tail-end of her term as governor. Tell me all about that.

Dimmick: I'm thinking she's talking about putting me on the Court of Appeals because that's where Barbara Durham is, and that's where I wanted to go. In the meantime the Bar Association had already got together and I was cleared for an appellate position. So I go down there and talk to Dixy Lee Ray. She's talking Supreme Court, and I was talking about the Court of Appeals. ... She talked about them both, and what it was like to make these appointments to these various positions, and we just had a nice chat.

Hughes: This was in the Governor's Office?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Is Jacques, her beloved poodle, lapping at your ankles?

Dimmick: No, he wasn't there that day. (laughs) Just her legal representative. I can't remember who he was, but he was someone I had known. This was a fellow who had been a District Court judge in the past. I can't think of his name.

Hughes: Had you met Dixy Lee Ray before?

Dimmick: No.

Hughes: And what was your impression of her?

Dimmick: She was great. She invited down all the women judges. She interviewed every woman judge she could get her hands on at that time for this position. Whether you applied or didn't apply, she wanted to talk to a lot of women lawyers, a lot of women judges.

Hughes: But this is toward the end of her term in office. She loses the battle for re-nomination to Jim McDermott. And John Spellman was elected governor.

Dimmick: Right.

Hughes: So it's in Dixy's last days in office. When you left her office did you get the impression, "Well I've acquitted myself well and I might get the appellate court slot"? And you wanted to be on the appellate court because—

Dimmick: Well, it's in Seattle. Who wants to go to Olympia? Been there, done that when I was young. My roommate burned up the apartment in Olympia and the whole thing.

Hughes: At least this time you might not have to have a roommate.

Dimmick: True.

Hughes: So all of a sudden what happens? You got a call?

Dimmick: I don't remember if I got a letter or got a call.

Hughes: And were you surprised that you were being named to the Supreme Court as opposed to the appellate court?

Dimmick: Well, probably not really as surprised as I could have been because it was common knowledge that Dixy Lee Ray wanted a woman on the Supreme Court and she was searching around for that. So I can't say that I was all that surprised.

Hughes: Did the governor ask you any philosophical kinds of questions?

Dimmick: *No.* She didn't ask anything political, nothing philosophical. That wasn't her mode.

And she knew everything there was to know. She did her homework.

Hughes: If she had done her homework, what conclusion would she have drawn from Carolyn Dimmick's jurisprudence?

Dimmick: Probably "law-and-order." Probably "work hard," "been around the block," "several jobs."

Hughes: Not a greenhorn, even gone to judges' school.

Dimmick: That's right.

Hughes: So, there you were – Jan 2, 1981. You're the first female member of the Washington Supreme Court some 90 years after statehood. When I asked Justice Smith what it felt like to be a trailblazer as the first ethnic minority on the court, he said, "There was no great sense of occasion. But I hope that I might have been a role model for

someone to follow.” He just wasn’t imbued with the magnitude of the occasion.

Dimmick: I wasn’t imbued with any of that. I did think, “Hmmm, I wonder if I’ll be in the history books.”

Hughes: Happily, your parents were alive for this moment in history.

Dimmick: Yes, they were there for my swearing in.

Hughes: And your fellow justices, many of whom you’d known since Law School —

Dimmick: The justices were fine with it all. Well, I think they were fine with it! I never got any other feeling.

Hughes: Since statehood in 1889,

you were the first woman on the Supreme Court. Tell us what sort of welcome you had there.



Dimmick takes the oath on January 2, 1981 to become the first woman on the Washington Supreme Court.



The Washington Supreme Court in 1982. Front row, from left, Robert Utter, Hugh Rosellini, Chief Justice Bob Brachtenbach, Charles Stafford, and James Dolliver. Back row, from left, Fred Dore, Floyd Hicks, William Williams, and Carolyn Dimmick.

Dimmick: Well, I knew everybody but Hugh Rosellini. And of course Floyd Hicks, who was a longtime friend of my husband; they'd gone to school together. After I had been interviewed by Gov. Ray, I walked across to the Temple and I talked to Floyd. And he said, "Oh Carolyn, you can't come! We're old and we've all got bad kidneys, and we only have one bathroom." (laughs)

Hughes: So was there literally just that one bathroom right inside the front doors?

Dimmick: There was one back in the conference room for the judges.

Hughes: But there was only a "male" bathroom?

Dimmick: That's right.

Hughes: And did Justice Hicks suggest any remedies for that?

Dimmick: Well, somebody told me after I got the job that they had asked the Legislature for \$60,000 or something for another bathroom. And I said, "You're not doing that on my time. You guys can lock the door." And I refused to let them put in another bathroom for me.

Hughes: Sixty-thousand dollars?

Dimmick: Yes! When they redid the Temple (in 1985) they put one in while Justice Barbara Durham was there.

Hughes: There's a feature in here (UW Law magazine) about the so-called "Fabulous Five," a quintet of law school grads who in 2007 made up a majority of the high court. But in your era the University of Washington Law School produced seven future justices of the Washington Supreme Court in the space of four classes, 1951-1955. It starts with Jimmy Andersen, Class of '51; Jim Dolliver, Class of '52; Keith Callow, also the Class of '52; Carolyn Dimmick, Class of '53. Is that right?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Bob Brachtenbach, Class of '54; Robert Utter, also Class of '54, and Charles Smith, Class of '55. So you had your own "fabulous five" while you were on the court. There was Andersen, Dimmick, Dolliver, Brachtenbach and Utter. And Callow was arriving while you were departing for the federal bench in 1985. Then Charlie Smith came on three years later. ...That's a pretty formidable "Husky mafia." Not to mention an interesting assortment

of personalities. Did you know all those fellows pretty well from law school?

Dimmick: I knew all of them, except for Rosellini. Everybody else I was acquainted with.

Hughes: Of all those guys you served with who was your favorite?

Dimmick: Well, I think Dolliver maybe. Well, Floyd Hicks was and then he left, of course – in 1982, a year after I came on the court – (and went back to the Superior Court bench).

Hughes: I wish I had known him. I don't know very much about him, except that he had served in Congress.

Dimmick: He was a crusty appearing guy.

Hughes: He looked sort of unapproachable.

Dimmick: *But he was.*

Hughes: You seem to me to be both a woman's woman and a man's woman, which is no small trick.

Dimmick: It depends on what you're surrounded with. You know, if you're raised with a bunch of boys, that's one thing. I'd been raised with boys since law school. That's it, you know.

Hughes: You're certainly a feminine woman.

Dimmick: I try to be. That's what you're born into. ... But I was fine (with the way things went) on the bench. Everybody was very cordial and nice to me. I wasn't causing them any trouble. They just wanted somebody else to do a share of the work. I was that somebody, and it was fine with me.

Hughes: I want to ask you about this picture of you with Justice Bob Utter. He's so handsome and dignified looking. If you called Central Casting and asked for a Supreme Court judge you'd get Bob Utter.

Dimmick: Wouldn't you! Or Dolliver. That (picture was taken) when I was sworn in (to the Supreme Court in 1981). I was sworn in by Bob Utter before the formal swearing in to get on the payroll.



Dimmick signs her oath of office before being sworn in by Chief Justice Bob Utter in 1981.



Dimmick poses with her family after being sworn in to the high court. From left, daughter Dana, husband Cyrus "Cy," Carolyn, her mother Margaret, father Maurice, and son Taylor.

I was so happy my parents were there that day.

Hughes: Did you feel like a trailblazer?

Dimmick: Well, I kept being interviewed by everybody asking me, "What do you bring to the bench as a woman?"

You know, I mean there's

really no answer to those kinds of questions.

Hughes: But women had come a long way. My late mother worked in the 1940s and 1950s when try as she might – a woman with a college degree – she never got to be a manager in the telephone company. She was only a "supervisor."

Dimmick: My mother had two (college) degrees at age 19. She taught in Toppenish and she taught in Nome, Alaska. She met my father on the Alaska steamship and married him shortly thereafter. She could never get another teaching job until she was like 60, or 65. Then she taught in community college. So she wrote in between. But she could not be a married teacher.

Hughes: So there you have it – your mom, my mom, women of the same era. You had to feel good about your accomplishments without a lot of whoop-de-do.

Dimmick: Well, I think deep in my heart that my mother probably felt she should have been able to do *more* because she was 10 times smarter than I was. So I mean as proud as she was of me, I think basically she was thinking, "I could have done so much if they hadn't been so against women."

Hughes: It's amazing stuff what's happened in the course of a century.

Dimmick: Yes, isn't it.

Hughes: 1981 was a landmark year in the judiciary. Carolyn Dimmick goes on the Washington State Supreme Court and Sandra Day O'Connor goes on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Dimmick: Sandra wrote me a very nice letter.

Hughes: Tell me about that.

Dimmick: She wrote a letter. I think I might even have it over there, a picture of her and congratulations, that kind of thing. And I later on met her and know her. Very lovely woman.

Hughes: Tell me about her in terms of jurisprudence. She is pretty amazing intellectually, too, isn't she?

Dimmick: Yes. Right in the center, I would say.

Hughes: It's interesting that you said that because she was a crucial swing vote on the high court for all those years. And her approach to jurisprudence sort of vacillated between somewhat moderate to more conservative. Did you see a lot of yourself in Sandra Day O'Connor as a kindred spirit?

Dimmick: Yes, I certainly did. And I think history will bear that out on my opinions.

Hughes: Are you more conservative than she is?

Dimmick: I can't tell. I mean who can compare? I don't know.

Hughes: Did you think that when Sandra Day O'Connor was elevated to the nation's court of last resort that that might be something that would be in the future for you too?

Dimmick: Oh heaven's no. I didn't even think I would want to go to the Washington State Supreme Court. ... I did not want to leave Seattle and go down there.

Hughes: The drive was better in those days.

Dimmick: Well, I got an apartment down there. Because I felt I had to do double time. I left my family and I got an apartment, and I would come home on the weekends. My daughter was at UPS. And my husband was here with his law practice and the dog. So it was hard. It was. So I studied all the time, worked hard and did my thing.

Hughes: How old were your kids at that time?

Dimmick: Well, my daughter was in college and my son is older.

Hughes: Do you have any strong feelings about the way judges get appointed?

Dimmick: Well, yes. In fact, Judge Bill Dwyer and I were on a committee to look into that, to try to make recommendations on whether to go with some of the other plans in

the nation, where you're appointed and you run against yourself. That kind of thing. We recommended it but it didn't go over.

Hughes: An appointed judiciary as opposed to being elected? Is that some kind of hybrid plan?

Dimmick: Appointed and then you've got to run against yourself. You have to have some sort of an election. But that was the recommendation. However, it was never going to go in our Legislature and our area because people still like the right to put their name up and run as they feel like it.

Hughes: On the Superior Court you said that your judicial philosophy was to use a lot of experts. "I have an alcohol expert," you once noted, to deal with driving while intoxicated cases, and "in every criminal case I have a pre-sentence investigation." Is that sort of a hallmark of your approach?

Dimmick: Everybody did too.

Hughes: So that was no big deal.

Dimmick: Everybody had a pre-sentence in court.

Hughes: But this notion of using experts. Is Carolyn Dimmick the kind of judge who really wants to get *all* the information she can get?

Dimmick: Yes. ... I mean you can't possibly know everything about every subject that comes in front of you. So I certainly benefited by listening to the experts.

Hughes: And what were the kinds of cases that really made you sort of scrunch forward and furrow your brow?

Dimmick: Well, it's when somebody would come in with a mental illness defense, where we would get a couple of psychiatrists. And you would do interviews with them and try to figure out whether the (defendants) were really mentally ill or just trying to beat the system.

Hughes: Do you have any skepticism on that score that you developed over years on the bench?

Dimmick: Well, I'm not too high on psychiatrists. For one thing, I don't think people level with them so they can really do their jobs. And I'm not sure that they can read people that

well. Some of them are obvious cases, like anyone can tell this person is mentally ill. But some of the nuances probably escape most people.

Hughes: Do you have any incredibly bizarre, wacko experiences with people who appeared in your court?

Dimmick: Well, a lot of them. But you know everybody is represented in the State of Washington. Everybody had a lawyer.

Hughes: Who were some of the best defense attorneys who appeared before you over the years – ones you thought *really* knew their stuff.

Dimmick: Well, there were a lot of them. I mean we had the public defenders' office people who were *trained*. And they're all good. They help each other, and they train each other. They do a good job. When I first started out there used to be a group of attorneys who would take the appointments to represent a defendant for like \$50 or \$75. And of course what they would do is they would plead half of them guilty and then work on the others, and they never got more money as they worked on them and took them to trial. Then it evolved into a defenders system where they got organized and they were paid by the county on salary instead of by the case.

Hughes: Were you frustrated at all by the advent of "determinant sentencing" that tied a judge's hands? I remember a bright young Grays Harbor Superior Court Judge who previously had been a prosecutor. He left the bench after four years, saying that he was very frustrated by being hamstrung.

Dimmick: It was after I left (the Superior Court bench) that they had the sentencing guidelines. Then we had it here mandatory. But now it's evolved so that the guidelines are something to think about. They're advisory now. They've gone all the way around.

Hughes: Strong feelings about that?

Dimmick: Well, I thought it was ridiculous because some of the minimums were —well like, OK, so there's a simple little woman who opens the door in a drug den where people are selling stuff and she's just kind off the street. OK, she's got a five-year minimum, for what? She's not making any money; she's not selling the stuff; she's opening the door for these rotten guys. There was nothing you could do.

Hughes: I just heard this morning on NPR that the fellow who succeeded Norm Maleng as King County prosecutor –

Dimmick: Dan Satterberg.

Hughes: Was going into court on behalf of an early three-time loser. His third strike was a second-degree robbery conviction. And Satterberg’s feeling was that this was an example where the “three strikes” law was excessive and that this person who had been a model prisoner shouldn’t be in for life. Did you see some shades of grey while on the bench?

Dimmick: Oh sure, lots of times.

Hughes: You may be a tough-minded person but you’re not real opinionated, are you?

Dimmick: No. If it’s proven to me that they committed these crimes, especially for a second or more time, they’re going to get it. If you prove to me, “Oh, I just made a horrible mistake. It never happened before, not likely to happen again.” You want to give them a break. And most of the time it doesn’t happen again.

Hughes: I get the feeling that Judge Carolyn Dimmick can spot BS at about a hundred paces.

Dimmick: Hey, I had two kids!

Hughes: But I mean you’re a real common-sense kind of person, aren’t you?

Dimmick: Yes. That’s what the law is – it’s common sense. What’s fair is fair. If you kept that in your brain you’d be all right.

Hughes: In 1981, you became only the 14th woman on a court of last resort in the U.S. Now there are four women on the State Supreme Court at one time—

Dimmick: There had been *five* women.



Hughes: Yes, a female majority from 2003-2005. What did you think of that?

Dimmick: I thought it was great.

Hughes: Did you know those ladies?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Madsen, Ireland, Bridge, Owens and Fairhurst.

Dimmick: Fairhurst was a law clerk when I was on the Supreme Court.

Hughes: I didn't ask you earlier if you had entertained the notion of applying for a law clerk job when you graduated from Law School, like Smith and Utter.

Dimmick: No, it didn't occur to me. It was not the kind of work that I wanted to do.

Hughes: And now the newest member of the Supreme Court is Debra Stephens, who is obviously extraordinarily bright, and looks like she's 25 years old.

Dimmick: I know it!

Hughes: Are there other female judges that you view as extremely capable, that you stay in touch with, and that you feel as if you're mentoring?

Dimmick: Oh yes, I get along with all of them. I really enjoy Bobbe Bridge. I'm sorry she's not there (on the Supreme Court) any more.

Hughes: Did they call you often? Even in an era when there are a lot more female judges, is there a network?

Dimmick: Oh sure.

Hughes: What kind of things do you talk about?

Dimmick: I have a group of three judges and two lawyers. We meet about once a month and go out to dinner and do stuff.

Hughes: I wanted to ask you about the judicial canons of ethics, about running for office. Do you think that Canon Seven is too restrictive in mandating that judges refrain from "inappropriate" political activity?

Dimmick: It's pretty constraining and it really should be because why are you going to announce how you would decide a case when you haven't even heard the case? That's the thing. You can have a philosophy, but when the facts come up in front of you that goes out the window. You've *got to* base it on the facts. You can say "I'm against this. I'm

against that. I'm for this. I'm for that," but wait till you get the facts. ... Even Jim Dolliver on the death penalty. Dolliver would tell anybody who cared that he was against the death penalty. When it got right down and dirty, he wrote one (supporting the death penalty.) I mean you do what you have to do under the facts.

Hughes: And that's what makes a good judge, isn't it?

Dimmick: Sure it is. You bet. You don't need to broadcast what you're thinking.

Hughes: Would it be fair to say that some people have mischaracterized you as being too doctrinaire, as too much of a law-and-order kind of person?

Dimmick: Probably. If they think that it's wholesale, then I don't think that's true.

Hughes: What's it like when you're in the Temple of Justice as a member of the Supreme Court? Do you just wander down the hall and say, "Gee Jim, let's have a cup of tea and talk things over."

Dimmick: We got together every morning.

Hughes: Tell me about that.

Dimmick: Well, the boys – *the boys* – had coffee every morning when I first came. And



The Washington Supreme Court in 1984. From left, Hugh Rosellini, James Andersen, Bob Brachtenbach, Vernon Pearson, Carolyn Dimmick, Robert Utter, William Williams, James Dolliver, Fred Dore.

Dolliver's office was next to Floyd Hicks and they had coffee every morning there. On Monday mornings they would talk about *60 Minutes* and football games. And Floyd would call me and say, "You've gotta come up. *You've gotta come up.*" So I would go and be bored while they talked all the sports. But we got to know each other very well in this kind of social, casual attitude. We didn't talk cases at that time. We talked our cases at the conference right after the arguments. And occasionally one of them would come in and want to talk about an opinion that I had written or that they had written. But Fred Dore was the *only* justice who ever said, "If you'll vote for me on this case, I'll vote for your opinion on this case." I said, "Fred, this isn't politics; *this isn't the Legislature*. It doesn't work that way." He was the only one that ever subscribed to "D" and "R."

Hughes: C.Z. Smith tells some similar stories ...

So the layperson who imagines what it's like to be a Supreme Court justice on the court of last resort probably has it wrong? I sort of imagined that you'd wander down the hall and just talk about stuff. "Gee, Bob, what are your thoughts on this sort of thing?"

Dimmick: No, you really didn't. You were on your own. You were in your office with your law clerk and you were writing your own opinions. And then once they were circulated occasionally somebody would say something, but not often. It was all done in writing.

Hughes: Tell me about the conference. Your opinions are done and then you conference....

Dimmick: No, no, this *prior*. You're assigned a case to write a bench memo. And you're supposed to have strong feelings on how it should happen. And you circulate the bench memo. This is before oral argument. Then somebody else would say, "Oh, I don't go for that." And so they would circulate.

Hughes: So these are talking points?

Dimmick: Yes. So they would circulate a little bench memo on the dissent. Then we would go in – sometimes they didn't even bother – but we'd get it there, listen to oral argument and then the person would be the presenter – the judge who had had the case assignment. And we would say "This is what we think." And then somebody would say, "Excuse me. That's not the way it should be." And then they would talk, talk, talk, talk.

Hughes: This is so interesting. It's great to hear you explain these things, and let me pay

you the compliment that you are a very normal human being.

Dimmick: I hope so! (laughing)

Hughes: Extraordinarily bright, but normal. You love the law, but you brought to the high court all this common sense and you don't speak in Legalese.

Dimmick: That's what it always has to be is common sense. If you had good strong reasoning for your point, they usually went along unless somebody had a *philosophical* difference.

Hughes: Sometimes did that get pretty heated? I hope to do an interview with Judge Utter, by the way, because you and everyone else I meet in the judiciary tell me that guy is really an intellectual giant.

Dimmick: I think he is. ... He's very confident about his ability to analyze. But I can recall when we'd have somebody like Judge (Charles F.) Stafford, who would say—and now we've listened to oral argument — “Well, this case could go either way.” And we'd go, “Oooooohhhhhh!” Meaning that's more work for the rest of us and he hasn't got a strong opinion that we could go against.

Hughes: Did the law clerks get to be in on this kind of stuff?

Dimmick: No, no, oh heavens no.

Hughes: Do you think there ought to be any kind of age restriction on judges?

Dimmick: I don't see why. I don't think it's necessary because we have committees, and if you're not doing a good job they're going to tell you, that you should be in an Alzheimer's unit or whatever.

Hughes: That must be the hardest thing to do — to confront a fellow judge who is losing his or her faculties.

Dimmick: Sure. But we do have that system. And the chief judge of our district, Bob Lasnik for instance, if I were just not competent he just wouldn't give me a case, it's as simple as that. You ask him. He still thinks I'm competent. (laughs)

Hughes: I have. And he does.

Getting back to the State Supreme Court: You completed Justice Wright's term, and then you ran for election in 1981?

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Did you have any opposition?

Dimmick: No, not that time.

Hughes: How much did it cost to get re-elected in 1984?

Dimmick: When I had competition – that was the next time, 1984 – I had all the records and I think it was something like either \$17,000 or \$27,000. I can't remember. It was statewide (in the primary), and I had a person running against me who had an airplane, Alan Merson. He would fly over Husky Stadium (with a banner boosting) "Merson for Supreme Court!" I had a campaign committee. See, we're not supposed to know who gave us money for our campaign. And the committee would watch his reports. They would match dollar for dollar what he was spending because we were not going to go and spend 15,000 dollars if he was spending 10. And so we ended up spending the same amount of money.

Hughes: Was that a palatable thing to you, campaigning for election?

Dimmick: I didn't want to do it. (laughs) I was shocked someone ran against me after all those years.

Hughes: What was the issue? Why was he running against you?

Dimmick: Because he wanted the job.

Hughes: It was nothing personal?

Dimmick: No. He came down and talked to me. Jim Dolliver brought him in. Dolliver knocks on my door and comes in with this guy. "This is Alan Merson. He's running against you for Supreme Court." And I said, "Why?" And he says, "Well, no one has ever run against you and I think the voters should have an opportunity." I said, "OK." What can I say? But, I think the funny part involved Bob Bryan. Bob was a Superior Court judge when I was, and we were all buddy-buddy. ... So he goes down and finds Alan Merson down in Pioneer Square, and he knocks on the door and says, "Are you running against Judge Dimmick?" He said, "Yeah." Bryan said, "You're going to get eaten alive." (Editor's Note: Justice Dimmick clobbered Merson by 300,000 votes in the primary and appeared unopposed on the 1984 General Election ballot.)



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- Member, American Judges Association (since 1969)
- Charter Member, National Association of Women Judges (1979)
- Member, American Judicature Society
- Participant, Judicial Administration Division, National Conference of Special Court Judges (1975-76), A.B.A.
- Participant, National Conference of State Trial Judges (1976-81), A.B.A.
- Participant, Appellate Judges Conference (1981), A.B.A.

State Supreme Court Justice



Hughes: Now they're spending *hundreds* of thousands of dollars to get elected to the Washington State Supreme Court. Half a million dollars in one recent campaign.

Dimmick: Oh, that was *insane*. I was shocked when I found out.

Hughes: It's breathtaking.

Dimmick: *It is breathtaking.*

Hughes: And some of the commercials are really hard hitting like that last go-around when Chief Justice Gerry Alexander was challenged...

Dimmick: Oh, those were bad.

Hughes: I think that there was upwards combined of a million dollars spent in those races.

Dimmick: Terrible, absolutely terrible.

Hughes: Any remedies for that judge?

Dimmick: That's what they were talking about, let's get them appointed and then you run against yourself. And it's state money, and you don't have to owe anybody anything.

Hughes: I'm sorry but I don't fully understand what you mean when you say, "run against yourself."

Dimmick: You run against your record. In other words, you're up for election, and anybody who wants to can bring up all the bad stuff you've done, crummy opinions you've written, or you ran away with the neighbor. Whatever they want to bring up. But you don't have somebody personally taking you on, person to person. You run against your record. And if you lose, then there's a new appointment.

Hughes: Tell us about some of the key cases you heard and what your philosophy was on the Supreme Court. And how you developed this reputation, deserved or undeserved, for being a tough, law-and-order, hang 'em high kind of judge?

Dimmick: I don't know. Do you have a case in mind?

Hughes: Well, there was the decision affirming the death sentence for Charles Rodman



Accused triple murderer Charles Rodman Campbell at his trial in 1985. Associated Press

Campbell. If you wanted a poster child for a vicious, unrepentant killer, it was him. Campbell was out on work release when he murdered a woman who had fingered him, her young daughter and a friend. Earlier, he had gone to prison for raping the woman.

Dimmick: Campbell was evil, through and through, and through and through. And my buddy Tony Savage was appointed to represent him. We used to call Tony the big Boy Scout, because he always found good in everybody. But he said, "He's the only guy I could not look in the eye and feel that there was anything behind his eyes."

Hughes: Scary stuff, isn't it?

Dimmick: Yes it is. First he had raped her. The neighbor had seen him, and they reported him. He goes to the bucket for rape. He gets out. They didn't tell her he's out, and he comes storming up the driveway of her house. When he raped her the first time, she was washing a window. I don't remember how he got in the next time. But then her neighbor came over and the daughter came home from school and he slit their throats so they couldn't cry out. The only reason we got him is that he had taken a glass of water and left his fingerprint right on the glass. He was *one* – ugh!

Hughes: Does the Campbell case still stand out in your mind?

Dimmick: Yes. Getting even with her because she *dared* to testify against him. The Campbell case was so horrific.

Hughes: So when it comes to the death penalty, you don't accept the notion that just locking up a person like that is good enough? You wrote the majority opinion in the case, joined by Justices Rosellini, Dore, Brachtenbach and Justice Pro Tem Cunningham.

Dimmick: Dolliver didn't see it?

Hughes: It says Dolliver, Utter and Pearson wrote partial dissents.

Dimmick: Hmm.

Hughes: Here's the news story from 1984: "The high court's 5-4 ruling upholding the death penalty included a majority opinion yesterday by Justice Carolyn Dimmick, a concurring opinion and three partial dissents. Dimmick was joined on the majority opinion by Justices



King County District Court Judge Carolyn Dimmick chats with Supreme Court Justice Robert Brachtenbach at the monthly Labor-Management Luncheon of the Inland Boatmen's Union in 1975.

Hugh Rosellini, Fred Dore, Robert Brachtenbach, plus Justice Pro Tem D.J. Cunningham. Rosellini wrote a concurring opinion, and Justices James Dolliver, Robert Utter and Vernon Pearson wrote partial dissents. The majority held that the state's statutory scheme for imposing the death penalty meets constitutional requirements and was properly applied in Campbell's case."

So you didn't go home after that one and lose a lot of sleep over Charles Rodman Campbell?

Dimmick: No. Philosophically, however, I think the death penalty is outdated because it's too expensive. It breaks communities. Small communities can't afford to try a death penalty case and put forth all the experts needed, all the defense money that's needed. You might as well put them away and throw away the key is now my philosophy. But when I wrote a dissent ... when I wrote on one of those (death penalty) cases, I had researched and found that the governor had commuted cases where they were supposed to have life without possibility of parole, and they had been given clemency by the governor. And so it didn't really mean what it said when you're putting them away forever. There's always some way out.

Hughes: With all these multiple appeals —

Dimmick: It's too expensive.

Hughes: If you ruled the world would you change that? Have we just gone too far in allowing appeals to drag on?

Dimmick: I think we have. I mean you can't take away any more rights than you've now given them, which is public defense. You can't do that. But in order not to bankrupt the counties and wherever it happens, you might as well do something differently.

Dimmick: That Campbell case came over here when I was on this court.

Hughes: It did?

Dimmick: Yes, because they appealed and then it goes to the federal system.

Hughes: What happened then?

Dimmick: He got it. He went through the ropes — all of his avenues of appeal.

Hughes: My favorite Carolyn Dimmick decision — from the standpoint of both wisdom and wonderful writing — is the one from 1984 where you wrote for a unanimous State Supreme Court in a “wrongful birth” case that made headlines. A woman and her spouse sued a doctor who performed sterilization. Despite the tubal ligation, the woman became pregnant and delivered a healthy, normal child. In the final analysis, you said it was impossible to weigh with reasonable certainty the costs of raising a child against the

emotional benefits of parenthood. “It is a question which meddles with the concept of life and the stability of the family unit. Litigation cannot answer every question; every question cannot be answered in terms of dollars and cents.”

Dimmick: I do remember that! Having two adopted children it was not hard for me to explain. I haven’t seen that for years. What year was that written?

Hughes: It was written in 1984. The couple sought damages to compensate for the costs and “emotional burdens” of rearing and educating the unplanned child. You concluded that they were entitled only to medical and other expenses directly related to the child’s birth. “A child is more than an economic liability,” you wrote. “A child may provide its parents with love, companionship, a sense of achievement and a limited form of immortality. ... The child may turn out to be loving, obedient and attentive or hostile, unruly and callous. The child may grow up to be president of the United States or to be an infamous criminal.”

Dimmick: I remember that so well.

Hughes: Why was the federal bench a lot more interesting to you than the Supreme Court when the opportunity arose in 1984? For one thing, as you mentioned earlier, it’s in Seattle, right?

Dimmick: Yes, that’s right. And it’s a trial bench, and the Supreme Court is an appellate bench. Appellate benches aren’t a lot of fun.

Hughes: You’re not the first person I’ve heard say that. You’d think that with all the marble and the pomp and circumstance —

Dimmick: We’re still sitting there by ourselves in a cell writing opinions.

Hughes: Albeit a pretty nice cell. I was in Justice Madsen’s office and it’s very comfy.

Dimmick: I haven’t been down there since they’ve remodeled.

Hughes: Oh they’re nice offices. She’s got oak and leather. But not as nice as this, with your stunning view of Puget Sound.

So tell us about your appointment to the U.S. District Court. How does this come about?

Dimmick: Strangely. I’m running for re-election for the Supreme Court, a statewide election in 1984. First time I’d had a campaign against me. We all fly up to Bellingham or

someplace for a meeting with the Bar Association. I remember distinctly that Utter was flying his plane. Dolliver was in the front. I'm in the back with Hughie Rosellini. There's four of us. And Utter is saying, "Now, how long has it been since you've flown, Jim?"

And he said, "God, it's been forever."

And he said, "Well, here's this and here's that."

And Rosellini was having a fit back there.

Hughes: I'll bet! White knuckles.

Dimmick: Anyway, we get there and one of the lawyers – I'm not going to tell you who it was – came up to me and said, "You know, I'm nominated for vetting the lawyers who want to be on district court, on the federal bench. And we've given a list to Slade (Gorton) and Dan (Evans), and they're not happy with the list. Would you be interested?"

And I said, "Well, right now I would not want any publicity that said I was interested in that. I'm running for election."

He says, "Well, if we gave it to you would you take it?"

And I said, "If you gave it to me on a silver platter without any interference with my election, I probably would take it, sure."

That was that. Isn't that amazing?

Hughes: I'm speechless.

Dimmick: So they went back to the committee and ran my name through Slade and Dan.

Hughes: Had you known those two over the years?

Dimmick: Well, I'd seen them off and on. And of course Dan had appointed me to the Superior Court in 1976.

Hughes: In the wake of that though, did you get to know him better?

Dimmick: No, not particularly.

Hughes: How about Slade Gorton, who had been attorney general before winning election to the U.S. Senate?

Dimmick: No, I didn't know him any better. ... So in my brain I figured that one of them had somebody they wanted to go on the State Supreme Court, in my job. I really do feel that way, that Slade had somebody in mind for that job. Then I won my election in 1984 with

73 percent of the vote.

Hughes: Against the guy who did the skywriting. Mr. Merson.

Dimmick: And then I'm sworn in. In the meantime I had gone over and talked to Gov. John Spellman, who had lost to Booth Gardner in his bid for re-election. And I said, "John, I cannot leave this bench unless you agree to appoint a woman because I will be pillored and posted and shot by every woman lawyer in town. I know that you planned to appoint Barbara Durham last time, but you felt Jimmy Andersen deserved it because he had been passed over before."

And Spellman said, "That is correct."

I said, "So who would you be thinking about in my spot?"

And he said, "Barbara Durham."

Hughes: Did you know John Spellman pretty well?

Dimmick: Yes. I trusted him.

Hughes: How did you know him?

Dimmick: Well when I was on the Superior Court he had an office down in the Smith Tower. I always knew John. ... And so in my heart I felt he guaranteed me that. So when I went over and took the oath of office, which Dolliver administered, and I had to say "I'm going to well and truly" blah, blah, blah, blah. I knew I wasn't because I'm resigning the next day. I had to resign immediately because John was a lame duck in January. So I was sworn in; I resigned and he appointed Barbara to my seat on the Supreme Court. So it was a done deal except I didn't have a job for like three months.

Hughes: Exactly. There was some real risk. You've got the nomination for a job, and though it holds the promise of a lifetime judicial appointment, you still have to be confirmed by the U.S. Senate?

Dimmick: Exactly.

Hughes: Did you know much about Booth Gardner to think that Booth might not have been as inclined to appoint Barbara Durham?

Dimmick: I wasn't going to take a chance. I couldn't do it to the women of the world, you know, really.

Hughes: Sure. Your responsibility as a woman, after all the progress women had made in the legal profession during your career. But, also, the woman you wanted to see succeed you was someone who both philosophically and –

Dimmick: Had great experience. I mean she was a Stanford graduate; she was on the Court of Appeals; she had been a Superior Court judge. She had every experience. She'd be the perfect choice.

Hughes: And you two were really dear friends.

Dimmick: Yes. But I didn't want her appointed as friendship. I wanted somebody up there who was going to do a *heck* of a good job, and would be smart and uphold the office.

Hughes: Sure, if you're the first – a trailblazer – you don't want to be succeeded by some weak sister.

Dimmick: *I didn't.* So those were the machinations that went on.

Hughes: Speaking of machinations, what's it like to get confirmed to the U.S. District Court?

Dimmick: Well, first you have to go back in front of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Hughes: And who was presiding?

Dimmick: Strom Thurmond. I couldn't understand him (through his Southern drawl). He was mush-mouth. I was like, "Excuse me?" ... It was terrible.

Hughes: So was that otherwise pretty straightforward and gentlemanly?

Dimmick: It was.

Hughes: Did you get to meet with President Reagan?

Dimmick: No, just his adviser.

Hughes: Who was that?

Dimmick: I don't know.

Hughes: So the president did call you?

Dimmick: Oh, he called me later (after the Senate hearing).

Hughes: What did he say?

Dimmick: "Hi." I'll tell you about that later.

Hughes: OK.

Senate of the United States
IN EXECUTIVE SESSION

April 3, 1985

Resolved, That the Senate advise and consent to the following nomination:
Carolyn R. Dimmick, of Washington, to be United States District Judge for the Western District of Washington.

Attest:

J. Anne L. Coe
Secretary



Dimmick: So I went in before the committee and I answered the things they asked. I brought my husband and my daughter. We went to Georgetown, and fooled around the town. Then I went to the Senate and looked at everything. We came back home to wait and then I got a call from the president. "The White House is calling," the operator says when they get you on the phone. I'm on a binge of knitting sweaters. I have no job. *I have no job.* The president said, "Judge Dimmick?"

And I said, "Yes, Mr. President. How's the weather in D.C.?"

And he said, "Oh, I'm in California." So then he just said, "I've done something today I hope you will be happy with. I forwarded your name to the Senate for confirmation."

And I said, "Well, that's very nice of you, thank you. I don't think you'll be disappointed."

And he said, "I know I won't because *we've read all your opinions.*"

When he said "we" he meant his staff.

Hughes: That's pretty impressive.

Dimmick: Yes, that was.

Hughes: Did he sound wonderfully, warmly Reagan-ly?

Dimmick: Oh wonderful, just wonderful, "Oh, ho, ho, ho, ho."

Hughes: Did you get a chance to meet him or Nancy over the years?

Dimmick: Never did.

Hughes: Looking back, is President Reagan one of your political heroes?

Dimmick: Sure. ...He was of the people. You could call him “Ronnie.” You just felt like you could chat away and talk to him. He wasn’t so high and mighty and so full of himself. I didn’t think of him as a politician. Let’s put it that way.

Hughes: Who are some of your other political heroes?

Dimmick: People ask me that, and I don’t really know what I would say.

Hughes: Did you meet Sandra Day O’Connor on that first trip to D.C.?



U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor visits the federal courthouse in Seattle. From left, O’Connor, Chief Magistrate Judge Karen Strombom, Judge Carolyn Dimmick, and Judge Robert Lasnik

Dimmick: Oh yes, I met Sandra. She would be our representative to the 9th Circuit. She would come to the conferences, so I would see her.

Hughes: She’s your kind of gal? Same age, similar experiences finding your way in a male-dominated profession?

Dimmick: She’s great. There’s a picture up there of her with women.

Hughes: I’d love to see that.

A lot of people think when they read articles or imagine the way politics work, that this judicial nomination would be a real smoke-filled room kind, litmus test kind of

thing. Obviously the Reagan White House, in concert with two Republican senators, knew what they wanted and got ‘er done.

Dimmick: They didn’t ask me a thing. ... Nothing about philosophy, no litmus test, no anything.

Hughes: Pretty remarkable.

Dimmick: I know it was.

Hughes: The debate has raged for years about “activist” judges.

Dimmick: Yes. I know.

Hughes: It seems as if the outs are saying that they want to be in so they can have *their* activist judges, as opposed to the other side’s activist judges. Do have strong feelings about activist judging?

Dimmick: The way I interpret that is (the debate) over strict constitutional adherence vs. stretching it to include a lot of things that were never meant to be. One who follows the law as a strict constructionist is not an activist judge. An activist judge is somebody who can find reasons to go outside what is commonly accepted.

Hughes: So if you're opposed to the death penalty you'll find any kind of subterfuge?

Dimmick: That's right.

Hughes: Is that an indictment you'd make – that we've seen too much activism on the part of judges?

Dimmick: You know, I don't really think so. I don't really think that because I've listened to the issues; I've seen it, and I haven't agreed with some of it, but I see that they've got a point of view. They could be just as right as I am.

Hughes: Here's a news story from the time of your appointment to the Supreme Court in 1980. It says, "Dimmick said the courts have gone too far in protecting the rights of criminals by giving them, 'Every possible consideration, down to the smallest technicality.'"

Dimmick: I was quoted?

Hughes: Yes.

Dimmick: Hmmm.

Hughes: This is a piece in *The Seattle Times* in 1984. Let's make sure I've got the context right: "Three Washington State judicial conservatives likely will be President Reagan's nominees to fill new federal judgeships when the 99th Congress convenes next year. *The Times* has learned the three: State Supreme Court Justice Caroline Dimmick, former but longtime Kitsap County Superior Court Judge Robert Bryan, and Yakima attorney Alan McDonald, will be formally announced at a 2 P.M. press conference today in U.S. Senator Slade Gorton's Seattle office. Dimmick's confirmation would cause a vacancy on the state Supreme Court, which the governor could fill by appointment. Yesterday Dimmick refused comment. At the time of the appointment in 1980 Dimmick said the courts had gone too far in protecting the rights of criminals by giving them every possible consideration, down to the smallest technicality."

Dimmick: They must have got me on that day. I think what happened there was that the

reporter back in 1980 framed the question like “Don’t you think the courts have gone too far ...” and I nodded or something and it became a quote.”

Hughes: Reporters are tricky, aren’t they!?! (laughing)

Barry Goldwater’s landmark book in the 1960s was called *The Conscience of a Conservative*. How would you characterize yourself? Is it accurate to call you a conservative?

Dimmick: I would say I used to be a lot more than I am now.

Hughes: Tell me about that.

Dimmick: Well, I mean I was a strict constructionist. I just felt that if it’s not in the Constitution we shouldn’t be mucking around with it, or Congress should do it. Let them make the law. Let us interrupt the law. That’s *always* been my view. I can now say I’m less doctrinaire ... having had lots of law clerks, I always pick somebody who was really opposite from me so we could have this repartee going on. We always had that going.

Hughes: You really like that, don’t you? You don’t suffer fools gladly, and you don’t want a bunch of yes men or women around?

Dimmick: *Right.*

Hughes: So these bright young people you get right out of law school, what have you learned from having them around?

Dimmick: Well, I believe the philosophies they’re now teaching a lot more than the ones they taught in my day, with a lot more social conscience going around. And a lot more “let’s help everybody out” kind of a thing going. It’s just that in my day the professors had never actually practiced law. They were intellectuals. Now, look at them. We have adjunct professors who have been out in the trenches, and that’s good. I guess I always listened, but I didn’t always track what others were intimating in their own philosophy. ... I think a bit different now.

Hughes: You just turned 79?

Dimmick: Yes, but do we have to put that on the tape? Erase that! (laughs)

Hughes: You don’t have to tell me how you voted, but what did you think of the rise of young Mr. Obama in this landmark election?

Dimmick: It's totally amazing. *Absolutely amazing.* And you know the way he did it was so timely. He got right on the Internet started telling everybody to get involved with him, give him 25 bucks. It's just totally amazing what he did.

Hughes: Judge Smith, although he had been a Hillary Clinton supporter, told me he was impressed by Senator Obama's legal scholarship, that he had a fine legal mind.

Dimmick: Yeah, Harvard, yeah.

Hughes: He's a constitutional scholar.

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: So this is a landmark for America?

Dimmick: It's amazing.

Hughes: And how did you feel about these bright women in high places, like Hillary Rodham Clinton and Condi Rice?

Dimmick: I like to see them up there. And I'm sure that Obama is going to have some around him as well. (Editor's Note: Right after this interview, the president-elect nominated Sen. Clinton as his secretary of state.)

Hughes: Do you think we're getting close to the day when we're going to see a woman as president of the United States?

Dimmick: Oh I don't. My first question is "Why would they want it?"

Hughes: Why not? Why would you want to be on the state Supreme Court, judge?

Dimmick: It's like my granddaughter, Madeline, who is brighter than bright. My granddaughter is in her second year at San Francisco, USF. And she's already got junior standing, so she's going to get out a year earlier. She's going to go to law school. She wants to go where they have a double major because she's interested in foreign policy and foreign trade. And she majored in French, and speaks French like a native. She's traveled *everywhere*. She's the one I'm taking to Ireland. She said to me, "You know, I think I could be president." And I said, "I think you could, too, Madeline, but why would you want to? There are so many other things you can do with your life." Like she's already traveled to Africa and helped out there, and she's going to go again this summer. And she's just so well rounded.

Hughes: So with all these bright young people there really is hope for America.

Dimmick: Sure there is, if we can get enough of them educated.

Hughes: Do you have strong feelings about that – the educational system?

Dimmick: You bet. We've got to get them more educated. And I was glad to see for once, Bill Gates came out giving money for education for our own area. I mean everything he's done overseas is magnificent, but right now we need help at home, too. It's like I used to feel when we were giving aid to everybody, and then we had starving people in New York in the ghettos. Let's help somebody here, you know. There's good things to do right here.

Hughes: Well, who's the best judge you've ever known?

Dimmick: That's an unfair question. Why do you have to make me feel that I should exclude some of the others? I've known plenty of best judges.

Hughes: OK, tell me about some of the best judges you've ever known.

Dimmick: Why is that important? It's just my viewpoint.

Hughes: You've had a remarkable career and it might be interesting to know how you feel about some other remarkable people – maybe ones we haven't heard about. But you don't have to answer it. It's your oral history.

Dimmick: I feel strongly that the judges I've associated with, that have become my friends and colleagues; I can't fault any of them, really. I just think the State of Washington does one heck of a job of vetting the judges, because there's always vacancies and new positions, and I just think it's amazing that we have such a good bench. There's no corruption like there is in Chicago. I think everybody appreciates their job, works hard at it and is doing good. Now, the one judge I *don't* like is Judge Judy. I think she does more to tear down the public's perception of the judiciary than anything I've ever seen in my life.

Hughes: Please continue!

Dimmick: I think it's *horrible* the way she treats people – wise-talking, telling people they're liars, diminishing people. If judges actually acted like that they would not be appointed, nor elected, nor maintain wherever they are. As a matter of fact, I just read in our own newspaper about two judges in our area who were taken before the commission and criticized for their demeanor in court. I mean that was minor. But Judge

Judy – if people think that’s how judges act, it’s just such a disservice. I mean it’s just high entertainment, and I wish people realized that. People always ask me, “What do you think of Judge Judy?” It’s just horrible stuff!

Hughes: Any judge worth his or her salt has strong feelings about the dignity and decorum of the court.

Dimmick: That’s right. But you know she was a municipal court judge in New York?

Hughes: I did not know that.

Dimmick: She was a real judge.

Hughes: I wonder if she behaved that way on the municipal court bench.

Dimmick: She probably did! Big, wise-taking New Yorker in there. She probably did. Given that more and more millions of people tune in and love shows like that, I guess people just like to see other people slapped down.

Hughes: I was really looking forward to interviewing you, but it was all the more so after I read a couple of things we dug up, namely that you refused to back the notion that what America needs is warning labels on milk bottles. I think that’s a breakthrough for common sense, judge! After some of the cases you’ve heard, a little levity helps ...

Dimmick: Oh yeah.

Hughes: This plaintiff in 1998 really wanted warning labels on milk bottles. He contended he had been hooked on milk since childhood and had a stroke as a consequence. And he argued that if tobacco products can be required to have warning labels, why not dairy products? When you hear stuff like that do you just kind of think, “My god!”?

Dimmick: Is *this* what the courts are all about?

Hughes: Well, on a more sobering note, you also upheld the sex offender registry. Some said it was subjecting the offenders to vigilantism. You held that “They put themselves there.”

Dimmick: Protect the rest of the people. ... I still feel strongly about that. But I think that was a Supreme Court case.

Hughes: No, you were on the federal bench when you upheld the sex offender registration.

Dimmick: Oh, good for me. I'd forgotten that.

Hughes: Here's the news story from 1996: "The federal judge who upheld Washington State's Sex Offender Public Notification Law yesterday said, 'The law does not punish the individual whose criminal past is revealed. The stigma of which plaintiffs complain is not created by the registration and notification provisions, but rather by the communities' reaction to the sex offender's prior conduct.'"

Dimmick: That's right.

Hughes: What kind of marks do you give your fellow judges here? They think highly of you, I can tell you that.

Dimmick: Well, I think highly of all of them. That's why I'm at a loss what to say about them. They come from good backgrounds, work hard, do their job.

Hughes: They're a diverse group of bright, young men and women, aren't they?

Dimmick: They are.

Hughes: Do you think they're smarter than you were at that age?

Dimmick: I think so. I *really* do. I think, "I wouldn't be able to get into law school nowadays." It's hard to get into law school at the UW. You don't just walk in the door any more.

Hughes: I was screened heavily to get in here. Is the intense security in this new Courthouse in the wake of 9/11?

Dimmick: No, that came in the wake of the bombing of the courthouse in Oklahoma.

Hughes: Timothy McVeigh.

Dimmick: Yes.

Hughes: Do you think it's well warranted and take comfort in having all this security here? Or in some respects does that sort of fly in the face of the "people's" court?

Dimmick: No, because when we built this Courthouse we made it as open as possible. You can walk in freely, look at the reflection pool, look at the art and not have to go through security. That was my primary intent when we planned this Courthouse, having some wonderful serene vista that the people could see without having to go through tight security to get into their court. And so that's what we did and fortunately it was a wonderful barrier.

Hughes: Who designed this structure?

Dimmick: Well, I was on the committee. NBBJ, the Seattle architectural firm, designed it.

Hughes: Are you happy with the end results?

Dimmick: Sure. You should see all the awards we've won on this Courthouse.

Hughes: Was building this new Courthouse controversial in any way?

Dimmick: Yes, because Clinton had put a hold on any federal building. Bruce Rifkin, the clerk of the court, and other judges and I went back two or three times to Congress, talked to our legislators telling them how important it was to get the money for this courthouse.



Judge Dimmick at a dinner in the 1990s with Congresswoman Jennifer Dunn, R-WA.

Jennifer Dunn was in Congress at the time.

Jennifer Dunn was a big influence, and so was Slade Gorton.

Hughes: I understand that your fellow judges picked you to be a key member of the committee looking at the nuts and bolts of everything?

Dimmick: The one who picked me was the 9th Circuit chief at the time, Clifford Wallace. He called me and asked me if I would do it. ... I used to call myself the "tenant representative." We

broke ground on the project in the summer of 2001 and it opened in September of 2004.

Hughes: So what are you most proud of about the structure?

Dimmick: I like the open appearance. ... And when you walk around, you see that there's two buildings. There's an L-way between the office part and the court part so that you could get natural lighting into the interior of all of the offices. I think that's the great part.

Hughes: And the furnishings and the other details in here, does any of this have your touch from the standpoint of someone who has always liked art?

Dimmick: Yes it does. What we did is we worked with interior designers in the office of the architects, and then we'd go to the judges. I got them all to agree on the carpeting, except they could have an inset of what color they wanted. And we all agreed on the wall covering and the carpeting, the colors in the courtroom, the finishes on the walls.

Hughes: For a lady who was fiscally conscious and once said, “You’re not going to spend \$60,000 and put in another bathroom at the Temple of Justice,” were you able to bring this project in on budget?

Dimmick: We did, on budget, exactly. We had to cut things when we got toward the end because things were more expensive. But we always went for materials that were native, that were good looking, that were easily attainable. So we managed to do it.

Hughes: What did it come in at, at the end, in terms of price tag?

Dimmick: Oh, I can’t tell you that. (Editor’s Note: It was \$171 million, according to *The Daily Journal of Commerce* in Seattle.)

Hughes: How many floors do you have here?

Dimmick: Nineteen. Some of them are double height, of course, for the courtroom floors.

Hughes: And the suites here for the judges seem outstanding. Does each judge have a conference room?

Dimmick: Everybody has a conference room, bathroom, closet, two law clerks in the reception area. But we took space out of the offices to have the joint library that you see right next to my court, so that we have one library on each floor rather than three libraries.

Hughes: So you are now on “senior” status?

Dimmick: Yes, as of 1997.

Hughes: Is that mandated by law or is that something the judge does voluntarily?

Dimmick: You do it after so many years on the bench, and so old. You don’t have to do it. You can if you want to.

Hughes: You can be an active federal judge until your dying day?

Dimmick: You can be an active judge even if you’re a senior judge.

Hughes: So how does that work for you?

Dimmick: What happens is, if I’m a senior judge then they get a replacement for me. Robert Lasnik is my replacement.

Hughes: So what’s the workload for you now?

Dimmick: Anything you want it to be. As a senior judge you take as little or as much as you want.

Hughes: What do you like to do?

Dimmick: Well, right now I'm just doing some office work. I'm doing appellate work for Social Security that the magistrates got way behind in.

Hughes: Do you find that interesting?

Dimmick: It's kind of interesting. It's kind of depressing, too.

Hughes: In the sense that?

Dimmick: You don't know if these people are really unable to work or trying to beat the system.

Hughes: Now that you're in senior status, does that allow you to be more outspoken on more topical issues?

Dimmick: No. I am appointed for life. I am a judge for life. I'm under the Hatch Act. I don't



A recent portrait of the federal judge.
U.S. Courts Library

talk politics. That's because we have to have an independent face and not take sides in advance, or let our views be known to who is likely to come in front of us. Like I never signed a petition. They were in the ferry line all the time, but I never signed a petition. Every time I've been on the ferry there's always somebody who has got a petition. They roam up and down the aisles of the ferry and they get you when you're in the parking lot.

Hughes: You live on Bainbridge Island, do you?

Dimmick: Off and on. I have a place over there.

Hughes: And a place in the city as well?

Dimmick: Yes, and I'm mostly in the city.

Hughes: My wife does all kinds of crossword

puzzles and Sudoku and things that I can't do because my brain won't do math. How do you stay so vital and on top of things?

Dimmick: I work solitaire on the computer.

Hughes: Do you like computers?

Dimmick: I do

Hughes: Pretty amazing what they can do.

Dimmick: Isn't it!

Hughes: I thought it was a real blunder by John McCain to admit that he didn't even know how to open his own e-mail.

Dimmick: Listen! Bill Dwyer and I were the *last* to say that we would want a computer. "We don't need to," we said. "We've got secretaries. We're not going to do it." Well, we finally did it. And then when he was so sick and at home he was e-mailing everybody.

Hughes: It's just amazing the amount of information you can find. However, the downside of it is that there's a ton of misinformation out there that people assume is the truth.

That's why I always try to ask an interview subject, "Is this true?"

Dimmick: Exactly.

Hughes: So, summing up, any regrets at all about this career of yours?

Dimmick: *No*, I can't imagine if I had stayed and worked at *The P-I* or sold men's neckties at Rhodes Department Store. I did that one Christmas too.

Hughes: You did?

Dimmick: Yes, I've always had some kind of a job. But, hey, I've had a fabulous run at my career.

Hughes: Do you find this stimulating, still coming to work?

Dimmick: Oh sure. ... I stayed home for a while when my husband was so sick. It's so easy to sit down and get used to watching "Antiques Roadshow" or Home & Garden TV, or just read books and magazines and just kind of vegetate. I've known too many people who've retired and died. ... When I look at the Superior Court judges who are forced to retire, they really, really think that I've got it great because I can go back and do whatever I want.

Hughes: In fact, Chief Justice Gerry Alexander —

Dimmick: He's going to have to get out pretty soon.

Hughes: He is. And he's as vital as ever. Talk about raconteur. I've never known a better storyteller.

Dimmick: He's great, a really nice guy.

Hughes: Do you have any kind of interesting hobby or research that you're doing that's related to your career? I read that you once had a loom.

Dimmick: Oh, a weaving loom. Sure.

Hughes: Did you loom stuff?

Dimmick: You don't "loom," John; you weave. (laughing) Yes, I wove some things. I wove some scarves. I wove some pillows, and I wove a couple of wall hangings. ... I've taken a lot of art classes. I've taken jewelry making. I've taken jewelry design. I've taken paper making.

Hughes: Do you paint?

Dimmick: I don't paint. I can't draw anything.

Hughes: I can't either.

Dimmick: I think it's something we just told ourselves, "Oh, I can't do that."

Hughes: You know the guy who wrote the book *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*?

Dimmick: Right.

Hughes: He says that if you go into a second-grade classroom and you ask, "Who can sing? Who can dance? Who can draw?" They all raise their hands. But then as we get older we get inculcated with the notion that "I can't do that."

I read that you like mystery novels.

Dimmick: Still do. The last one I just read was (John) Grisham's book, *The Associate*.

Hughes: He's a lawyer isn't he?

Dimmick: Yes. But I tell you he could never practice law. This last book just *tore* into the big law firms and their charging practices and how they run their show.

Hughes: Do you think that's true? For the record, the judge is nodding.

Dimmick: (laughing) The judge has no comment. Having never been on the inside of a big law firm I don't know. But I'll tell you that the big law firms who read that, and the business people who have them on retainers are going to give it another thought.

Hughes: Grisham's plot narratives are really strong, aren't they?

Dimmick: Well, he's got the experience. He's right on the inside.

Hughes: Did you ever think about writing stuff like that?

Dimmick: No!

Hughes: You're a good writer, judge.

Dimmick: I don't want to write.

Hughes: As for newspapers, which we've both worked for, isn't it an awful thing that the *P-I* might close?

Dimmick: It's totally amazing. I can't believe that this would not be a two-newspaper city.

Hughes: And you grew up in an era that had the *Seattle Star* too, so this was a three-newspaper city in the 1940s.

Dimmick: That is correct.

Hughes: Are you on the Internet all the time, judge?

Dimmick: Yes. I'm reading an opinion from the Supreme Court that just came out. ... But I still take the paper. I take *The Times* every day and read it. It's quicker than going through the (Internet). But my son-in-law reads the *New York Times* (on line) and he's always flashing me tidbits to make sure I know about it.

Hughes: How would you like to be remembered?

Dimmick: Old. A hundred years old. How about that?

Hughes: That would be fun. And I always liked that scene in *Huckleberry Finn* where Huck —

Dimmick: Ends up watching his own funeral?

Hughes: Yes, I mean you could hear what people were going to say about you and be alive to enjoy it. What do you think they'll say about Judge Carolyn Dimmick?

Dimmick: She tried hard.

Hughes: Well, I think you succeeded.

Dimmick: Did her job to the best.

END OF INTERVIEW

Interview with Federal Judge Robert Lasnik about Judge Dimmick

December 11, 2008

Hughes: You and I should be so lucky to be as vibrant and not missing a beat as Judge Dimmick at 79.

Lasnik: She's amazing. She's lovely too.

Hughes: She looks 15 years younger than she is. I'm 65 and she looks like she'd be my classmate. She's really interesting, too.

Lasnik: I'm sure C.Z. Smith must have been jaw dropping at times, too, in that oral history.

Hughes: It was 16 hours of jaw dropping. At the end of day one, I said, "Can you spare me some more time judge?" And he said, "Oh yeah. We have lots more to cover." He is fascinating.

Lasnik: He has had a fascinating life going back to the Justice Department.

Hughes: He was de facto adopted at the age of 15 by an Ivy-League black educator who saw in Charles Z. Smith this brilliant young black boy and paid his way through school.

Lasnik: It's just amazing.

Hughes: Carolyn Dimmick is portrayed, if you just read the one-dimensional clippings, as being this law-and-order kind of feisty but no-nonsense person. Clearly she's no-nonsense but she's also charming and witty.

Lasnik: She is.



Good friends and colleagues: Robert Lasnik and Carolyn Dimmick in 2009
John Hughes for The Legacy Project

Hughes: But too modest by a turn, I think. Her modesty and her unpretentiousness.

I asked, "Judge, do you have any pictures?" She said, "Oh yeah, I'll have them dig out some stuff." And she sends me off with two notebooks of stuff, including a drawing of this knockout 23-year-old waterskiing. ... So tell me about Carolyn Dimmick. Is what you see what you get?

Lasnik: *Totally*, and I think the thing that's underestimated about her, especially in the state Supreme Court ... Being the first woman on the state Supreme Court, you know that is a *tough* place to suddenly change. Sandra Day O'Connor did it a year later with the U.S. Supreme Court. But the kind of person who the first is, is always so important to how it's going to be perceived, and how it's going to be received. And I think just as Justice Sandra Day O'Connor turned out to be a remarkable pick for Ronald Reagan, Carolyn Dimmick turned out to be the perfect person because she was able to make her male colleagues adjust and accept without *ever* making them feel put upon, or under attack, or anything.

Hughes: A man's woman and a woman's woman?

Lasnik: You've seen it. And you've seen it in newsroom, right?

Hughes: Absolutely.

Lasnik: Carolyn just set them at ease, and made it so much easier for Barbara Durham, who came after, to the point where you end up with a majority ...

Hughes: They had a five-member majority from 2003-2005.

Lasnik: There again too, she was a *saint* to Barbara Durham in those years when she started to decline. I mean she's a very loyal friend; she is a tremendous colleague. She was chief judge here for three years. And on the state Supreme Court I think she was able to forge alliances with people from both the liberal wing, like Jim Dolliver...

Hughes: You'd think if you just read the clippings that she was a doctrinaire conservative.

Lasnik: She *never* was. And the thing that people always came away talking about with her was she's not the kind of judge you come away talking about her intellectual capacity. It's there but it doesn't jump out at you as much as the graciousness, the courtesy, the respect, the relaxed manner, and things like that, which are much more important in a lot of ways. I'm not saying she didn't have tremendous intellectual power, but she is so

modest and so self-effacing that she comes across *much more* as the people's judge.

Hughes: I like that a lot.

Lasnik: And then when she did this project here -- again to me this was another one where there was no other person who could have pulled it off as well as Carolyn Dimmick did because she had the clout with her colleagues to force us to sit down and deal with issues *now* when we're planning the building, rather than complain about them later. But she also helped the architect and the design people because they can't get a judge to make a decision, she can. She could come and say, "OK, here's three possible fabrics you can have. Make a choice." She dragged us down to a warehouse in south Seattle where there was a mock courtroom set up. And she said, "Sit in the chair, look at the sightlines, this is what you're going to get. Complain about it now when I can do something about it. Wait until it's built, I can't do anything about it." And she forced us to look at things and make adjustments all for the better of what we ended up with. So she had the clout to deal with the judges, she had the ability to speak with architects and designers because she has such personal design—

Hughes: She's an artist, no doubt about it.

Lasnik: And the trades people, the construction people adored her because she'd put on a hardhat and go out with them. And she was just like somebody's mom or aunt. And they thought this is great. They wanted to do it right for the judge because she is so neat, she's so cool. I'm telling you, there's not another judge in the building who could have been able to deal with all the groups, and successfully.

Hughes: That's a wonderful story. She sure feels highly about you, too.

Lasnik: Well, having taken her position, and as chief judge now, we're very close, very close.

And again, it's *way* too much of a stereotype to say "to the right of" because on Social Security cases or cases involving people who were hurting and needed relief, she can be a real softy too.

Hughes: That's the thing that's always annoyed me about journalism is that the shades of grey often get overlooked.

Lasnik: Another great Carolyn Dimmick story, and this goes back to what used to be the old boys' network. When Becky Rowe left the prosecutor's office and went into private practice she handled her first case in federal court. And there was a status conference on it and the men on the other side really felt that they had this novice civil lawyer. Yeah she'd been in the prosecutor's office but she wasn't part of the federal bar. She had never been to federal court before. And so when they went in they were definitely trying to take advantage of her and of course it happened to be Judge Dimmick, who had seen Becky try scores of cases in the Superior Court, and they were good friends. And right away Carolyn said, "Oh Becky, you remember that Sonny McIntire case?" And they're having this personal conversation about this really gross sex crime case, and the other guys are kind of like, "Uh-oh, this is not going the way we thought it was going to go at all."

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