

The First 50 Women in Idaho Law

ADELYNE MARTHA BURRUS CHAMPERS

April 11, 1927
(1904 – 1992)



Adelyne Martha Burrus Champers was born on January 4, 1904 in Pocatello, Idaho to Fletcher Ready Burrus and Emma (Day) Burrus. Adelyne's father had a real estate, insurance and abstracting business in Pocatello. Adelyne's mother was a housewife, who took care of Adelyne and her four siblings, Susie, Ophelia, Fletcher Jr., and Mary Emma.

After growing up in Pocatello and graduating from Pocatello High School in 1921, Burrus attended the University of Washington from 1921-26. She was active on the varsity debate team, and was a member of the Kappa Delta sorority, Delta Phi (women's national honorary forensic), and Phi Delta Delta (women's honorary law). She graduated with honors in 1926 with a Bachelor of Laws degree. Immediately thereafter, on June 24, 1926 she was admitted to the Washington State Bar.

While enrolled in law school, Burrus met a fellow law student named Jesse E. Champers, a self-made man who would eventually earn four separate degrees (forestry, math/physics, civil engineering, and law). Jesse, born in Ohio, left home at the age of 14 to work on the railroad, eventually bringing him to Seattle and the University of Washington.

Burrus returned to her family in Pocatello after graduation and applied to sit for the Idaho bar exam. When asked to describe "the various reasons for your desire to adopt the practice of law as a profession" by the Idaho State Bar, Burrus replied: "At the time of entering college I selected law believing that with close application it offered an opportunity for mutual development and an honorable avocation in life, the possibility of rendering service to others and receiving a fair remuneration." One letter of recommendation to the Idaho State Bar said: "she stands unusually high as a good clean ambitious girl who is admired and respected by all who know her." With this, Burrus was admitted to practice in Idaho on April 11, 1927.

Burrus practiced in Pocatello with Drew W. ("D.W.") Standrod (a former candidate for Governor of Idaho and prominent judge) and handled a variety of cases, including a high profile probate of the will of Judge J.W. Fisher. According to news reports of the trial,

Adelaide Burrus, young woman lawyer, matched wits with Attorney Petersen, as she presented evidence in support of the will. She was assisted by D.W. Standrod. Miss Burrus won a favorable decision before Probate Judge William A. Hyde, who held that the will was valid.

This case eventually made its way to the Idaho Supreme Court, where the decision was affirmed. *Estate of Fisher*, 47 Idaho 668 (1929). In so doing, Burrus became the first woman to argue a case before the Idaho Supreme Court (and she won).

On July 17, 1929, Changers married Jesse in Pocatello and the family moved to Washington State to begin their married life. Together they had two children, a daughter, E. Lucinda Changers (Latimer) born in 1936 and a son, Jesse Changers, Jr. born in 1942. Changers did not work outside the home while her children were young and in school.

Changers' youngest sister, Mary Burrus, followed in her footsteps and received a law degree from the University of Washington and went on to become a prominent Washington lawyer herself. In fact, Mary was the attorney responsible for condemning the land upon which the Seattle airport is now located and also taught law at the University of Washington. Although Changers did not hold a full-time job outside the home for many years, she did work from time to time in her sister Mary's law office.

In 1959, when her youngest child was a senior in high school, Burrus went back to work as a lawyer in the Inheritance Tax Division for the State of Washington in Olympia, a position she held for many years. Meanwhile, her husband was involved in many engineering projects in western Washington, including the construction of the I-5 corridor from Everett to Roanoke, the Rainbow Bridge in LaConner, and many roads and highways on the Olympic peninsula.

Changers died on June 1, 1992, in San Juan County, Washington at the age of 88.