

The First 50 Women in Idaho Law

MYRNA ANNE ITZEN STAHPMAN

October 3, 1974



Myrna Anne Itzen Stahman was born in Wheaton, Minnesota, where her parents were grain farmers. She is the fifth of six children. Stahman attended Hamline University and graduated from the University of Minnesota, Morris, earning a B.A. with distinction. In 1967, she married Robert Stahman. She and Bob served in the Peace Corp in Liberia, West Africa, from 1968-70.

Upon her return to the United States, Stahman enrolled at the University of Idaho College of Law. After graduating from law school in 1974, both she and Bob joined the Army. Stahman served in the Judge Advocate Generals Corps, Third Armored Division in Frankfurt, Germany and was one of the first 25 female Army JAGC attorneys. While in Germany, Stahman's daughter Kayla was born. Kayla, following her mother's example, is now a graduate of Stanford Law School and is practicing law in Washington, D.C. A son, Jeff, was born after the Stahman family moved to Boise. Jeff, a graduate of Kansas State University, interned in golf course management in New Zealand, sharing his mother's interests in distant people and places.

In 1977, Stahman moved to Boise and went to work at the Idaho Attorney General's Office, starting in the Consumer Protection Division. In 1981, Stahman transferred to the Criminal Division Appellate Unit of the Idaho Attorney General's Office, a position she held for 24 years until her retirement in November 2004. During the course of her long career at the Attorney General's Office she received published appellate opinions in 580 cases and hundreds more unpublished opinions. Over that same time frame, she taught numerous classes at the bi-annual Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys meetings and at the annual judicial education meetings for district and magistrate judges.

In 1996, Stahman enjoyed a special assignment in Washington, D.C. as a Supreme Court Fellow with the National Association of Attorneys General. During her fellowship she had the opportunity to attend all United States Supreme Court arguments and assisted states attorneys preparing for oral arguments before the Supreme Court. Shortly after her return to Idaho she wrote an amicus curie brief on a case of interest to the development of criminal law in Idaho.

Stahman is an accomplished knitter, specializing in lacy shawls. She is frequently invited to teach knitting classes all around the United States and has also spent time in New Zealand and Australia working with wool growers and knitters. Stahman not only knits shawls, but she also designs patterns. In 2000, she published *Stahman's Shawls and Scarves: Lace Faroese-Shaped Shawls From the Neck Down and Seaman's Scarves*, a collection of her original designs. Her second book, *Variations on a Theme* will likely be published in 2005.

Stahman is a long-time advocate for young people and for women in the Boise community. She has been active in the Girl Scouts and in school literacy programs; she has gathered contributions for the Women's and Children's Alliance, and lent her hand to those attempting to improve services to victims of domestic violence throughout the state. She is an active member of the

Zonta Club, an international service organization focused on improving the status of women worldwide. Several years ago Stahman designed a dressing wire kit for knitters, which has been manufactured and sold nationwide by the Boise Zonta Club ever since, with proceeds funding several international service projects, including a scholarship at the Lester B. Pearson World College. Stahman's ingenuity did not stop there, however. Approximately a year ago, she developed a service project in which the Boise Zonta Club purchased looms in New Zealand and had them shipped to Chrissiemer, South Africa. There, a skilled and dedicated spinner/knitter/weaver teaches native South Africans to spin, weave, and knit; skills they use to support their families.

In addition to all the accomplishments summarized above, Stahman is a steadfast friend to many people. Her unwavering support has helped a lot of individuals through the hard times of their lives.

Reflecting on Stahman's life and career, former Idaho Supreme Court Justice Robert Bakes says:

Myrna Stahman was a product of the 1970s. She was one of those dedicated idealists who committed themselves to public service. She served several years in the Peace Corps in Africa, and then came to Boise where she was Assistant Attorney General handling criminal appeals before the Supreme Court. She handled dozens of criminal cases before the Supreme Court, and was a strong law and order advocate for the prosecution. As a result she often disagreed with, and engaged in spirited arguments with Justice Bistline, who was an advocate for the rights of the criminal defendant. To her credit, Myrna stood her ground and was not intimidated by questions from the Justices.

Stahman retired from the practice of law on November 1, 2004 and lives in Boise.