

Alumni Notes

Belle Case La Follette

Women in Law School

What follows is an excerpt from a chapter prepared for a book about University Women published by the Office for Women, a part of the University's Central Administration. This chapter, written by the Gargoyle, deals with women in the Law School. Audrey Roberts and Marian Swoboda are co-editors.

In her biography of her husband, Robert La Follette, Sr., Belle Case La Follette (class of 1885) seldom mentions herself. One of her rare personal comments follows:

When our first baby, Fola, was born, I was profoundly happy. During the first year of infancy her care absorbed my thought and time. I experienced wonderful contentment and restfulness of spirit, although I had never been troubled over problems of a career . . . I am sure there is no inherent conflict in a mother's taking good care of her children, developing her talents, and continuing to work along lines adapted to motherhood and homemaking.

Bob was the first to suggest that I take the University of Wisconsin law course. It did not require much urging to convince me I could do so without neglecting my child and other home duties. The course was then two years. I entered in 1883 and was graduated in 1885, being the first woman to graduate from the University of Wisconsin Law School.

It appears that Belle La Follette was misinformed. The earliest alumni directory lists Elsie M. Buck as a graduate in the class of 1875; however, skimpy records prevent us from asserting with certainty that she was the first Law School graduate. Buck mar-



ried John H. Bottensek, also a member of the class of 1875. She never practiced law but was an instructor in art at Lawrence College.

Belle La Follette had a natural interest in law and lawyers. She worked closely with her husband when he was Dane County district attorney. As a college girl she was a prize-winning debator as well as a brilliant student. She was a writer of great accomplishment, a leader of the suffrage movement and a founder of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She was a founder and editor of *La Follette's Weekly* which has become in our generation the *Progressive Magazine*. She wrote occasional briefs for her husband during his few years of practice. Early in his career as Dane County district attorney, La Follette, when praised by the Chief Justice of Wisconsin for a brilliant brief, admitted to the court that it had been written from "start to finish" by his wife.

But she never practiced law.

Joel P. Smith, Class of 1961, has recently been appointed vice-president for development at Stanford University in Palo Alto, California. A graduate of Beloit College and Oxford University in England, Mr. Smith had a brief career as a practicing lawyer before he joined the staff at Stanford. He served as President of Denison University in Granville, Ohio, between 1969 and 1975.

In his law student days, Mr. Smith was note editor of the Wisconsin Law Review and was elected a member of the Order of the Coif.

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Professor August G. Eckhardt, Professor of Law at the University of Arizona School of Law, Tucson, has written a glowing review of Professor Stuart Gullickson's recently published book, *Structuring a General Practice Course*, for the ALI-ABA CLE Review. Professor Eckhardt, during his long career on the U.W. Law Faculty, was director for a time of the U.W. Law Extension Program.

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