

Profiles in Diversity Journal®

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Kathleen McClurg Wiljanen
Kindred Healthcare, Inc.

Christine W. Wallace
NCR Corporation

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Illinois Tool Works Inc.

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Salt River Project

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CSC

Lynne Fischman Uniman
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Lynne Fischman Uniman

Andrews Kurth LLP

I entered the practice of law in 1979, young, scared, and doubtful of my ability. As one of only a handful of women in a profession and a practice dominated by men, I was intimidated to say the least. With few female mentors to guide me, I relied for assistance upon the men around me who knew what it took to succeed. Many were sincerely helpful; others were actually inadvertently so.

In that day, associates, both male and female, were treated with less regard than they are today. We were commodities that could be replaced in a heartbeat, yet we all wanted the coveted “Wall Street Firm” training and prestige. Frequently, I’d be summoned into a partner’s office with no warning and no explanation of what was needed. Immediately, I’d climb up the stairs and report to his office, only to be sent down again to retrieve a stack of files. Upon returning, I’d be sent back down for another stack. I didn’t need a gym to stay very fit in those days.

You have to know what is expected of you, then go the extra mile.

Other times, I’d be called into a partner’s office, only to sit and wait, often for long stretches of time, while he finished whatever business he was in the middle of. It may sound demeaning today to be treated as part of the furniture or wallpaper, but it was the best training I could have received.

The partners, without intending to mentor, train, or guide, were allowing us, the lowly associates, to listen in on high-level conversations that we would never have been privy to otherwise. And thus, I learned to practice law—on my feet, going up and down the stairs, and sitting in a partner’s office like an ornament on his desk.

The advice I would give to young professionals today is to try to learn from whatever experiences are offered to you. Because I felt that I was treated differently for being female, as a manager I learned to treat all employees with respect, regardless of gender or title. You have to know what is expected of you, then go the extra mile. And most of all, make others feel confident and comfortable when a matter is in your hands.



TITLE: Partner

EDUCATION: BA, New York University, summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa; LLM (taxation), New York University; JD, cum laude, Brooklyn Law School

FIRST JOB: Legal: Office of the Chief Counsel Internal Revenue Service; Non-legal: Salesperson at B. Altman & Co.

WHAT I’M READING: *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen

MY PHILOSOPHY: Never give up.

FAMILY: Married with two children, a daughter and a son

INTERESTS: Reading classic literature, interior design, and travel

FAVORITE CHARITY: Bide-A-Wee Association

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COMPANY: Andrews Kurth LLP

HEADQUARTERS: Houston, Texas

WEB SITE: www.andrewskurth.com

BUSINESS: Law firm

ANNUAL REVENUES: \$251 million

EMPLOYEES: 882