

GOOD STUFF

Producing Dreams: The Sarah T. Hughes Diversity Scholarship

What happens when lawyers create opportunities for exceptional diversity students? Good future lawyers. That's what.

In 1919, at the age of 23, Sarah Tilghman Hughes was one of two women in her class at The George Washington University Law School. Sarah Hughes didn't stop at being one of a rare few women practicing law. She was the first female district judge in Texas and the first woman to serve as a federal district judge in Texas. Judge Hughes swore in Lyndon Johnson aboard Air Force One following the assassination of John F. Kennedy and was one of a three-judge panel that first heard the case of *Roe v. Wade*.

Sarah T. Hughes made a difference in the lives of women and minorities in Dallas but her impact was felt beyond city limits. Did Judge Hughes know that her legacy would reach a young girl in Pakistan? Or unite a diverse group of Dallas lawyers in her name?

THE SCHOLARSHIP

In 1981, five years before her death, the Sarah T. Hughes Diversity Scholarship was established at Southern Methodist University's Dedman School of Law by the Dallas Bar Foundation. The Scholarship is to allow exceptional diversity students the opportunity to obtain a law degree with the hope that they will pursue their legal careers in Dallas.

THE BAR NONE SHOW

The Dallas Bar Foundation needed funding. In 1985, *Bar None*, a show making fun of lawyers and the profession, was conceived. The Entertainment Committee's newest member, Martha Hardwick Hofmeister, was asked to make the show a reality.

Not only is *Bar None* still run by Hofmeister, it is also produced, directed, written, choreographed and performed by lawyers. Don't cringe at the thought. These lawyers are



actually good and the show is often irreverent and pretty darn funny. Each show parodies songs (such as Michael Jackson's Thriller; Tradition! from The Fiddler on the Roof and Queen's Bohemian Rhapsody) and offers up original skits making fun of the legal profession.

The show doesn't just raise money for the Sarah T. Hughes Diversity Scholarships, although it has raised \$1.2 million in its history. For many, it has become a family of sorts. The relationships formed among the cast members during the frenetic six-week rehearsal period last beyond the final curtain call each June. Laughs aren't the only thing the cast produces. A few marriages and some resulting Bar None Babies have been created as well. This family of lawyers has fun in the good times and bands together to offer support in bad times. Meals are delivered, hospitals are visited, and parties are thrown. There's even an annual trip to New York City to catch the latest Broadway shows.

It takes an inordinate amount of work to put on a show, so why does Ms. Hofmeister continue to do it after 23 years? "I am a part of a project that is meaningful to my community and

my profession. It is more fun than effort and it's introduced me to many cherished friends," she said.

THE SCHOLARS

To date, forty-three men and women have been granted the Scholarship. Who are these recipients? First year law student, Ann Chao from Garland, Texas, earned her undergraduate degree in business management from SMU. After graduation, she went to work for Perot Systems and last August completed a Masters degree in alternative dispute resolution. When looking at law schools, staying close to her family was mandatory. "For about ten years my dad was really sick," Ann said. "I wouldn't have been able to go to SMU and stay near my family if it weren't for the Scholarship."

I asked Ann about her biggest aspiration. After a long pause and a laugh she says, "I don't know, be the President of the United States?" After having spent twenty minutes with Ms. Ann Chao, I have no doubt that if she has political aspirations, she will achieve them.

Third year law student, Fatima Shah, began her life in the foothills of the Himalayas in northwest Pakistan. She graduated at the top of her high school class, scoring the highest grades in the history of the school. "My parents always encouraged me to study," she said. After high school, adhering to cultural expectations, Fatima was introduced to her husband. "My parents took finding husbands for their daughters very seriously," Fatima said. Her future husband, originally from Pakistan, was living and studying in the United States, but returned to Pakistan to meet Fatima's parents. "Ali and I met and two days later I was married," Fatima said. Ali returned to the United States, Fatima remained in Pakistan awaiting her immigration documents. Their courtship began after the marriage was official. Their relationship began like so many do: over the phone. Still in Pakistan, preparing for her move to the United States, and anxious to continue her education, Fatima began studying for the SATs. On her 21st birthday, Fatima was on her way to Fort Worth, Texas to begin her life with Ali.

A quiet confidence exuding from her, Fatima explains that she attended the University of Texas at Arlington and studied political science on scholarship. She is humble. She earned a 3.975 grade point average. When applying to law school, she said, "SMU was my first choice. I don't think we would have done it without the scholarship." Speaking of Ali, she said, "He's very supportive. He is different from all the others. I was lucky I got married to him and not somebody else." Fatima Shah has taken full advantage of the Scholarship and the opportunities available to her. She is in the top of her class, an Articles Editor of the International Law Review, and has clerked for two judges. She mentions that Ali is next door at the SMU Book Store waiting for her. "Can I meet him?" I said. Fatima laughs and takes me next door. Ali is charming and it is clear that he is proud of his wife. I'd lay bets on the fact that Judge Hughes would be, too.

Did Judge Hughes know that the trail she blazed would result in the opportunity for young men and women to realize their dreams? Did she know that, in her name, a very special community would be born? I'm not sure, but I do know that Judge Hughes is the reason this group of people comes together to welcome into their fold new generations of lawyers and friends.

"Did Judge Hughes know that her legacy would reach a young girl in Pakistan?"

