

Channeling History

To the Editor:

Kudos to the *Michigan Bar Journal* for its outstanding “Michigan Lawyers in History” series. Author Carrie Sharlow’s writing is interesting, informative, and shows the colorful side of some of the most influential persons in the history of the practice of law in our great state.

From Ms. Sharlow’s September 2011 piece on Gilbert Moyers who, as a state senator, authored the 1857 legislation providing for compensation for court-appointed attorneys, to the January 2012 feature on Michigan Supreme Court Justice William W. Potter, who was the “father of the State Bar” in 1935, we learn of the extraordinary efforts of those who came before us to make the practice of law more competent and more available to indigent criminal defendants.

In the September 2012 issue, Ms. Sharlow treated readers to the story of Lizzie J. McSweeney, the first female graduate of

the Detroit College of Law who, in 1893, became the first woman lawyer in Wayne County. The daughter of Irish immigrants who fled the potato famine, Ms. McSweeney is the first of a long line of women attorneys, of Irish descent and otherwise, who have gone on to serve with great distinction in the bar and on the bench in Wayne County.

Ms. Sharlow’s October 2012 article about U.S. District Judge Stephen J. Roth and the indignities he suffered when he was assigned the Detroit public schools desegregation cases in the 1970s, and the December 2012 article about then-Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Homer S. Ferguson, later U.S. senator and ambassador, and his battles to fight corruption in the city of Detroit and Wayne County in the 1930s and ’40s, serve to show that corruption and efforts to intimidate the judiciary have a long and continued history in our state.

The attorneys featured in the “Michigan Lawyers in History” series bring home the fact that members of the State Bar of Michi-

gan have been at the forefront of the battle to follow the rule of law, protect the public, and improve the competence of our profession. Perhaps even more evident, however, is that the work must go on and the cause endures.

Hon. Michael J. Riordan
Detroit

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