

Pride Issue

Every year, June commemorates Pride Month, a month of LGBTQ+ awareness, advocacy, and celebration in honor of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising. For me, as a gay man and father of four, Pride Month is a month of celebration—of our identities, love, and differences. Despite the challenges that face our LGBTQ+ community today, including current legislative and cultural attacks on our transgender community, our LGBTQ+ community has much to celebrate: courtroom victories, boardroom representation, and living room acceptance gained over the last decade. Nonetheless, members of our community continue to be marginalized, discriminated against, and silenced because of who we are—something many of us experience regularly.

In honor of Pride Month this year, the 51st year of Pride celebrations, the latest edition of *LWI Lives* focuses on celebrating members of our LGBTQ+ community, their careers, and the impact of their identities on their lives. We celebrate these voices this month in hopes that one day—perhaps even in the lifetime of my children—our LGBTQ+ community will achieve the freedom from discrimination, equality, and acceptance we deserve.

- Adam Eckart

Cheryl Bratt: Education in Grit



By Adam Eckart

In ninth grade, Cheryl's father sat her down after a long field hockey season spent on the bench. Although she may not have been a star athlete, he told her that he was proud of her for working hard and sticking it out—traits that ran deep in her family.

(Continued on page 2)

Judy Stinson: Thankful and Inspiring



By Stephanie Rae Williams

Judy Stinson is a Clinical Professor of Law Emerita at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. After admiring Judy for years, I was delighted when she agreed to an *LWI Lives* profile. I was also surprised that we had never profiled Judy, our 2013 Thomas F. Blackwell Memorial Award Winner and a past-president of ALWD. I learned Judy is a fun, positive, humble professor who values personal connections and family.

(Continued on page 5)

Cheryl Bratt

(Continued from page 1)

The next year, Cheryl's father passed away, but Cheryl held his lessons in grit and hard work forever, employing such skills throughout academics, and life.

Cheryl grew up in the New York suburbs, the daughter of two hard working first-generation Americans. Her grandparents had immigrated to New York decades before, and her parents were first-generation college graduates. Cheryl lived the typical suburban upbringing as the middle child of three girls, with her mom working as a teacher and her father in business and then as a lawyer. Her parents instilled grit and hard work in their daughters from the beginning, and by example—each earning advanced degrees in the evenings while raising their children.

Although she was a good student, Cheryl often had her focus elsewhere. It wasn't until high school, when she joined the debate team, that her focus changed. First, the debate team improved her writing and fostered an increased interest in learning. Second, it opened new doors, offering Cheryl a chance to attend a debate camp at the University of Michigan after freshman year of high school. In Ann Arbor, six hundred miles from home, Cheryl felt cool in a nerdy kind of way.

Returning home, Cheryl found her father in declining health. After his death, the family struggled, each in their own way. In addition, Cheryl was also struggling with her sexual identity, beginning to realize that she was different. With her older sister away for college, Cheryl was now the oldest child at home, and in her gritty kind of way, Cheryl dug into her academics—in part as a way to honor her father.

Craving change and the ability to explore new places, Cheryl initially wanted to attend college in California. When her mother said that Cheryl couldn't leave the Eastern Time Zone, her fond memories of Ann Arbor led her to choose Michigan. There, Cheryl majored in Women's Studies and English, and made the decision to come out. It was a turning point in pop culture with respect to gay rights—Ellen DeGeneres had just come out on the TV sitcom "Ellen" in 1997 and there was a feeling in Cheryl's community that a sea change in women's rights, LGBTQ rights, and activism was on the horizon.

After college, Cheryl accepted a job with Teach for America, teaching eighth grade language arts in New Orleans. Coupling the challenges of being a first-time teacher with the realities of working in a disenfranchised and under-resourced community, Cheryl's first semester was difficult. But despite her racial, religious, and sexual orientation differences, Cheryl's grittiness helped her through that first semester. As she gained more experience, Cheryl went from surviving to thriving, with 98% of her students passing the high-stakes exam at the end of her second year. And despite the environment requiring her to cover her sexual orientation, Cheryl still loved New Orleans: the festivals, culture and revelry.

As Cheryl's time in New Orleans came to an end, Hurricane Katrina was rolling in. Cheryl evacuated and went home to New York, considering next steps. She ultimately decided on law school, despite the pain in knowing her father



Cheryl's kids preparing for law school



Playing with the kids

Cheryl Bratt

(Continued from page 2)

would not be there to see it. Cheryl took the LSAT and shortly thereafter embarked on a journey to Africa, seven time zones away.

In Africa, Cheryl served as a paralegal to the Legal Advisor to the Government of Eritrea, traveling throughout Eritrea to interview villagers and assess war damages stemming from the 1998-2000 Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict. Covering her sexual orientation once again—for fear of imprisonment and her life—not many of Cheryl's colleagues or acquaintances knew about her sexual orientation, but such covering would become increasingly harder soon.

Cheryl traveled back to the University of Michigan for law school where her assigned LGBTQ mentor was a young 2L, Sue Dyer. They met at a summer job Q&A session where Cheryl uncharacteristically approached Sue, a panelist. At the end of Cheryl's 1L year, they started dating. Cheryl and Sue continued their law school career together, and graduated in successive years. When Sue landed a job in Boston, Cheryl wasn't far behind, first serving as a clerk in Philadelphia for the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania and then in Boston for the First Circuit.

Cheryl and Sue decided to marry in 2011. Marriage equality had yet to come before the Supreme Court, so instead of getting married in New York or in Sue's home state of Rhode Island, Cheryl and Sue settled for a small wedding ceremony in Massachusetts, where marriage was legal under the 2004 ruling in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health*, followed by a reception back in Rhode Island—the best that they could do with the existing legal status of marriage equality. After all, that sea change that felt like it was coming over a decade ago had only begun to arrive in certain places.

Newly married, Cheryl moved on to big law, working as a litigation associate in Boston at WilmerHale. At Wilmer, Cheryl specialized in securities litigation and also represented a variety of pro bono clients in education and family law matters.

Two years into her work at Wilmer, Cheryl's mentor and friend, Beth Wilensky, was expecting, and Michigan needed someone to teach legal writing for the semester. Convincing Wilmer to let her take a few months away, Cheryl went back to Michigan to teach in Michigan's Legal Practice Program, just as Sue was called away to help build out Ropes & Gray's Hong Kong office, thus putting them 14 time zones apart.

Despite the distance from Sue, Cheryl loved being back in the classroom and on campus. But personal life in Michigan was sometimes hard—under the Defense of Marriage Act, Cheryl's marriage was only legal in Massachusetts. While in Michigan, marriage equality briefly came to the Wolverine State when the state's same-sex marriage ban was invalidated. But despite the victory, the Sixth Circuit stayed the enforcement the next day, and upheld the ban on same-sex marriage six months later. It was not until a year later, with *Obergefell v. Hodges*, that Michigan, and all states, were required to grant (and recognize) same-sex marriages.

After her semester at Michigan, Cheryl knew that she wanted to pursue life in academia. Following a brief return to Wilmer in Boston, Cheryl embarked on her career in academia: first for a year as a Fellow back at Michigan in its Pediatric Advocacy



Ice skating with Ilan

Cheryl Bratt

(Continued from page 3)



Clinic, and then for two years as Assistant Director of Harvard Law School's Child Advocacy Program. But another Boston-based school had always been on Cheryl's radar. When Boston College had an opening in its Law Practice program for the 2016-2017 academic year, Cheryl applied and got it.

Starting her sixth year at Boston College next fall, Cheryl is one of several "out" faculty members; is one of the faculty advisors to Lambda, a LGBTQ student group; and has since earned a new title: Mom. Cheryl and Sue are proud parents to Ilan, named for Cheryl's father (5 years old), and Gabriel (2 years old). Cheryl and Sue live with their kids in Newton, Massachusetts, a mile from Boston College, where their same-sex marriage is well-accepted, if not commonplace, nearly 20 years after *Goodrich*.

What so many members of our LGBTQ community dream of, Cheryl and Sue are living—the normalcy of family life: shuttling kids to activities, managing play dates, and enjoying the exhaustion of chasing little ones. It is their time as a family that they enjoy most: spending time at the beach, riding bikes through the neighborhood, exploring playgrounds, and watching little league games.

Cheryl's life today is a long way from New Orleans, Africa and Hong Kong, and even further from the life Cheryl imagined when she was in high school, when marriage and children seemed impossible. Her grittiness and hard work paid off—in her professional life, and also in her personal life. In that way, despite the challenges so many in our LGBTQ community still face, the sea change Cheryl first felt was coming at Michigan has arrived, at least on most days in Newton, Massachusetts.

To get in touch with Cheryl, you can email her cheryl.bratt@bc.edu or follow her on Twitter at [@CherylBratt](https://twitter.com/CherylBratt).



Cheryl and her family

If you or someone you know is struggling with or has questions about sexual orientation or sexual identity, please visit the following resources:

It Gets Better Project: <https://itgetsbetter.org>

PFLAG: <https://pflag.org>

The Trevor Project: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org>

Trans Lifeline: <https://translifeline.org>

Judy Stinson

(Continued from page 1)

Before I asked Judy about an *LWI Lives* profile, I had registered for the newly-established ASU lecture in Judy's honor. I attended the wonderful March 25, 2021 Judy Stinson Lecture to learn about Justice Sotomayor's Rhetoric of Settings from the speaker, UNLV Professor of Law Emerita Linda Berger, but I also gained insight into Judy. For example, Dean Doug Sylvester began the event by thanking Judy, explaining, "But for her efforts," the school "probably would have been in receivership." Dean Sylvester also described Judy as a professor of "unbelievable tireless passion" and "humanity." For her part, Judy thanked our field "full of helpful, generous mentors and life-long friends." But one of the most intriguing points came from a photo at the end of the event, showing Judy in front of a flashy orange sports car.

Of course, I asked Judy about that sleek orange car first, and learned it was a Lamborghini. While Judy and I both drive "beat up old minivans," her youngest son loves cars. Therefore, when she was out with friends and saw a group of fancy cars at a valet stand, she had a pal take the photo and sent it to her son. She told him she was thinking of buying the Lamborghini. Judy explained: "I was trying to convince my [then] fifteen-year-old I was cooler than I am." Alas, the coolness attempt failed, but she has a fun story and photo to share.



Judy and the orange Lamborghini

Judy grew up in Tucson, and she moved back to the desert from the Midwest when she was ready to start a family. In addition to their now sixteen-year-old, Judy and her wife have two older boys, aged twenty-six and twenty. LRW teaching is indeed a small world, and we discovered Judy's middle son and my oldest son attend the same college in Chicago. Judy's boys are close, and she's grateful she was able to raise them near extended family in Tucson and the Phoenix area. ASU posted a legal writing director position just as Judy was ready to return, and Judy explained this was just one way "it all worked out" for her professionally and personally. Considering all of the hard work Judy did to enhance our profession, it's clear Judy toiled plenty to create her wonderful career, but like many of us, she also feels quite lucky.

Chatting with Judy, I learned she loves teaching LRW in part because she enjoys "sitting and talking to people" and making personal connections. She likes seeing the "lightbulbs go off" with her 1Ls, and finds watching them "grow and learn so much in that first year very rewarding." In fact, Judy liked teaching LRW from her first days as an LLM student and new teacher at University of Illinois, even though when she started teaching writing she thought it would be "on the way to" other teaching. At ASU, Judy taught many upper division writing courses, electives, and first-year writing. She also served in several Deanships.



Judy teaching

Judy Stinson

(Continued from page 5)

Judy's awards and publications take a significant amount of space on her CV, so I asked what publication she is most proud of, and why. Judy chose her 2010 article in the *Brooklyn Law Review*, *Why Dicta Becomes Holding and Why It Matters*. She said this article gave her "a chance to explore a topic [she] was really interested in and taught," and also "helped jumpstart" her scholarship. While writing her first major piece on dicta, Judy realized writing "is so much fun," and resolved to publish something each year. Judy stressed how helpful it is when your teaching and scholarship connect, a great lesson for all of us.

This month, we are giving special focus to LGBTQ+ issues, so Judy and I discussed her work mentoring students and teaching *Sexual Orientation and the Law* and *Sexuality and the Law*. I also asked about challenges serving on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee of the State Bar of Arizona, for example, and Judy laughed and told me "challenges" was the right word. She served on the committee in 2008, when the law did not provide any protections for the LGBTQ+ community. And while some things have changed "pretty dramatically for the better," progress is slow. Judy explained she was "at least fortunate to work with people on the committee who had a lot of energy and dedication," and so they "didn't move mountains, but did move forward."

We talked about how wonderful it is to see students list activities like OUTlaw on their resumes now. Judy loves the way current students perceive that listing an LGBTQ+ affiliation "should be a positive, or at least neutral," compared to twenty-seven years ago. When Judy was at Illinois, literally none of her students were out, from fear they would not be employable or would face other discrimination. Judy noted the state of Arizona is becoming more open, and we discussed how accepting our children are, especially compared to so many in our (older) generation. Ironically, we both still teach students to use "he/she" pronouns (or find a way to eliminate the need for gendered pronouns, such as by using plural nouns when possible) to best represent clients, even as we hope to find a way to move legal writing past traditional gendered pronoun agreement.

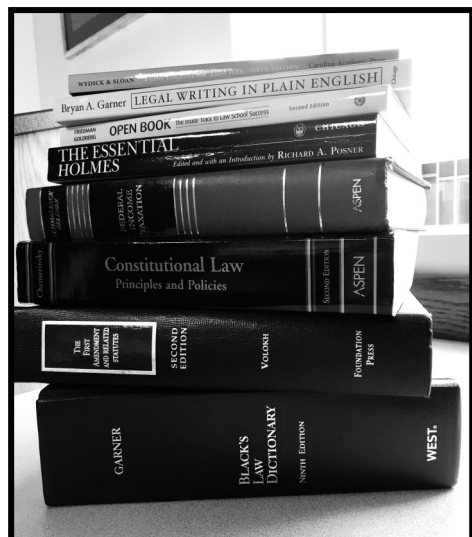


Judy and her wife on their 2019 Alaska Cruise, as she notes:
"back when people travelled"

Students regularly select Judy for teaching awards. Judy enjoys getting to know students, but said her students might be surprised to learn that, "despite being kind of an old fuddy-duddy," she has watched all the Marvel movies and six installments of the *Fast and Furious* franchise. Judy does not generally enjoy action movies, but her boys do—especially the youngest—so they have fun watching these movies as a family.

Finally, I asked Judy what excites her most about starting a new chapter in retirement. Judy explained that "so many people made [her] career better than ever imagined," and she will miss her colleagues and students. However, she is looking forward to spending more time seeing extended family and "travelling as soon as that's an option."

Many thanks to Judy for sharing with us and always inspiring us. You can reach Judy at judith.stinson@asu.edu.



LWI Lives

LWI Lives is a regular electronic publication of the LWI Lives Committee, which explores and communicates the emerging identity of LWI and its members. We have in common the commitment to being the best legal writing professors that we can be. But we are multi-dimensional people with different strengths, interests, curiosities, and gifts. By profiling individuals in our community, we hope to expand and develop our understanding of who we are and what we aspire to be.

The LWI Lives Committee is organized into three teams, and each team is responsible for selecting, proposing, and writing the three profiles in each issue. To ensure a diverse newsletter, teams propose individual names to the Co-Chairs, and the Co-Chairs review the suggestions to ensure a wide range of coverage over time.

If you have someone in mind who we should put on the list for a future newsletter, please feel free to email any of the committee members listed below. Please include a note explaining why you think the individual's profile would be particularly interesting.

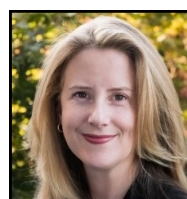
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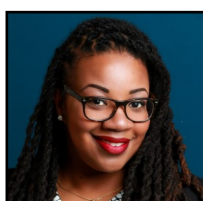
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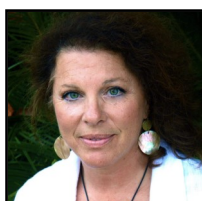
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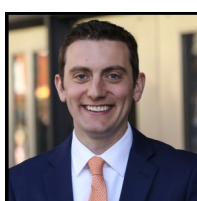
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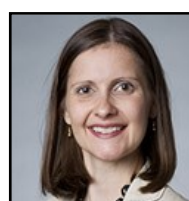
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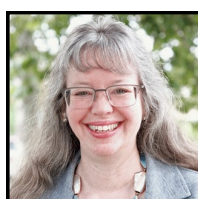
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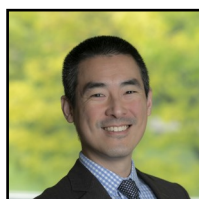
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