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## Against the Odds

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## Against the Odds

Jane Bond

Hail Akron Submittal

I should never have become a lawyer. The odds against it were too great. But it happened because the University of Akron School of Law had a night program. It was a remnant from the postwar years in the early fifties when young men had to work their way through law school and attending evening classes made that possible. But such an opportunity was never intended for someone like me.

In 1973 I was living in Akron, a young, single mother with two little girls, ages two and three. I had a journalism degree from Ohio University but could not get a job in my chosen field because women were suitable only for the society pages and as the exceptional "tough dame" reporter. When the facts of my situation were discovered at a job interview, I was out the door.

Law was becoming a hot area as the Nixon presidency began to crumble. Feminism was slowly rolling through society and increasingly women were looking at law schools as real possibilities for the first time. I was part of that wave and applied as a night student at UA School of Law. Only ten women were admitted in the Fall of '73. Most were married and I was the only one who was single with children. Of course, I could never have carried a full course load as a mother. The Admissions Dean was skeptical that I could do it even part time.

I started that Fall, working part-time during the day and using one critical lifeline, the University Childcare Program on campus. Having nearby childcare for my girls during the day in a high quality program while I studied and worked downtown was essential. During my evening classes, I had a babysitter in my home.

At the end of the first quarter as I began studying for exams, I was exhausted. Maybe the skeptics were right. I realized I couldn't keep going. Something had to change. Either I had to quit school or quit my job or give away my children. So I quit my job. Money had been tight before but now I was taking a vow of poverty.

I went to the Dean's office and said I wanted to enroll in the full-time day program. There was consternation. I had started as an evening student and had to stay in the evening tract for my sequential course work. No one was both a day student and a night student. It was finally decided that I would remain a night student and add day classes. So I became a full-time and a part-time student. I wanted to graduate in three years with the day students but I had "lost" a quarter so I had to keep up and catch up.

The next years passed in a fog. I knew I had to do exceptionally well to get a job after graduation and overcome my double bind of being a woman and a mother. So I submitted a case note for the law review. When that was accepted for publication, I decided to submit a comment as well so my overachiever credentials would be obvious. My years at UA were difficult but at key points someone stepped up and I got the help I needed. I did graduate in three years and went on to a career in law and the judiciary. My daughters are also UA grads, one in education and the other in law. Our lives, like thousands of others have been shaped by the University. Hail, Akron!

Judge Jane Bond, ret.  
Summit County Common Pleas Court