

Wanda Borges '72 Credits Multi-Cultural Upbringing and Strong Women with Inspiring Successful Law Career



Photo provided by Wanda Borges

Strong women have always inspired Wanda Borges '72. When listing strong women who shaped her, Borges gives much inspirational credit to her mother. Yet, it is the Sisters of Mercy she says that helped to germinate her thirst for lifelong learning — a thirst that would eventually lead her to a now 43-year career in law.

“Mercy nuns were there for me every step. My mother was very close to them growing up,” said Borges, who recalls her mother sewing for the nuns in her school. Raised in the Bronx, she and her older sister, Cynthia, were both educated at St. Catherine’s Academy, an all-girls school in the Catholic tradition.

Her parents, born in Puerto Rico, intent on both of their daughters assimilating into American culture, were adamant that they not learn Spanish and speak only English in and out of the home. “It was a different time then,” said Borges, explaining how her parents in the '50s and '60s strived to ease the pathway of success for their children when multi-culturalism was not as embraced as it is today.

Her mother’s job as a secretary and legal assistant for a female attorney in the legal department of Paramount

Pictures Corp. first sparked Borges’ interest in the field of law. “I remember going into this library with ladders all around just looking in complete awe at the shelves of law books that reached almost to the ceiling,” said Borges. “This exposure introduced me to a possibility I never considered before. I wanted to read each one of those books.”

Following high school, Borges accepted a scholarship to attend Mercy College, where Cynthia, also on scholarship, was entering her senior year. She majored in Modern Foreign Languages; a career in law only played softly in the background of her mind. By junior year she began a part-time job as a secretary at the law firm of Jules Teitelbaum. Through this new role, she reconnected to an aspiration she’d temporarily set aside because of the burden of law school expenses.

“My goal was not to remain a secretary after four years of college,” said Borges. “Jules Teitelbaum offered me an intriguing option toward pursuing a career in law,” explains Borges, by offering her the chance to clerk for the bar. This rare pathway once allowed applicants to obtain a law degree by registering with the Clerk of the Court of Appeals of the State of New York to read and study law under the tutelage of a practicing attorney. Tenaciously working for Teitelbaum’s firm by day and studying law after-hours, Borges plowed through a grueling schedule toward her dream.

Upon completing this apprenticeship, she passed the bar exam and was admitted to practice law in New York in 1979. Borges began to distinguish herself in her career at a time when the door had just begun to open wider for women in the field of law, continuing at her mentor’s firm specializing in bankruptcy and commercial law.

In 1985, she became a partner of her mentor’s law firm, Jules Teitelbaum, P.C. and upon Jules’

demise, Borges created the firm Teitelbaum, Braverman & Borges, P.C. In 2000, she created Borges Donovan LLC, the predecessor to Borges & Associates, LLC, where she continues to practice today in Syosset, NY. Her firm represents corporate clients in commercial bankruptcy matters and litigation.

Today, Borges is a nationally recognized lecturer and author on various legal topics regarding corporate and commercial law and has no plans to slow down. Among her many credits are the role of past president of the Commercial Law League of America, having also chaired its bankruptcy and creditors’ rights sections. She has served and continues to serve on several boards, including the Board of Regents of Empire College (now Excelsior College), the Fairfield County Chorale and the International Association of Commercial Collectors. She has taught college courses at Elizabeth Seton College and professional credit courses at the NACM Graduate School of Credit and Financial Management. She has authored and edited for numerous professional journals and magazines. She provided dedicated leadership to her alma mater in the '90s, serving nine years as a member of Mercy’s Board of Trustees, with four years as its chair.

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Borges still draws from her days learning from the self-discipline of the Sisters of Mercy who she said set the bar high for other women to empower themselves. “Their example instilled a strong desire to learn and achieve more,” said Borges. “I continue to learn every day of my life.”