

WHO'S WHO ABSTRACT 1988

ABELLA. Hon. Rosalie Silberman BA LLB
(Resides in Toronto)

Born: Stuttgart, Germany. 1 July 1946

Daughter of: Jacob Sumer and Fanny (Krongold) Silberman

Educated: Bathurst Hts. SS. Toronto 1964, Univ Coll. University of Toronto
BA 1967 LLB 1970 LLD (Hon), Dalhousie Univ 1985
Queens Univ 1983, McMaster Univ 1986, Univ of Windsor 1988

Married: Irving Martin A. 8 December 1968
Two sons, Jacob Julian, Zachary Joshua.

Employment etc: Chairman, Ontario Labour Relations Board 1984 - present day. Judge Ontario Family Court 1976-87. Call to Bar of Ontario 1972. Private law practice 1972-76. Comnr. Ont. Human Rights Comn. 1975-80. Co-Chmn University of Toronto Academic Discipline Tribunal 1976-84. Mem. Ont. Public Service Labour Relations Tribunal 1976-84. Mem. Premier's Adv. Comte on Confed 1977-82; Chmn. Study on Access to Legal Services by Disabled 1982-83. Sole Comnr. Royal Comn. on Equality in Employment 1983-84. Dir. Internat. Comn. Jurists (Cdn. Sect.). Dir. Cdn. Inst. Adm. Justice. Dir. Inst. for Resch. on Public Policy. Dir. Cdn. Council of Christians and Jews. Names B'Nai Brith Woman of Year 1977.

Publications: "Equality in Employment" 1984
"Access to Legal Services by Disabled" 1983
Various articles legal journals.
Co-ed "Family Law: Dimension of Justice" 1983.
"Justice Beyond Orwell" 1985.

Recreations: Music, reading

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01 ** PEOPLE WATCH **

** People always feel better after they talk to *Rosalie*Abella**

STEVIE CAMERON

It doesn't matter who you ask about Judge *Rosalie*Abella, *they all say the same thing: "I always feel better after I talk to Rosie."

Don't bother searching for parts, adds Toronto lawyer Edward Greenspan; "there aren't any. I met her in second-year university and she is the most wonderful person I have ever known in my whole life."

Only 40, with so much still before her, Rosie Abella has already affected Canada's history. From 1983 to 1984, she conducted a one-woman royal commission on employment equity, commissioned by former employment and immigration minister Lloyd Axworthy when the Liberals were in power.

Last June 27, the Conservative Government, under the firm guidance of Employment and Immigration Minister Flora MacDonald, pushed through Bill C-62 based on Judge Abella's report, making employment equity the law of the land.

This bill is now bubbling its way through the system and it will mean fairer treatment in the job market for hundreds of thousands of Canadian women, disabled people and members of minority groups.

Judge Abella gives all the credit for the bill to Miss MacDonald, but Miss MacDonald, now Minister of Communications, hands it right back.

"Her mandate was to look at employment equity in eleven Crown corporations," the minister said. "She said, 'Why eleven? Let's look at them all.' In fact, she went beyond that to look at all federally regulated businesses. Rosie has always seen the bigger picture in everything she's tackled."

The two women talk on the phone a lot. "You come off the phone from talking to Rosie feeling better," says Miss MacDonald in that old familiar refrain. "She makes me say to myself, 'Well, things aren't nearly as bad as I thought.'"

Judge Abella, a pre-Raphaelite sprite with tumbling hair, an elfin creature in a red dress with red stockings and red shoes, dances into rooms and hugs her friends. She has 1,000 best friends, but as one of them, Maureen O'Neil, who is director-general of the Canadian Human Rights Commission, says, "her friendships aren't the shallow kind you

carry on over lunch."

"I flatter myself that she's only pretending with all those other people and that I'm really her best friend," says York University president Harry Arturs, former dean of Osgoode Hall Law School. "But she doesn't get by on being adorable. She has a quick mind and works very hard."

Her energy is legendary. Ten years ago, when she was 29 and seven months pregnant with her second child, former Ontario attorney-general Roy McMurtry appointed her a judge in the family court. Today, she is chairman of the Ontario Labor Relations Board.

She's published four books and 22 articles. She's given dozens of lectures and speeches in Canada, Europe and the United States. She's been awarded three honorary degrees. Her volunteer work for the University of Toronto, provincial boards and commissions, the arts community, the Jewish community and the legal community fills pages of a curriculum vitae. Colleagues say that someday she will be on the Supreme Court of Canada.

Last May, Toronto Life magazine listed her among the 50 most influential people in Toronto. Only one other woman, businesswoman Sonja Beta, made the list.

Why Rosie?

"Because she's a powerhouse in six different fields," publisher Peter Herrndorf says. "Law, women's issues, the Jewish community, public policy, arts and journalism and the academic community. She has a kind of influence in all those fields that is almost unparalleled. She's brilliant, compassionate and lovable. She's incredibly cuddly but she also has a very, very tough mind."

"When you ask who are the people who are contributing to a change in the economic and social environment and opening people's minds up, you think of her," says Robert Fritchard, dean of Law at the University of Toronto.

Her father was a Polish lawyer who survived four years in a concentration camp with his wife but lost his first child, his parents and three brothers. After the war, her parents moved to Germany where her father was a senior legal advisor to the Americans. Judge Abella and her sister were born there. When she was four, her parents moved to Canada.

At first, her father worked as an underwear cutter because his legal qualifications were not accepted in Canada. Eventually, he established a successful insurance agency but her greatest grief is that he died two months before she graduated from law school. Now, everything she accomplishes is her tribute to him.

Judge Abella has been married for 18 years to Irving (Ichie) Abella, whom she met at university. He is a professor of Canadian history at York University and co-author of *None Is Too Many*, the story of Canada's refusal to admit Jewish refugees during the Second World War.

They have two boys, Jacob, 13 and Zachary, 10. She's home for dinner with them most nights and stays until the boys fall asleep about 10. Then she goes back to the office and works until one or two or sometimes all night.

She doesn't need much sleep but she does need books and music. Every week she happily wades through a thick nineteenth century novel, every day she plays her favorite George Gershwin and Cole Porter tunes on the piano. She tells her friends she's not superwoman; a housekeeper cooks the meals and runs the house.

"The first thing she does when she comes here for meetings," says Canadian Human Rights Commissioner Gordon Fairweather from Ottawa, "is

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PRIVE

phone home to talk to the kids. Her family gives her calmness."

Judge Abella will not go into politics, nor does she want to practice law again. Her ambition is to contribute to the intellectual process of the country. As Mr. Fairweather pointed out, she writes well. Her labor board decisions, her books and her articles are crisp, concise and spiked with humor.

Another accomplishment has been her ability, through her writing and lectures, through simple networking, to influence the legal community on social issues - family law, human rights, women's rights.

Until a few years ago, "law to lawyers was corporate law or criminal law," she has said. "The law that touched people was ignored until the Charter of Rights."

With the royal commission she also changed the vocabulary of fairness. She refused to use the narrow expression "affirmative action," which only means quotas, and substituted "employment equity," an umbrella term which includes pay equity, child care, training and technical support systems for the disabled.

Because of her work on employment equity and social justice, a whole community of Canadians will know what her 1,000 friends already know - their lives are better for knowing her.

ADDED SEARCH TERMS: Canada labor law legal profession women biography profiles
