

Judge Moritz, '85, Sworn In to Tenth Circuit Court

The first thing that comes to mind when you think of **Judge Nancy L. Moritz, '85**, is success. A close second is people, and her superb memory of all of those who impacted her life, from her childhood in Tipton, Kan., to Washburn Law, to her office in Lawrence with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

In fourth grade, Nancy didn't know any judges or lawyers in Tipton, Kan., where she and her cousin decided to have a little bakery. But then she decided that it would be a lot of hard work to be a baker and she would have to get up early in the morning. The hilarity of Nancy not wanting to work hard isn't lost on anyone who knows her.

When her dad's symptoms of Huntington's Disease necessitated a move nearer to Topeka for medical care, the family relocated to Salina, Kan. Most of the 80 students in her new class at Sacred Heart school already had tight friendships, so to make friends, Nancy decided to join the debate team. She calls it the best thing she ever did.

It was through debate that Nancy discovered her love of the analytical process: putting

together evidence in a form that makes sense, creating a plan, becoming an adversary, honing oral speaking skills, and cross examining. "Everything about it — I just thought this is what I want to do," said Nancy. "The only thing I could think was I probably ought to be a lawyer."

Nancy chose Washburn University because she knew Washburn Law would prepare her to be a good lawyer. She began taking communications and English classes because they came easy to her. But she was also taking accounting classes and doing well in those. When a friend noted that a communications degree wouldn't allow her to have a real job, something she chuckles at now, Nancy decided to major in accounting despite the repeated advice of her professor, Dr. Meredith Moore. When she reflects on business courses, Dr. Richard Moellenberndt and Dr. Walt James come to mind as tough professors who challenged her.

Nancy never really doubted that she was going to law school, but she never considered career counseling. "I don't remember ever going to career counseling and saying here's what I want to do; I

want to go to law school. What should I major in? What are my talents? Because I'm sure if I had, I wouldn't have done what I did. Everybody laughs because the idea of me as an accountant is really kind of a scary thing," she said.

Nancy's story from childhood through today contains references to numerous employers, coworkers, and friends. Her first job was working for Moira Brouddus at the Holiday Inn in Salina nearly full-time during the school year and more during the summer, to help pay for tuition. All six Moritz children worked to supplement their mother's income as an editor at School Specialty Supply since their father resigned as the postmaster of Tipton when his health failed.

That same Moira became a catering director at Washburn University and then a house mom for Alpha Delta fraternity. She came to all of Nancy's swearing-in events, helped Nancy out along the way, and perhaps changed her life's course.

Nancy mentioned other people who impacted her career, including Shawnee County District Court Judges Terry Bullock and James Martin



Macnish, Jr.; federal **Judge Patrick F. Kelly, '53**; and partners and associates at Davis, Unrein, Hummer, and McAllister.

Nancy recalls a time when she and Judge Kelly argued about a certain case. “Nancy, when the President calls and makes you God, you can decide,” he told her. “I always think about that — when the President calls and makes you God,” Nancy said. The President did indeed call, nominating her to the Tenth Circuit bench in August 2013. “Well, guess what, Judge Kelly? Here I am. I’m not God, but you know, if Judge Kelly were still alive, he would be so proud.”

Nancy was notes editor for **Judge Eric Melgren, '85**, on the *Washburn Law Journal* their last year of Law School and they became good friends. For years, their careers took similar paths and he ended up being her boss at the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Eric came to her swearing-in for both the Court of Appeals and the Kansas Supreme Court, and Nancy chose him to perform her swearing-in. He was very helpful throughout the two-year process of getting her appointment, as he had been through it himself fairly recently. “He was always encouraging,” said Nancy. “He said, ‘We’re going to make it. You’re going to make it. It’s all

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going to be worth it.' He's been a good friend."

Nancy remembers that professors James M. Concannon; **Linda H. Elrod, '72**; and Gregory J. Pease were always willing to talk to her about anything when she began at Washburn Law. She notes that they are still with her. "They're supporting us," she said. "And they're advocating for us. My class at Washburn Law has remained very close. There's a group of us that communicate by email and support each other. I remember when I was applying for both the Court of Appeals and the Kansas Supreme Court, they did a letter writing campaign. We are a group that supports each other without having any organized structure. We know each other and we've kept in contact and there are so many of us now that are judges from our class in particular. We all talk about how we think that support has helped us."

When professors Concannon and Elrod wrote letters on her behalf, they could really talk about who she was. "Nobody has that from their Law School," Nancy said. "Since I've now been hiring Washburn Law students...I know there is still that support from the university, from the professors.

"Obviously I have a lot of praise for my professors and the classes that I took, and they gave me a solid background. I never felt like I didn't have what it took to practice law or get started. I think that's the big thing. Everyone, not just the professors, but the deans, assistant deans, and the staff, they're helpful and they'll continue to help people."

Nancy credits a suggestion from Justice Herd as leading to her many lawyer friends across the state. He suggested she get involved, which led to her relationship with the Kansas Bar Association, where **Judge Christel Marquardt, '74**, appointed her to the board of editors for the KBA Journal around 1985. Again, it was one of the best things she ever did.

Nancy chose to have her investiture to the Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals last October at Washburn's White Concert Hall, where her many professors, classmates, colleagues, employees, and mentors could share in her success and visit with the delightfully warm, funny, and successful woman they consider a friend. Getting to know Nancy was one of the best things they ever did.

