

MARGERY CEDERSTROM BANIGAN

Margery E. Cederstrom was a talented and sensitive woman, who gave up a promising law career to raise her family and never regretted the choice. Cederstrom was born in Brooklyn in 1902. Her mother was Ella Frances Cederstrom and her father, Sigfried Cederstrom, was a Swedish immigrant who was a highly regarded real estate appraiser. Cederstrom attended public elementary and high schools and a college preparatory high school for a year. She graduated from Adelphi College in 1924. Left to her own devices, she would have become a writer, rather than an attorney, but her father felt strongly that she should go into law. Miss Cederstrom's gift as a trial attorney became apparent while still in law school. She was the only female selected to compete in her law school class' final moot court trial competition. After receiving her law degree in 1927, she went to work as a law clerk for the firm of Talley & Lamb and remained there for three years. She was admitted to practice in 1928.

In January, 1931, Cederstrom was hired by the New York State Attorney General's Office, along with Ruth Warters and Dorothy U. Smith. The hiring of these three women received a lot of press, which focused on what was perceived as the women's choice of career over family. Miss Cederstrom was assigned to the Securities Bureau and put in charge of the Complaints Department. During her tenure with the Attorney General's Office, she investigated fraudulent stock activity and brought actions, under the Martin Act, to enjoin from further stock transactions businesses and brokers who violated the law. She had numerous reported cases in the Appellate Division and the Court of Appeals, mostly involving attempts to enforce or quash subpoenas. In particularly egregious situations, she brought criminal charges. According to the press, she was particularly effective because of her feminine demeanor, catching perpetrators off guard. One headline, reflecting the public sentiment during that period, was entitled, "Stock Fakers and Thieves Quail Before Mere Woman."

Margery Cederstrom married Leonard A. Banigan in 1935 and became Margery Cederstrom Banigan. Cederstrom Banigan continued to work in the Office for another two years until her first son was born. At that point, she decided that "being a homemaker and a career woman at the same time is well nigh impossible," and she left to raise her family in Stony Brook, New York. Cederstrom Banigan returned to state government, working as an attorney in the New York State Insurance Department in 1954, and remained there until she retired from state employment in 1968. Later, after she was widowed, she moved to New Jersey to be with family. Mrs. Cederstrom Banigan never gave up her love of writing and wrote a number of autobiographical essays that speak about her career, her choice to be a full-time mother, and the challenges of aging. She passed away in 1987.

Margery Cederstrom Banigan was a member of the First Assembly District Democratic Club in Brooklyn and the Speakers Bureau of that political club, the New York County Lawyers Association, the New York State Bar Association, the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, and the Business and Professional Women's Club of Brooklyn.