

KCMBA Baron of the Boardroom

Terry Satterlee

She doesn't ride horses well or lasso dogs. But she has worked tirelessly as a board member for the American Royal. She doesn't camp or hang out in the P&L District. But she's served on the Missouri State Parks Board and helped former mayors Cleaver and Barnes realize the dream of a revitalized downtown. And she didn't let a gender-based law-school rejection or demeaning remarks from judges averse to women practicing in their courtrooms in the 1970s hold her back from becoming a nationally preeminent environmental practitioner and a leading light of community service in Kansas City.



Terry Satterlee is an ardent, lifelong Kansas Citian, who is also one of a rare breed of late — a diehard Royals fan, who proudly boasts ownership of every rendition of the “Believe” T-shirt. This is fitting. Her distinction as 2012 “Baron of the Boardroom” is arguably attributable to her own unwavering ability to “believe” — to believe in her clients, in her community, and in the potential of her many colleagues and acquaintances.

One of just eight women among the 223 students who graduated in 1974 from the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, she began her legal career working on employment, civil rights and zoning cases with Arthur Benson. During that period, she also represented farmers affected by the construction of Truman Dam, which sparked an interest in environmental law that would shape her career.



Terry Satterlee and her husband Bill Rice recently celebrated the marriage of their daughter Mary to Dave Ingram. From left to right: Brendan Rice, Tyler Rice, Bill Rice, Terry Satterlee, Mary Ingram, Dave Ingram, Cassandra Sagel, Joey Sagel, and the dogs, Linus and Otto.

Now a partner in Shook, Hardy & Bacon's Environmental Law Practice, Terry has devoted her career to environmental law in the public and private sectors for more than 35 years. She began practicing environmental law by serving as chief lawyer for the Enforcement Division at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1978, at the time that EPA's new laws were just getting under way.

Terry has also dedicated countless hours of community service on behalf of and for the advancement of women. She was the second woman named to the board of Legal Aid of Western Missouri and is active in its Endowment Founders Society. She also helped found The Central Exchange and has been part of the Women's Public Service Network. Her close friends would add that she is also a founding member of “The Rules Committee,” a close-knit group of judges and lawyers who have met every month for the last 25 years.

“She is as good at bringing people together as anyone I've ever seen in this community,” says Pat McLarney of Shook Hardy. “Terry is the ideal role model for young lawyers; the combination of her personality, good humor and energy, along with an incredible knowledge of her practice area, allows her to work with anybody.”

Her many acquaintances uniformly speak to her integrity, passion for justice and commitment to the community. “Terry's work before the Missouri Supreme Court and in other Missouri courts has been truly exceptional,” said Missouri Supreme Court Judge Laura Denvir Stith, “but that only tells half the story. She contributes just as much in her multi-faceted roles as a mentor to young lawyers, as a source of wise advice to her friends and fellow women lawyers, and as a community member who doesn't just spend her time wishing things would get better — she helps make them better.”

Her former partner, Missouri Court of Appeals Judge Alok Ahuja, similarly says “Terry is truly an ‘all-rounder’: She has excellent judgment, and knows how to get things done, whether in a courtroom or through the informal means. Beyond that, Terry has impeccable musical taste: I would bet that she was the first in Missouri history to quote Grateful Dead lyrics in a judicial investiture speech!”

As complete as Terry's professional life has been, she has always considered her many professional commitments as enriching, rather than competing with, her family life. She is a caring and devoted wife and mother who also presides over an ever-changing menagerie of cats and dogs. Her two daughters have matured into accomplished young women in their own right, and she now relishes being a grandmother. Not surprising, young (and not-so-young) professionals seek her guidance on balancing work and family. In this, as in everything else she does, she is more than eager to help.



About the Author

Tom Grever is a partner in the Environmental Practice Group at Shook, Hardy & Bacon, LLP. He has practiced with Terry since 2001.