

March 19, 2015

Women quietly do extraordinary things every day. To help shed light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women and celebrate their accomplishments and contributions to history we are releasing an article every day in the month of March. These articles showcase how women have moved Indiana and our country forward and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives.

Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women and their current initiatives.

Sources:

- Miller, Holly, (5 June 1977), "Virginia Dill McCarty Awaits Presidential Nod for District Attorney Post", *Anderson Herald* (<http://www.newspapers.com/image/26590607/?terms=%22virginia%2Bdill%2Bmccarty%22&match=3>)
- Staff of the Indiana Magazine of History, (31 October 2011), "A Woman's Bid for the Highest Post." *Indiana Magazine of History* (<http://indianapublicmedia.org/momentofindianahistory/womans-bid-highest-post/>)
- Virginia Dill McCarty, Landman Beatty, Lawyers, LLP (<http://www.landmanbeatty.com/?t=3&A=7532&p=7098&format=xml>)
- Virginia Dill McCarty Obituary (<http://hosting-4995.tributes.com/show/Virginia-Dill-McCarty-89240887>)

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Women's History Month 2015

Telling 31 stories in 31 days this March.

Virginia Dill McCarty (1924-2006)

Virginia Dill McCarty championed women's rights for Indiana women throughout her life. At a time when women didn't go to law school, McCarty attended the Indiana University School of Law-Indianapolis and graduated first in her class. In an *Anderson Herald* interview, she said,

My parents always told me to go out and do the best I could. I think I was the only woman who graduated from IU law school in June of 1950. I just didn't know I wasn't supposed to do those things.

Spanning more than fifty years, she did not achieve prominence until after the age forty. But, in doing so, her career in law and government was one of "firsts." She served as Assistant Indiana Attorney General and Chief Counsel to the Marion County Prosecutor. These roles led to Senator Birch Bayh recommending for U.S. District Attorney for Indiana's southern district in 1977. She was later appointed to that position by President Jimmy Carter. By accepting the position, she became the first woman in the country to be appointed to a full term as a U.S. Attorney, serving in that capacity for four years. Even in that role, she said she would continue to encourage women to enter public service,

We have to say we want the top jobs and go after them. The time is ripe now because women are willing to support other women. And a lot of men are willing to support women. Neither of those things were true in the past.

McCarty also was the first woman to be nominated by a major party for Judge in Marion County, and became the first woman to be nominated as the Democratic candidate for Attorney General of Indiana in 1976. Then, in 1984, she became the first woman to run for Governor of Indiana. McCarty ran in the Democratic primary but lost to the eventual nominee, Wayne Townsend, who then was defeated by incumbent, Governor Robert Orr. During the primary season McCarty traveled the state, giving interviews and speeches, and "...inspiring women and girls alike to get involved in politics and government, as they finally saw someone who looked like them reaching for the highest of state political offices. "

McCarty continued to law at Landman and Beatty, an Indianapolis law firm, until her death at the age of eighty-one in 2006. Throughout her career, which she pursued while raising two children, McCarty remained committed to public service and to securing equality for women in all areas of society. A native of Plainfield, she loved Indiana and believed it was the best place in the country to live. She was a colleague, a mentor and a friend to many younger attorneys; and she set a high bar for those women who aspired to serve their community.