



A Backward Glance

Bennett Boskey

MY WIFE SHIRLEY AND I, married for all of about one month, came to Washington in the summer of 1940 so that I could serve for a year as the law clerk to Justice Stanley Reed. Sometime late in the fall I was told that, assuming I continued to behave myself as a law clerk, we would be invited for a Sunday afternoon tea at the home of Justice Brandeis, who by then had retired from the Court yet remained a heroic figure to my generation. In due course the invitation arrived and we were delighted but, as it turned out, slightly unprepared.

As we entered the Brandeis apartment on California Street, all the women were ushered into one room and all the men into another. There were not vast numbers –

perhaps a half dozen of each. Throughout the afternoon, no one was permitted to change rooms – the separation of the sexes continued – except that at about midpoint the Justice and Mrs. Brandeis swapped rooms. This was not exactly in tune with the progressivism expected from Louis D. Brandeis. In a long career at Washington social gatherings, I have never again encountered comparable enforced segregation of the sexes (apart from very occasional brief after-dinner seances).

I do remember a few additional things that marked the event. Another young lawyer, probably near my vintage, was present and the Justice gave him what I understood was the regular Brandeis sermon on the virtues of going back home to enter the practice of law. One of the guests was the colorful

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Sumner T. Pike, an almost New Dealish Yankee Republican from Maine who at that time was a member of the Securities and Exchange Commission, whose comfortable wealth was derived largely from his family's Maine sardine factory, and who later became

my good friend when he was appointed to the original Atomic Energy Commission after the War. And still another guest was a terribly obscure United States Senator named Harry S Truman. I wish all small teas could have such an enviable aftermath. *GB*