



Hon. Stacie F. Beckerman

Magistrate Judge, U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon

by Christine E. Sargent



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Judge Stacie Beckerman was destined for success as a legal practitioner from the start. As the daughter of an esteemed general practice attorney in the Midwest, Judge Beckerman's career track was greatly influenced by her father's upstanding pursuit of justice for the citizens of his small-town community. Judge Beckerman is an undeniably diligent, learned, and skilled judge, but her poise and benevolent nature is what sets her apart. As a magistrate judge for the District of Oregon, Judge Beckerman demonstrates these same qualities in her judicial position every day.

A Humble Upbringing and Impressive Education

The youngest of four sisters, Judge Beckerman was raised in a traditional household in the small town of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Judge Beckerman's mother, Carol, stayed at home until Judge Beckerman reached high school, while Judge Beckerman's father, Jerry, maintained a general legal practice in Cedar Rapids. There, her father took on "a little bit of everything," from trusts and estates to various civil and criminal defense matters. In one of his most noteworthy cases, Jerry represented a local church in a pro bono matter, which ultimately reached the Iowa Supreme Court. Judge Beckerman, only a teenager at the time, had the opportunity to observe her father argue the case. Ironically, Judge Beckerman's initial reaction to watching her father argue in front of the Iowa Supreme Court was that she did not want to become a lawyer. She believed that her shyness and fear of public speaking (at the time) would not be conducive to the profession. Regardless, the experience of watching her father argue only bolstered the admiration she felt toward him. Perhaps more significantly, despite his burgeoning legal practice helping members in his local community seek justice and resolve their legal problems, Judge Beckerman's father always maintained a balanced family life, something Judge Beckerman clearly values in her own career today.

After graduating from Kennedy High School, Judge Beckerman recognized that attending a private or out-of-state university was cost-prohibitive. Thus,



as a lifelong Iowa Hawkeye fan, she was happy to attend the University of Iowa in Iowa City. Judge Beckerman entered college planning to attend medical school. During her sophomore year, however, she worked as a nursing assistant at one of the university's hospitals and determined a medical career would not be the right fit. She paused to reconsider her career track. In deciding on a new career pathway, Judge Beckerman says, "The fact that I had admired my dad for so many years had significant influence over my ultimate career." In 1995, Judge Beckerman earned the highest distinction in her class at the University of Iowa, graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science.

Once Judge Beckerman knew she wanted to pursue a legal career, she applied to a number of top-rated law schools, including Harvard Law School. As soon as she received the acceptance letter from Harvard, Judge Beckerman was confident that was where she wanted to be. She immediately called her father to report the news. Though her financial circumstances did not allow for a visit to her future law school, she got into her car and drove to Boston in the fall of 1995. Boston—and specifically, Harvard—was a culture shock at first. She recalls the first orientation activity being a Boston Red Sox game. "I had never been to a

Major League Baseball game. It was overwhelming and incredible, and I fell in love with Boston and Cambridge (and the Red Sox),” she says.

Multifaceted Attorney Experience

Between her first and second year at Harvard, Judge Beckerman clerked in Washington, D.C., at Crowell & Moring LLP. She enjoyed D.C. so much that the next summer, she returned to the area and worked for Verner, Liipfert, Bernhard, McPherson & Hand (“Verner Liipfert”) in the Government Relations group, where she ultimately worked as an associate after graduating from law school. The practice was a perfect fit. “I had been a political junkie growing up in Iowa because so many presidential candidates would visit and spend time in the local parks nearby,” she says. “Working in the Government Relations group was a nice intersection between law and politics.” While at Verner Liipfert, Judge Beckerman worked closely with a number of prominent political leaders, including former Senate Majority Leaders Bob Dole and George Mitchell as well as late former Texas governor Ann Richards. “They were my idols at that time, so I felt very lucky.”

Not only did Judge Beckerman find success in her career at Harvard, she also met her now-husband, Jamie. Jamie was studying at Harvard Medical School while Judge Beckerman was studying at the law school. In 1998, Judge Beckerman graduated from Harvard Law School *cum laude*. She continued working at Verner Liipfert. In 1999, Jamie matched in a residency program in Boston. Judge Beckerman happily moved back to Boston and began working as an associate at the well-respected Skadden Arps firm. She transferred to Skadden’s Palo Alto, Calif., firm in 2003 after her husband matched in a fellowship program for cardiology at Stanford Medical School.

Judge Beckerman enjoyed the slightly less combative practice of litigation on the West Coast as opposed to her practice in Boston. However, the birth of her first son put her priorities into perspective. In 2006, Judge Beckerman left Skadden. “I left the firm on my son’s first birthday as his birthday gift. I was having trouble balancing motherhood with 100-hour billable weeks. I didn’t know anyone at the time who was successfully balancing being a law firm partner and a mom.” Judge Beckerman’s growing family toured several cities to identify where they wanted to live permanently. They loved California, but the cost of living was overwhelming. It did not take long for them to decide on Portland, Ore., a city chock full of outdoor enthusiasts with close proximity to both the mountains and ocean.

Upon their arrival in Portland, Judge Beckerman knew she wanted to move on to a legal career in public service. She began working for the Appellate Division of the Oregon Department of Justice in late 2006 and had a second son shortly thereafter. Two years later, she saw a job posting for a half-time assistant U.S. attorney position in the Criminal Division. Judge Beckerman always

had an interest in being a prosecutor, and because the position was half-time and she was a mom of two boys, it seemed like the right fit. Then U.S. Attorney Karin Immergut, who was recently appointed to the bench as a U.S. district court judge for the District of Oregon, hired Judge Beckerman. Judge Beckerman “absolutely loved every day of [her] job.” She started in the white collar and environmental crimes unit and then transferred to the violent crime unit. Eventually, she led the sex trafficking crimes unit.

Judicial Excellence

In 2013, U.S. Magistrate Judge Dennis Hubel announced his retirement. Judge Beckerman applied, not expecting to receive the appointment but hopeful that applying would pave the way for a future appointment. On Jan. 5, 2015, Judge Beckerman was appointed as a magistrate judge for the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon.

Judge Beckerman appreciates that she is in a unique position to help people who are struggling. Accordingly, she finds that to be her primary motivation. Not only does she make efforts to further this objective on her docket, but she has led and been involved in a number of different court initiatives during her five-year tenure on the bench. As one of the judges assigned to the CAPS (Court Assisted Pretrial Supervision) docket, Judge Beckerman has been afforded the opportunity to provide extra support and structure to high-risk individuals who are released pending trial. Judge Beckerman also serves as one of the judges presiding over the District of Oregon’s Reentry Court Program, a structured program for high-risk individuals who have been released from custody and are struggling with reentry into the community. Without a doubt, Judge Beckerman’s efforts in both of these noble endeavors have positively affected both individuals and the community at large.

Judge Beckerman’s service to the community does not end there. She has also been heavily involved in volunteering for the SMART (Start Making a Reader Today) program. She served as a volunteer site coordinator at a local elementary school located in a gang-impacted neighborhood—one in which she had prosecuted various gang-related crimes during her time at the U.S. Attorney’s Office. SMART places volunteers in public schools facing such hardships as poverty, injustice, and gangs, and sets up volunteer readers with elementary-age students on a weekly basis. Judge Beckerman singlehandedly enlisted a number of prosecutors, defense attorneys, and courthouse personnel to volunteer. Doing so, Judge Beckerman says, “brought them together and gave them an opportunity to get to know each other outside the courthouse and join in a mission that gives back to the community.”

Judge Beckerman strives to improve judicial administration as well. She is the chair of the Ninth Circuit Pro Se Litigation Committee and vice chair of the Ninth Circuit’s Magistrate Judge Executive Board. She serves



Left: Judge Beckerman and her family recently spent two weeks in Peru, which included a hike to Machu Picchu. Bottom: As an avid Comic Con fan, Judge Beckerman makes annual trips to San Diego's Comic Con convention. Recently, she participated on a "Judges on Star Wars" panel.



on the board of the U.S. District Court's Historical Society and is the former president of the Queen's Bench, the local chapter of Oregon Women Lawyers. Last year, she traveled to Sri Lanka to speak at a judicial symposium on asset forfeiture and money laundering. To be sure, Judge Beckerman is a force to be reckoned with as a judge in the Ninth Circuit.

Judge Beckerman also greatly values and enjoys mentoring law

students and young lawyers. Her goal in hiring legal externs is to allow them to be a part of chambers and expose them to a wide range of experiences that show them what being a lawyer is all about. Judge Beckerman seeks to make them better writers but also believes that through experiential learning in the courthouse, her clerks and externs can make an informed decision about where they fit best in the legal community. Perhaps most importantly, Judge Beckerman also tries to teach her externs that balance in life is important. "If I leave early to go to my son's basketball game, I make sure to let them know that is what I am doing and why it is important," she says.

Mohammed Workicho, one of Judge Beckerman's former clerks who is now an associate at Lane Powell PC, says, "Although she has a very demanding job, she gives her time freely to those who need it, from law students seeking sage advice to community organizations in need of steady leadership. She is a great mentor for law students and young lawyers because she exemplifies all of the qualities every legal professional, and really every person, should strive toward." Laney Ellisor, another former clerk who now practices criminal defense at Boise Matthews Ewing, says, "When my externship with Judge Beckerman ended, I feared we would lose touch. I soon learned that membership on Team Beckerman never ex-

pires. Judge Beckerman continues to mentor and inspire me regularly. I owe her an enormous debt of gratitude for where I am in my career, as I'm sure is true for many other lawyers and students, especially women."

Balance

Though it may seem that Judge Beckerman's docket, involvement in the community, and efforts to improve the judicial system would limit her time spent with the family, that could not be further from the truth. In her words, "My goal is to be the hardest worker in the courthouse, to write meticulous opinions, to be a good role model for young lawyers, and to do all of this while being home for dinner every night."

Judge Beckerman's family travels as much as possible. Most recently, her family spent two weeks in Peru and hiked the Inca trail together. In the summer of 2018, they spent two weeks on a driving trip throughout eight countries in Europe. They make a point of leaving the country every year for at least two weeks, something that is necessary "to detach [herself] from [her] tendencies to be a workaholic." She and her husband also recently completed a 50K trail race together on Mount Hood. This year, she is training to compete in sprint triathlons.

Judge Beckerman makes sure she does not take herself too seriously. Among other speaking engagements, she travels to San Diego Comic Con every year to speak on a "Judges on Star Wars" panel and preside over pop culture mock trials. One of her favorite parts of the job is inviting school groups to her courtroom, and she hosts a one-week criminal justice program for high school students every summer.

During her first five years on the bench, Judge Beckerman has continued to be a leader in the legal community through her mentorship of young lawyers, community service efforts, and active participation in a long list of initiatives and organizations. Her direct influence on former externs and clerks can be seen in their successes and the way they practice law. As Workicho puts it, "I will always remember how warmly people speak of her when she is not present and how quickly people's faces light up when she is." Judge Beckerman is a dedicated mother possessing a brilliant mind and hard-working attitude, and Portland is lucky to have her on the bench. ☺