

Alice I. Gordon, 52nd President of the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary



Photo by John Gilroy

By Edgar G. Gordon

Remember the saying, “If you want something done, ask a busy person?” My wife, Alice, is such a person. The opportunity to serve as president of the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary and promote law-related education throughout Michigan with the State Bar couldn’t be a better fit for our 52nd president.

Alice Irwin, whose ancestors were early settlers in Michigan, was born in Detroit and lived in the house built by her great uncle. Growing up as the only girl among four children was very special. She came from a family of educators—her father was assistant superintendent with the Detroit Public Schools and her mother, a voice and piano major, taught at Eastern Michigan University.

Originally from Monroe, where my father was a lawyer and my mother was a teacher, I attended the Cranbrook School for Boys in Bloomfield Hills and then entered Princeton to study public and international affairs. While at Princeton, I enrolled in the Navy V-12 program and was sent to the Philippines and also to Shanghai, China, where I was port supply services officer. I continued my education at Harvard Business School and subsequently attended Harvard Law School.

Alice and I met at a Harvard University alumni dinner event when the Harvard president came to the University Club in Detroit to speak. At that time, Alice, who had taken graduate classes at Radcliffe, was teaching in Detroit. I had graduated from Harvard Law School and was working in Detroit with the law firm Poole, Littell, Warren and Gordon. Shortly after the alumni dinner, we began dating.

While teaching in Detroit, Alice spent a summer in Japan as an exchange student through the Experiment in International Living. Later, she received a fellowship to the University of Michigan to earn a specialist



Ed and Alice Gordon at the 2010 SBM Bar Leadership Forum, Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island

degree in educational psychology and became a reading specialist. It was there in Ann Arbor that we were engaged on Halloween night and married the following February.

We made our home in Grosse Pointe Farms. There, Alice joined the Grosse Pointe Lawyers Auxiliary. She also was involved with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra Association. During our time in Grosse Pointe, our two sons were born and Alice was a stay-at-home mom until the boys began school, and she began substitute teaching. I was corporate counsel for Hygrade Food Company and later joined City National Bank in Detroit, where I was head of the bank’s law division.

When City National Bank merged with First of America, we moved to Kalamazoo. Alice became a reading therapist at Western Michigan University and taught adult and alternative education. Later, she was hired by the Kalamazoo Public Schools and taught reading from elementary school to high school. She recently retired after 27 years of teaching.

We have lived in Kalamazoo ever since, raising our sons and becoming involved with their scouting, swim teams, tennis, and marching band. Community volunteering has been a joy for Alice. She became involved with the Kalamazoo Lawyers Auxiliary; she was the group’s president for three years and chaired the Law Day essay contest. She was president for three years of Phi Delta Kappa, an international educational association. Currently, she is a member of the Symphony Orchestra League and the Junior League of Kalamazoo and serves on the church council, the governing board of our church. She has been involved with the Kalamazoo Communities in Schools as a volunteer for Vista and AmeriCorps. She also worked to raise reading scores in the Kalamazoo schools as part of the Reading First grant program.

We have had the opportunity to travel to Japan to visit our sister city, Numazu. We also traveled to China to retrace my steps in Beijing and Shanghai when I was a naval officer. Our cruise with Holland America to the Panama Canal opened our eyes to what a tremendous undertaking it was to build that canal. We are enjoying our sons, their families, and our three grandchildren who live close by. How lucky can we be after 43 years of marriage?

The Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary will be in good hands as my wife takes the reins and moves the organization forward with the mission for public outreach and law-related education with the State Bar of Michigan. ■

Edgar Gordon, Alice’s husband and author of this article, graduated from Harvard Law School. A retired corporate attorney, Ed practiced with Howard and Howard Attorneys in Kalamazoo, concentrating in mergers and acquisitions.