



World Bank Group Archives Exhibit Series

Shirley Boskey – The First Female Department
Director of the World Bank

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These exhibits, authored by World Bank archivists, highlight key events, personalities, and publications in the history of the World Bank. They also bring attention to some of the more fascinating archival records contained in the Archives' holdings.

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Shirley Boskey – The First Female Department Director of the World Bank

Shirley Boskey, a native of New York City, graduated from Vassar College, then attended Columbia University law school, and received her law degree from George Washington University. Before joining the World Bank she served as a lawyer at the U.S. Department of Interior. During her service at the Bank she contributed to the drafting of the charters of the IDA and IFC and was “one of the group of Bank staff which first considered the possibilities of multilateral investment insurance” (*The Bank’s World*, February 1983, p. 10).



Shirley Boskey, Director of the International Relations Department, 1975-1983

As the Director of the International Relations Department she was responsible for managing the World Bank’s relationship with other intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations. As a result of her efforts the Bank’s relationship with the agencies of the UN system became much stronger.

“I’ve always felt it a necessity that there be association and understanding between the Bank and the U.N., because through understanding and cooperation comes support,” said Ms. Boskey upon her retirement in January 1983 in the interview with Thierry Sagnier (*The Bank’s World*, February 1983, p. 10).

After her retirement she continued to contribute to the Bank by serving eight years as the President of the 1818 Society, the retirement association for staff of the World Bank Group, and later wrote its history. Shirley was known to her colleagues in the Bank and other international institutions for her professional excellence, institutional knowledge and strong diplomatic skills. Shirley Boskey died on October 13, 1998 but the memories on her many accomplishments live on.

“She was the best mentor I could have had when I joined her department in the early 70s at a time when a young woman needed all help she could get in navigating the male-dominated Bank. She taught me that it was not only possible to make a career in the Bank, but that it could be done with elegance, charm and graciousness. She taught me to listen even when



bored, to ask questions, and not to take myself too seriously.” Anne Vaughn (1818 Society Newsletter, October/November 1998, p. 46)

“During my twenty years in Washington she became professor and personal friend as I developed confidence in her exceptional combination of gifts, allowing her to apply a high level of competence, subtlety, humor and good judgment to many problems.” Bernard Chadenet (1818 Society Newsletter, October/November 1998, p. 48)