For Hester & Susan
UVic's Hester Lessard and UBC's Susan Boyd are both retiring from their positions this year.

Smart people have pointed out to me that waiting for retirements to celebrate & thank people can be a mistake on many levels. Still, they do offer a handy moment if you forgot before. They might also be a good time to just want to do it again.

Both Hester and Susan will no doubt be feted by their close (geographically & otherwise) colleagues and friends, but one of the features of the Canadian feminist legal academy is that it is relatively small and interconnected. There are people at every school in this country who have been taught by these women and have learned from their work and their example.

With that in mind, we’ve gathered up a small set of notes about and for Hester and Susan. Thanks to all who contributed, and the comments (moderated) are available for those who want to put in their two cents.

A very happy retirement from the formal work world to both—don’t be strangers.

-SL
Hester and Susan were both such formative influences for me in figuring out what it meant to be both a legal academic and a feminist.

They epitomize for me the very finest work in legal education and scholarship - relentlessly brave, articulate, rigorous and compassionate.

Their mentorship and friendship have been wonderful gifts.

Lisa Philipps
My personal experience and enduring image of Hester Lessard - an unwaveringly principled and brilliant academic, grace and dignity personified, deeply committed to social justice, author of profound and eloquent contributions to Canadian feminist legal scholarship.

Shelley Gavigan
Susan Boyd taught me feminist legal theory, family law, and advanced family law at UBC’s faculty of law in the mid-1990s. She was a fabulous teacher: considerate, careful, and deliberate. More than that, though, she was an outstanding mentor when I was a junior colleague. Her office was beside mine and she served as a model for how to be a diligent academic.

Kim Brooks
To be in Hester’s world is a remarkable thing. And so I visit often. I teach Hester’s jurisdictional justice in Health Law. I teach Hester’s context-stripping in Public Law. I return to Hester again and again for the construction of health care and the ideology of the private. Hester, you write the things I want to mean. Thank you.

Joanna Erdman
Despite the fact that I have never been taught by Susan or Hester, never shared an institution with either, each has been a very real part of my (continued) exploration of how to be an [Cdn, Feminist, Legal] academic. Susan’s attention to how to bring together academics, students, and others with shared interests, how to create and be a part of feminist community that goes beyond our own institutions, continues to inspire. Hester’s writing and insistence on setting things into a larger context is a constant source of proof that looking at appellate cases – as long as that isn’t the only thing you see – can be deeply illuminating. One, the other, or both, taught and mentored so many of my academic friends. And both, in different times/ways/places have shown me great generosity – some of which I’m really only now beginning to recognize and, I hope, honour.

Sonia Lawrence
Susan Boyd is one of the most insightful and giving people I have ever met. Since my very first day as a Masters student at UBC (and she wasn't even my supervisor) Susan has offered me hands on guidance, advice and even editing!

Her boundless energy for feminist scholarship and her students inspires me constantly, and I hope to be able to give as much over my career as she has during hers. Academically she is a hard act to follow, such influential and smart work over such a long period of time is something to aspire to.

I hope her retirement means we get to hang out together more.

Angela Cameron
So much of Hester Lessard’s work has been influential, but for me, one of her most significant contributions is the feminist, social justice lens she brings to division of powers analysis. “Jurisdictional justice, democracy and the story of Insite” (19 Constitutional Forum 2010) caused me to think about democracy and the division of powers in new ways. It should be mandatory reading for students and teachers of Canadian constitutional law.

Debra Parkes
I was one of a generation of feminist graduate students from around the world mentored by Susan Boyd. She wrote reference letters, shared SSHRC applications, attracted feminists internationally to UBC and ensured we met them (often at gatherings at her home with Claire Young), and inspired and supported so many of us to embrace an academic path and to use it for positive social change.

Jennifer Koshan
I met Hester Lessard in the early 2000s, although of course her work was familiar to me well before that. What I most admire about Hester is her ability to hang tight to how law intersects with people’s lived reality. At the core of her work is the question, “why does this matter on the ground”. She couples that commitment with a firm belief in the value of democratic dialogue. If you haven’t been able to get a sense of Hester, you can listen to her excellent 2011/12 Marlee Kline lecture in social justice here. 

Kim Brooks
Susan Boyd is a lustrous presence in Canada's legal feminist legal academy. We all bask in the glow and reap the rewards from her illustrious career and her dedicated and inspirational mentorship to students, colleagues, and a generation of young feminist legal academics. One marvels at her capacity to share joy and delight in life and work and to find reason for hope and optimism - even when that work brought her hard struggles, resistance, and heartbreaking child custody cases. Everyone who has worked or studied with Susan Boyd has been touched by and benefitted from her warmth, openness, and generosity of spirit. Through her leadership as Chair of Feminist Legal Studies at UBC, she fostered and built a vibrant community of feminist legal scholars and scholarship, a community that transcends borders and regions - an enduring, unalterable and noble legacy of which she can be justly proud.

Shelley Gavigan
Hester Lessard is a brilliant constitutional thinker and writer whose rigorous analyses of equality rights and social justice set the high water mark for scholars like me. She is also a generous mentor, and helped make my sabbatical in New York a truly memorable experience for me and my budding-artist daughter.

Jennifer Koshan
Susan Boyd co-supervised my LL.M. thesis at UBC in the 1990s, and I have stayed in touch with her, and her extensive scholarship, ever since. As a supervisor, Susan taught me many things, but two in particular always stand out for me. The first was about writing. Susan graciously invited me to contribute a chapter from my then still evolving LL.M. thesis to her edited collection *Challenging the Public/Private Divide* (University of Toronto Press, 1997). In the process of preparing the chapter, Susan worked with me again and again (and again) revising drafts. I learned a lot about academic writing (and analysis) through Susan’s patient, thorough, and kind editing.

In hindsight, and this relates to my second ‘take away’, the whole time Susan was carefully helping me edit my chapter, I now realize she was also swamped with her own teaching, research, book preparations (and managing other chapter contributors!), as well as supervising various graduate and LL.B. students. As my colleagues from UBC will know, Susan was also a community builder and she fostered a lively, collegial environment among faculty and many, many students.

Now that I find myself as a (senior??) academic, I realize just how many different demands Susan was juggling, and how much extra work she took on. But even with that enormous workload, Susan never made me feel I was unworthy of her time, or taking her away from other important matters. She was always open, supportive and available. I can’t say that I have lived up to that standard myself, but I hold onto it as a model to guide me and to which I daily aspire.

Doris Buss
Hester is one of the most generous, intelligent women I have ever met. I worked for her as a research assistant while I was a doctoral student at UVic.

I was constantly amazed at how insightful she was, how she could always see the big picture, the system in every project she undertook. At the same time she had the ability to make you feel like you were making a HUGE contribution, even when all you were doing was checking footnotes. I truly hope that I am like her as a professor and mentor, and I often ask myself the Hester 'big picture' question when I am mired in minute details.

Angela Cameron
Being taught family law by feminist superhero Susan Boyd was a highlight of my education at UBC Law. The political became personal for me when, at the end of third year, I came out as a lesbian. Ten years after that, when I became a mother, the legal rights I enjoyed were those that Susan had been fighting for when I was in that family law class. Very few of us will have a career with such impact on law and society.

Debra Parkes
It is hard to imagine Susan Boyd and Hester Lessard retiring! Nothing (nothing!) in their teaching, their scholarship, or their lives would ever be characterized as "retiring!"

Both of them have been leaders and mentors and advocates for us, especially in relation to gender issues in family law (including its constitutional dimensions), and we have all learned from their thoughtful insights, their intellectual engagement with the most difficult legal challenges, and their willingness to support and protect "families" in all their diversity -- always recognizing the how the mystery of human relationships is both fundamental and, at the same time, demanding of the best and brightest of intellectual efforts! Thank you!

For you both I send a poem (Lorna Crozier in Bronwen Wallace, *Arguments with the World* (1992) at 229):

It's not only the women we know, our friends and sisters, our mothers climbing the stairs after work, weariness heavy on their backs. It is also the women on Greenham Common, their chain of endurance and belief stretching the heart. The women of El Salvador, of Nicaragua, keening for sons and husbands, the lost villages, the empty places where nothing grows.... Across borders, across oceans and the endless reach of the prairie, our sisters, our mothers, our daughters join hands. These women make us holy.

With profound thanks and very best wishes,

Mary Jane Mossman