

Leta Best: Powerhouse and Passionate Advocate



With Val Wilson

If you want something done, get a busy person to do it. Leta Best certainly qualifies. And through the constant pressure and large workload of her businesses, she manages to stay efficient, courteous, and patient. The questions are answered; calls and emails are returned; the work gets done.

While dedicated to her Notary practice and accounting business, Leta's other commitments add balance, texture, and a high level of satisfaction to her life. She also schedules time to get away on an annual vacation. Looking ahead to that break each year may be part of her secret for being able to work late hours, yet bounce back the next day, refreshed and ready for more.

A Director of The Society's Board of Directors since 1988, Leta is currently First Vice President of The Society. In the Fall of 2002, she is slated to become President. Leta is looking forward to "a further opportunity to give back to the profession that has given me so much."

Add *humility* to Leta's long list of attributes. Her energy is boundless. Please read on.

The Scrivener: *Leta, where were you born?*

Leta: I was born, raised, and have spent my entire life in Victoria. In fact, both my parents were born in Victoria.

The Scrivener: *What was your very first job?*

Leta: At age 15, I worked at the local "hang-out." It had it all—pinball machines, jukeboxes, and a soda fountain. My shifts from 6 to 10 PM evenings and 1 to 10 PM weekends didn't leave me a lot of free time, but I still managed to be in the school band, a cheerleader, and president of the school's sports council. Looking back, I have always been busy. This may run in the family; my daughter Liz is also busy. When I ask my little granddaughter what she's doing, she says, "Busy, busy, busy!"

The Scrivener: *What did you want to be when you graduated from high school?*

Leta: A teacher, but that road was not open for me. I attended secretarial college and took accounting courses. When I completed my training, I went to work as an accounting assistant with my father, in his firm.

The Scrivener: *Who were your mentors?*

Leta: The people who most influenced my young adult life were my father and Frank Kitto Sr.—my father for his influence in my accounting skills, and Mr. Kitto as my mentor and role model to become a Notary Public.

The Scrivener: *What path led you to become a Notary?*

Leta: In 1968, I started my own bookkeeping service, keeping the books and records for 26 companies—four Notaries, five or six real estate firms, general and subcontractors, and other companies in related fields. The Notary profession seemed the most interesting to me.

In 1971, the *Income Tax Act* changed drastically. As a single practitioner, I could not keep up with the changes. In mid-1972, my client Frank Kitto Sr. began talking about his retirement. When he inquired if I knew of a young man suitable to become his son's partner in the family Notary practice, I asked "What about me!" Kitto & Kitto & Best was formed in 1976, and became Kitto & Best in the mid-'90s.

The Scrivener: *What other factors made the avocation of Notary attractive to you?*

Leta: In addition to working in the accounting office, I had two small children at home. The Notary correspondence course gave me the opportunity to study on my own time. And when I became a member of The Society, there were few women Notaries—only about 17 for the entire province. Today, over half of all BC Notaries are women.

The Scrivener: *What are the advantages of having your Notary practice in Victoria?*

Leta: Victoria is and has always been my home—it's most feasible to have my practice here. During the course of my career, I have looked at other areas but deep down, I've never had any desire to leave Victoria. In retrospect, that was a good decision. Many of my high school friends are now at a time in their lives when they or their parents need a Notary Public. My personal touch helps make their decisions just a little bit simpler.

The Scrivener: *I understand that most of the members of your staff have been with you for over 10 years. That's impressive.*

Leta: Of the four staff members, one has been with me for five years and three for more than 10 years. This team—Mary Palfrey, Dave Fast, Amanda Parker, and Shaheen Domay—work hard for me, and are very loyal. They take my moods—both good and bad—and work diligently on my behalf. They understand the end result is the production of a work product that benefits the clients.

The Scrivener: *Your Notarial associate, Sabrina, has worked with you for four years. How has that affected your practice?*

Leta: When Sabrina came into the office, it breathed new life into my commitment to being a Notary. After practising for over 25 years, I felt renewed dedication to being a Notary Public and serving my clients.

Sabrina and I have taken courses together. Our personality types are identical. We act and react in exactly the same manner in most situations, even down to ordering exactly the same lunch. This makes the discussion of files and courses of action on behalf of our clients very productive. It is even a bit scary because every day, Sabrina becomes more and more like me. I watch her and see myself. I just wonder when she will have as many pairs of shoes as I do.

The Notary correspondence course gave me the opportunity to study on my own time.

The Scrivener: *What do you find most satisfying about your work as a BC Notary Public?*

Leta: Working with people. The Notary profession is very people-oriented. I like helping to bring joy into people's lives. Whether drawing a Will or a Power of Attorney, I like to open avenues for people by assisting in the completion of the business portions of their life.

When you have a very tough real estate transaction, nothing is more satisfying than saying: Yes, we won that one! Whether working for a vendor or a purchaser, assisting that individual to sell his or her home and move on with life—or getting someone into a new home to advance his or her life—the fact that I was there to help achieve a dream is a definite reward, a big plus for me.

The Scrivener: *Please describe a typical day/week in your busy life.*

Leta: Like everyone else, my week has seven days, but my seven days are almost always full. I don't work five days and then have two days to relax.

In addition to my Notary practice, I own and operate Frank L. Kitto Registry Services; live with and look after my mother; spend almost every second weekend in Cumberland with my son Gary, daughter-in-law Kathleen, and three grandchildren, Alanna and my twin grandsons Kale and Sean; belong to Zonta International; serve on the Board of Directors for The Society of Notaries Public; chair the Committees for Finance and *The Scrivener*; serve on the Board of Governors of The Notary Foundation, and curl.

The Scrivener: *You certainly do participate! Please tell us more about Zonta International.*

Leta: It is my passion. As an ideal, over 20 years, Zonta has helped shape my life and through me, the lives of my children. Dedicated to education on an international, national, and local level, Zonta is a worldwide service organization of executives in business and the professions, working together to advance the status of women.

Locally, I am involved in the Zonta International Young Women in Public Affairs Award competition. Established in 1990, the program—open to young women currently enrolled in secondary school—is designed to encourage women to pursue decision-making positions in their communities, to impact the policies that affect the lives of women in the community and throughout the world.

Applicants are asked to reflect on their lives, their commitment to the communities in which they live, and the role models that have inspired them to become involved in the community or in a specific prospective career. The Zonta International Young Women in Public Affairs program looks to the young

women of today who will be the leaders of tomorrow.

Here are a few of Zonta's education activities and goals.

- Teaching income-producing activities within their own culture to women in developing nations
- Providing fellowships for women studying aerospace-related sciences
- Encouraging young women to be the very best they can be
- Helping promote sound lifeskills to our very young students

The Zonta Club of Victoria is also a supporter of the Rock Solid Foundation, and in particular, their WITS program. As you may be aware, we in Victoria have been subject to violence among our youth. To counteract this, Rock Solid has presented a violence-prevention message to over 350,000 students. Their presentation is a high-impact, no-nonsense approach to handling bullying and intimidation.

To learn more about Zonta International, I invite you to visit the Website: <http://zonta.org/>.

The Scrivener: *What do you value most in life?*

Leta: Number one—without any qualification—is my family. My children and grandchildren are my greatest joy. I can't even begin to imagine what my life would be without them. All that I have achieved and all that I have done pales in comparison to my love for my family. ▲

For more information about Zonta International, please see page 46.