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Dean Logan's Blog

25 Lucky 1Ls Get to Hang Out with a Legal Legend

Posted by David Logan on 11/18/2011 at 09:45 AM

RWU law is proud of all of its graduates, but there is a special place in our heart for Betty Anne Waters ('98), whose amazing legal journey was the basis for the 2010 movie *Conviction*. A single Mom with a high school GED, Betty Anne went to community college, then college, and then (RWU) law school, and passed the bar with a single goal in mind: freeing her brother Kenny who was serving a life sentence for murder. Betty Anne's passion and resourcefulness were rewarded when Kenny was freed through work with the Innocence Project. Last year Fox Searchlight released a movie on Betty Anne's remarkable story featuring a star-studded cast: Hilary Swank (played Betty Anne!), Juliette Lewis, Sam Rockwell, Melissa Leo, Peter Gallagher, and Minnie Driver (playing Abra Rice, the only person at RWU Law who knew of Betty Anne's dream).

At Dean's Movie Night, 25 very lucky 1Ls got to watch the movie and then spend an hour in a spirited exchange with Betty Anne that covered a broad range of topics, from how to deal with the stresses of law school, to what it was like to be played by an Oscar-winning actress, to the important Innocence Project work that she continues to do. Visit the [Innocence Project](#) website to learn more about Betty Anne Waters and the movie.

Below is a pic of Betty Anne and the lucky students and then some reactions from attendees at a memorable RWU Law night.



“
I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to watch "Conviction" and speak with the one and only Betty Anne Waters. As the semester comes to an end, I was questioning whether I had the time to come to the movie night, but now I'm very grateful that I did. The movie was even better the second time, now that I can appreciate the hardship and determination of Betty Anne. At this point in the semester it's easy to lose sight of why one would put themselves under such consistent pressure, but the discussion with Betty Anne really put everything into perspective for me. It was an inspirational reminder of why I'm here and the great potential to actually make a difference in the lives of people who feel hopeless in our legal system. Movie night was perfect timing! Just in time for final exams.
”

Chelsea A. Kelly

“
I had the privilege of watching the movie on the same day that the mail man was delivering my acceptance letter in the mail. It was truly inspiring as a 1L to hear Betty Anne's story in her own words, and it was even better to learn that her brother encouraged her to get the education necessary to get into and complete law school. That he had that much confidence in her and that she accepted the challenge while enduring her own personal tests was amazing.

Though I am certain that most of us don't have the same reason as Betty Anne for getting through law school, the drive that she exhibited is the kind of drive every student could use.”

Lesley Jackson

“*It was an incredible experience to sit there and have watched her story and realize she really was just a regular person sitting in front of us. It was humbling to see how even though she may have had a movie made about her life, she was now helping people who her brother told her about. Most strongly of all though, it was heartbreaking to see tears in her eyes as she walked in to meet us and when she reminisced about her brother while at other times seeing her laugh as she recalled funny stories and the times they had shared. Being famous for freeing someone you loved but who you later tragically lost must be a struggle she lives with and is something I could never imagine. On a brighter note, it was good to see she was just the same person she had always been and was going to go have dinner at Aidan's after meeting with us! She is an amazing person who has a spirit that just engulfs a room, and I am so grateful to have met her.*”

Lauren Lane

“*The opportunity to meet Betty Anne Walters and hear her inspiring story was surreal. Betty Anne Walters is an extremely down to earth woman who acted like what she accomplished is what anyone could and would do given the circumstances that were placed upon her. Her motivation and determination are trademarks to her story and her law school journey will be imprinted on me forever. Thank you so much for the opportunity to hear her remarkable story.*”

Morgan McCarthy