

Member Spotlight

Agnes Kull



Agnes Kull is the chairman of the board of **Greenberg Rosenblatt Kull & Bitsoli PC** in Worcester. She has more than 30 years of experience in public accounting with a specialization in estate planning. She has served on the MSCPAs board of directors and is a former chair of the Massachusetts State Board of Public Accountancy. Kull has two children, Karen A. Fitch and Tara S. Roy, and two grandchildren, Sabrina Roy and Ross Fitch.

Q. Why did you decide to go into accounting?

A. I was working as a bookkeeper for a construction company after I graduated from high school. My English was passable, but I still had a heavy accent, since I was only in this country for six years. I asked my boss for a \$5 a week raise, and he said no. Shortly thereafter, he was praising his daughter who graduated from college and was working as a market analyst gathering information by going from house to house asking whether the household was folding or crumpling their toilet paper. He was glad that she did not choose to become just a bookkeeper. I became so angry that I went and registered for evening classes at a college to become an accountant.

Q. How did your career start?

A. Very slowly! I was looking for a job in Worcester, and nobody wanted to hire a woman. I was told to go home and have babies, or the pay offered was \$15 less than the going rate, which was \$50 at the time. Even the accounting firm that did the books for my ex-employer and who had encouraged me to become an accountant did not have an opening. Through a friend of my ex-employer, I had an interview with **Nathan Greenberg** who was just starting in business. He explained that he did not have enough business to hire a junior accountant, but I could start as a secretary. When business increased, he said he would promote me. I was a secretary for six months before I became a junior accountant.

Q. Did you find it difficult to be a woman in a predominately male-dominated profession at the time?

A. I had trouble being accepted by client bookkeepers, controllers and CFOs. They would not accept questions from a young woman, but once they saw that I knew what I was doing, they changed their behavior towards me.

When Greenberg acquired the practice from a retiring CPA (Mr. S), Mr. S came towards my desk and with a finger pointing towards me said "you will not touch any of my accounts." The following week Greenberg put me on one of Mr. S's accounts, even though I told him what Mr. S had said. Three days after I was back in the office, Mr. S again came towards my desk and said "I hear you

did a great job." Two weeks later, Mr. S asked me to go with him to a client.

Q. How have you seen the profession open up to women over the years?

A. When I started to proctor the CPA exam in 1986, very few women were sitting for the exam, I would guess around 5 percent, and by the time I left the Board of Public Accountancy, I would guess it was more than 50 percent. Now, in my office, it is close to 75 percent.

Q. How have you seen the profession progress in your career?

A. When I first started working in accounting in 1959, there was very little in the way of authoritative accounting guidance with respect to financial statement presentation or disclosures. Most of the financial statements we prepared consisted of a balance sheet and an income statement. The accountants wrote the financial statements out by hand, and the secretaries typed them on manual typewriters using carbon paper to generate multiple copies. Proofing and correcting the statements was a colossal endeavor. The ten key adding machines just came into being. There was only one machine in the office and since I was the new kid on the block, I received it as nobody else wanted it.

Today, all of our accountants are equipped with laptop computers, so proofing and revising financial statements is no longer a significant chore. The challenge now is keeping up with all of the accounting regulations, as evidenced by the fact that PPC's standard disclosure checklist is over thirty pages long before considering "other possible disclosures," and the Accounting Standards Codification was recently established to organize the thousands of accounting pronouncements that are in effect into 90 topic areas to simplify user access.

Q. If you could give one piece of advice to a young professional or aspiring CPA, what would it be?

A. Public accounting is a knowledge-based industry. Accounting and tax regulations are constantly

changing, and business information systems are increasingly complex. To best serve your clients and advance your career, keep learning. While hands-on experience is often the best teacher, it is important to read professional journals to stay current. Getting involved in trade groups or committees provides opportunities to build business acumen and cultivate professional relationships. Learn how to communicate.

Also, due to the dependency of accounting systems on technology, it is important to develop an understanding of how IT systems operate. Furthermore, today's MIS systems are capable of capturing a plethora of data. Honing your general computer and analytic skills will enable you to increase the value of the data by converting it to meaningful information.

Accomplishments:

- American Cancer Society Board of Directors
- American Institute of Certified Public Accountants Public Service Award
- Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Investment Committee
- Katharine F. Erskine Award in Business/Law
- Massachusetts Board of Public Accountancy, Chairman
- MSCPAs Board of Directors
- MSCPAs Public Service Award
- Memorial Hospital, Treasurer, Executive Committee and Board of Directors
- Robert W. Stoddard Award for Outstanding Community Service
- UMASS Memorial Foundation, Treasurer and Board of Directors
- United Way, Treasurer and Board of Directors
- Worcester Art Museum. Treasurer, Executive Committee and Trustee
- YWCA Treasurer and Board of Directors