Improving Society 
One Client 
at a Time

PAULA LORANT, JD ’75, who attended law school following the social upheavals of the 1960s, reflected the spirit of the time by seeking to use the law to improve society. After completing her legal education in the recently built Mudd Hall, she spent a career in Milwaukee helping indigent people of all ages.

During her 36 years of lawyering, Lorant’s employers were always in financial trouble, so the support services most lawyers take for granted were not available. Inadequate office space, inconsistent secretarial help, and nonfunctioning office equipment were daily challenges. In addition, her clients were often uneducated or unfocused—and these clients found it difficult to provide the cooperation Lorant needed to help them.

Lorant’s career, one of dedication to helping others less fortunate, began by spending approximately four years as a public defender in the Children’s Court, representing indigent juveniles charged with delinquency. She then moved to another Legal Aid Society employer, working several years in the Legal Aid’s Civil Division representing poor clients in civil matters.

She next became co-director of the Marquette University Law School’s legal clinic for the elderly. There she supervised law students representing elderly clients in civil matters. She returned to Legal Aid for her last 20 years of employment, developing a specialty in public benefit law that won her the respect of lawyers in that field.

Lorant, who recently retired, achieved life-changing results for many, treating her nonpaying clients with no less respect than if they had paid her $500 an hour. She also found time to consistently mentor young lawyers and law students throughout the years. In 2007 the Wisconsin Bar Association recognized her as the state’s Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year. And while achieving recognition for her work is not Lorant’s style, her career remains an example of how the law can be used to serve the greater good by helping those most in need.

David A. Robinson, JD ’77

“In fall 1975, I was taking Trade Regulations with Professor Neil Bernstein. I was walking alongside Professor Bernstein as we headed to his class. A man who appeared to be in his early 50s and who did not appear to be a student or faculty member asked us, in a Southern accent, if we could direct him to the Moot Courtroom. We pointed him to the Moot Courtroom, where there were about five people. This man was a scheduled speaker there. As we continued to walk to class, Professor Bernstein said to me, ‘Can you believe it, that guy is running for President?’ I asked, ‘Who is he?’ I don’t recall Professor Bernstein’s exact words but they were to this effect: the man is a former governor of Georgia. One of us said to the other, ‘Sad. Only a handful of people came to hear him.’ The man was Jimmy Carter. One year later, he was elected President.”