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ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT NAMES NEW APPELLATE JUSTICE

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Supreme Court announced the appointment Tuesday of Melissa A. Chapman Rheinecker, a Granite City lawyer of diverse background and experience, to the Illinois Appellate Court in the Fifth Judicial District.

Ms. Rheinecker will succeed Judge Charles W. Chapman who is resigning from the bench on Aug. 31, 2001. Her appointment will be effective Sept. 1 and will terminate Dec. 2002. She said she intends to run for election in 2002 for a full term.

“In my opinion, the Supreme Court appointed the best available and most qualified person to sit on the Fifth District Appellate Court and fill the vacancy due to Judge Chapman’s retirement,” said Chief Justice Moses W. Harrison II of the Illinois Supreme Court. “Ms. Rheinecker has vast experience in the courts and is an outstanding lawyer.

“We feel fortunate to attract a person of her abilities and character. She was chosen because of her ability but I would like to note at this time that the Fifth District is the only appellate court in Illinois where there is no woman sitting on the court.”

Ms. Rheinecker has a diverse educational and professional background and has been practicing law in Granite City with the firm Morris B. Chapman and Associates since 1983.

She completed her high school education in Guatemala, where her parents did missionary work. She also attended the University of the Americas in Mexico City for two years before transferring to Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, where she graduated with honors majoring in psychology and Spanish. She also received a master’s degree in counselor education in 1975 from SIUE, and worked for the Department of Mental Health, counseling emotionally disturbed children at the Adler Mental Health Center in Champaign, and working in a treatment program for juvenile delinquents.

Following her father’s career in law, Ms. Rheinecker attended St. Louis University Law School and received her *Juris Doctor* in 1983 when she began practicing in her father’s firm.

She has wide experience in the general practice of law and expanded her emphasis to trial practice, handling complex tort litigation and contract litigation, representing both plaintiffs and defendants.

She has argued at the appellate levels in both Illinois and Missouri. She was the first woman to serve on the Review Board of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, the arm of the Supreme Court which investigates attorney misconduct. She also is a member of the IPI Civil Committee, which drafts complex jury instructions for use in civil trials.

Ms. Rheinecker has written several articles for law journals, presented legal education seminars and chaired a Madison County program, “The People’s Court” — whose purpose was to better familiarize the public with the judicial system.

“I have always been interested in both the study of law as well as its practical application,” said Ms. Rheinecker. “I have a high professional regard for both the law and the administration of justice and by reason of my broad legal background and my varied life experiences I believe I can significantly contribute to the appellate court.

“I look forward to carrying out my responsibilities to the utmost of my abilities.”