

IN MEMORIAM: ELLEN GAY BAKER

Ellen Gay Baker, energy lawyer and policy aide, died March 19, 2015, in the Sarasota, Florida home she shared with her husband, Robert Scarbrough, both long-time participants in energy regulation and policy.

Gay, as she was known by all, continually set her own path. With her undergraduate degree from Sophie Newcomb College, later merged into Tulane University, Gay entered Tulane's Law School. At graduation, she was one of only two female students in her law class. Searching for an employment environment where she would have early opportunity to take on responsibilities, she moved to Washington, D.C. In the federal government, her gender actually proved an advantage; she was accepted as a "minority" hire into her first legal position, at what is now known as the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Before Gay finally accepted a legal post at the Federal Energy Administration, she served stints as a civilian staff attorney in the Air Force and as an investigator at the Federal Trade Commission.

In 1977, Gay was brought into the FERC by Commissioner George Hall, where she proved immensely helpful to him and the new Commission, as the FERC established not only new policies but also procedures, often needing to navigate occasionally roiled waters between the FERC and the new Department of Energy, over matters of jurisdiction and statutory authority, as well as over national energy policies in the wake of the 1973 Oil Embargo. Gay was also deeply involved in the regulatory activities required to meld the intrastate natural gas market into the interstate natural gas market, as well as in activities that lead to the FERC's issuance of Order #436, initiating the restructuring of the interstate gas pipelines from merchant sellers and transporters into "open access" transporters only, described by the reviewing court as "one of the three great regulatory milestones of the industry."

Gay was known not only for her sound advice, but for her easy working style in engaging with the Commission's staff, as well as representatives of the regulated entities. Later, she continued her service in the office of Commissioner Georgiana Sheldon Sharp, who relied on Gay for advice, both legal and policy.

After a decade at the FERC, Gay ventured into the corporate world, joining Houston Natural Gas. She arrived as a landmark merger was creating Enron, combining Houston Natural Gas, InterNorth, Transwestern, and Florida Gas Transmission. At Enron, Gay was one of the first women in Washington responsible for managing federal agency affairs for a large energy company. When she left Enron, she engaged in independent consulting until returning to a position on the FERC staff. Gay retired in 1998.

Accomplished attorney, adventuresome world traveler, effective Washington networker, proud Texan, best friend, confidante . . . all were words that fit Gay Baker's active, helpful, and friendly approach to life and her friends.