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The University of Montana

NEWS RELEASE

University Communications
Missoula, MT 59812
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JUDGE'S DAUGHTERS GRADUATE UM LAW SCHOOL TOGETHER

by Rita Munzenrider
University Communications

MISSOULA--

Diana Rodeghiero always knew she would one day be a lawyer like her father, but she never expected to be graduating from law school with her sister Lisa.

For as long as either sister--and almost anyone else--can remember, Diana has wanted to follow in the footsteps of their father, District Judge Roy Rodeghiero of Roundup. But Lisa wasn't sure what she wanted to be until she decided on a whim to take the law school entrance exam four years ago.

On Saturday, May 27, the Rodeghiero sisters will graduate with honors from The University of Montana School of Law, the same place their father earned his law degree 34 years ago. The hooding ceremony will be especially meaningful for Diana, since her longtime idol, U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, will give the commencement address.

While growing up in Roundup, Diana's heroes weren't cowboys or movie stars. They were justices and lawyers. As a preschooler, she began helping her father in his law office every Saturday and continued that practice after school as she grew older.

"As soon as I knew what my Dad did, that's what I wanted to do," remembers Diana. "I loved being there. I remember looking at all the law books thinking that Dad was so smart

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because he knew everything in them."

She attended legal conferences with her father whenever possible, even sacrificing time in the pool at Fairmont Hot Springs in favor of sitting through his meetings. As a teenager, Diana accompanied her father to Missoula for a Montana Bar Association conference where she met O'Connor, the featured speaker.

O'Connor, the first woman on the U.S. Supreme Court, has always inspired Diana, so much so that she wrote about the justice in her personal essay to get into UM's law school. Several months ago, Diana wrote to O'Connor to thank her for accepting law Dean Rod Smith's invitation to speak at commencement, and O'Connor wrote back.

"It really is ironic that Sandra Day O'Connor is the speaker," says Lisa, noting that her sister had nothing to do with extending the invitation to the justice.

Until recently, Lisa had never shared her sister's and father's passion for the law. But that doesn't mean she never learned from observing her father's example of lawyering.

"From him, I've learned that there are professional, ethical, compassionate attorneys, and that's what I want to be, obviously," Lisa says.

"Dad should be teaching professional responsibility," Diana adds. "He's the most ethical person I know."

Lisa says she considered going to medical school before deciding on law, and still has a desire to enter that field, even if it only means focusing her law practice on medical malpractice issues. Lisa's interests have always been more varied, says her mother, Janet, a licensed nutrition consultant who also earned bachelor's and master's degrees from UM.

It didn't come as a surprise to any of the Rodeghiero family that Lisa and Diana ended up in the same law school class. They've done most everything together throughout their lives.

"We were meant to be twins, actually," says Lisa, who turned 25 this week. Diana, 26, is just 14 months older.

The two were partners on the basketball court at Roundup High School, and at one time, were part of the team's starting lineup with their older sister, Sara. This year, the three teamed up with their youngest sister, Rita, a UM pharmacy student, to take the Missoula city league basketball championship.

After high school, Diana attended Dawson Community College in Glendive on a basketball scholarship; she was joined a year later on the team by Lisa. They transferred together to UM to complete their bachelor's degrees.

They spent their summers "sliming fish" at a cannery in Alaska, sometimes working more than a hundred hours a week to bankroll their education. The sisters separated briefly to travel in Europe and Asia, but reunited again at UM to finish their undergraduate coursework in fewer than the standard 12 quarters--Lisa with a degree in history and Diana with a degree in business like her father.

"Both Lisa and Diana have always been hard workers," says Judge Rodeghiero, who presides over Montana's 14th Judicial District and also serves as one of the state's four water judges. "That's one of the reasons that caused them to go to law school."

Diana abandoned applications to Stanford University, Notre Dame and the University of Washington law schools when she heard Lisa had been accepted to UM's. The two sisters have

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always lived together, including last summer during law internships in **Billings**, where Diana worked for the Crowley law firm, and Lisa for the Federal Defenders Project.

Study partners throughout law school, the sisters will soon begin cramming for July's state bar exam. Jobs in their profession will separate them in August when Lisa moves to **Helena** to clerk for Montana Supreme Court Justice Terry Triewelier for a year, and Diana heads to Billings to clerk for U.S. District Judge Jack Shanstrom for the next two years.

Neither has thought seriously about what they'll do when their clerkships are up, but Diana has always entertained the notion of being a judge someday. In the meantime, the Rodeghiero sisters have considered opening a law practice together somewhere in Montana and bringing their father into it in some capacity.

"It just seems like my Dad has such a base of knowledge," says Diana. "It would be great if I could somehow tap into that."

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Contact: Diana and Lisa Rodeghiero, 543-1223. The sisters will take part in the law school's hooding ceremony Saturday, May 27, at 10:30 a.m. in the University Theatre.

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Special, Billings Gazette, Missoulian, AP, Montana Lawyer
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