

# Mary S. Coleman

## First woman to serve on the Michigan Supreme Court and as Chief Justice

Justice Mary S. Coleman always knew she wanted to be a lawyer. She attended law school at a time when few women practiced law or served as judges. Because of her interest in children, she eventually decided to become probate and juvenile judge. When she ran for election to the Michigan Supreme Court, she felt that the Court — and Michigan needed her perspective.

**1939–61** Graduated law school; moved to Germany to join her husband in Berlin following World War II; established law firm with her husband; later became juvenile referee for Calhoun County Probate and Juvenile Court

**1961–73** Elected Calhoun County Probate and Juvenile judge

**1973–82** First woman elected to Michigan Supreme Court; appointed Chief Justice



Growing up, Justice Coleman watched her mother make ethical choices as a lawyer for the federal government during Prohibition. Some people tried to stop the investigations with illegal gifts or threats to the family, but still her mother followed the rules.