

TEXAS LEGAL LEGEND: JUSTICE RUBY KLESS SONDOCK
Induction November 11, 2015

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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At noon on November 11, 2015, the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas will induct the Honorable Ruby Kless Sondock as a Texas Legal Legend in Krost Hall at the University of Houston Law Center.

Justice Sondock was born in 1926 in Houston and attended Cottey College in Nevada before marrying and starting a family. She later enrolled in the University of Houston Law Center with the intention, she has said, of becoming “the best legal secretary in town.”

As one of only five women in her class, Justice Sondock graduated as valedictorian in 1962. She had been admitted to the bar a year earlier – in fact, she passed the bar without taking a bar review class. Following graduation, she went on to practice, arguing a case before the Texas Supreme Court in her first year.

Gov. Preston Smith offered her the appointment to the bench of the Harris County Domestic Relations Court in 1973. Four years later, Gov. Dolph Briscoe appointed her to the 234th District Court, earning her the distinction of being the first woman district court judge in Harris County.

In 1982, Gov. William P. Clements appointed Justice Sondock to the Texas Supreme Court to serve the unexpired term of a deceased justice. With this appointment, she became the first woman to serve on the Texas Supreme Court in a regular session of the court, and the first woman to serve on the court since a special session in 1925.

Justice Sondock neither sought election for a full term nor accepted the later nomination to serve the unexpired term of then-retiring Texas Supreme Court Chief Justice Joe Greenhill. Instead she returned to district court, and ran unopposed. Since retiring from the bench, Justice Sondock has worked for many years as a successful private mediator in Houston.

Her alma mater, the University of Houston Law Center, hosts a biennial lecture series in her name, “The Ruby Kless Sondock Lecture in Legal Ethics.” University of Houston Law Center Dean Leonard M. Baynes said, “Like so many other women trailblazers, Justice Sondock succeeded with grace, dignity, self-assurance and courage, not letting any obstacles or barriers stand in her way.”

Texas Legal Legends is a project of the Litigation Section of the State Bar of Texas. Its purpose is to memorialize the stories of many legendary lawyers who have practiced in Texas, and to use those stories to enhance the public’s understanding of the historical importance of law students and lawyers to emulate



Legends like Justice Sondock by serving others and making a difference – not just a living. Justice Sondock and the other Legends are prime examples of lawyers who have spent their professional careers serving others and taking on challenges that are much bigger than themselves.

Past Legends inductees include:

1. Joe Jamail
2. Joe Reynolds
3. Harry Reasoner
4. Barbara Aldave
5. Carolyn Dineen King
6. Gibson Gayle, Jr.
7. LA Bedford
8. Jerry Goldstein
9. Adelfa B. Callejo
10. Broadus Spivey
11. Blackie Holmes
12. Craig Washington
13. Scott Baldwin
14. Royal Furgeson
15. Forrest Bowers
16. Bob Black
17. George Chandler
18. Mary Lou Robinson

Videos highlighting the careers of these individuals are available on DVD and on the Litigation Section's website: litigationsection.com.