

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

FOR

REBECCA M. THOMAS

(1913 - 2002)

Rebecca Thomas passed away on March 16, 2002 at the age of 88. She was born in Nashville, Tennessee on November 6, 1913, the daughter of Jessie Lander and Wallace Clyde Thomas.

Miss Thomas, as she was affectionately known by members of the Bar, attended Hume Fogg High and graduated from Phillips High School in Birmingham, Alabama. She graduated from the YMCA Law School in 1939. She began the practice of law the same year with Judge Albert Williams and Judge Sam Felts. She was, prior to passing the Bar, secretary for both. Upon receiving notice that Miss Thomas had in fact passed the Bar exam, Judge Williams stated that day was the worst and best day of his life. The worst, because he lost the best secretary that any lawyer could ever have, and the best because he had the opportunity then to practice with what he considered to be his most knowledgeable and considerate partner. In 1946 Judge Williams, along with Joe Brown Cummings and Ben West, former Nashville Mayor, Kenneth Harwell, former United States Attorney and Hugh Howser, formed the law firm of Williams, Cummings & West. During the remainder of her practice, she retired from the active practice of law in 1994, she practiced with other notable

members of the Bar, including James Clarence Evans, James Cornelius Summers, Thomas C. Binkley and John Archer. Her practice was primarily concentrated in Probate and Chancery matters. In 1956 she became the first woman in Davidson County to serve as a Special Judge in Circuit Court and was the only woman to serve on the Metro Charter Commission in 1958. She was a member of the Nashville, Tennessee and American Bar Associations, a member of the National Association for Women Lawyers, a Past President of the Women's Section of the Tennessee Bar Association, Founding Member of Nashville Bar Association Fellows, Nashville Bar Association Board, Secretary of the Tennessee Bar Association, Member of the YMCA Foundation of Middle Tennessee and Belmont Heights Baptist Church. She was B&PW Woman of the year in 1973, the 1992 Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to her by the Lawyer's Association for Women, in 1995 she was honored for "leadership, tenacity and ingenuity" by the Lawyer's Association for Women. In 1996 she received the Distinguished Alumni Award from the Nashville School of Law, in 1999 the John C. Tune Award by the Nashville Bar Association, and in 2000 the YMCA Order of the Red Triangle. She was the first woman ever elected to the Board of Governors of the Tennessee Bar Association. She also was designated by the Tennessee Supreme Court as a Bar Examiner.

Miss Thomas, who had a keen sense of humor, many times told the story of a young woman who after completing the bar exam approached her and asked about the appropriateness of women attorneys and/or secretaries wearing slacks in the workplace.

Miss Thomas, tongue in cheek, replied that in her office her male partners did not approve of their secretaries wearing slacks, but Miss Thomas, being a true renaissance person, said she made an exception to this rule for her secretary. The young woman then asked whether or not she had tried to influence her male partners to follow her exception and Miss Thomas stated that no, she had not done so because she believed that was a matter of personal preference and should be dealt with by each individual attorney. Miss Thomas quickly told the hopefully young barrister that her principal reason, however, in allowing her secretary to wear slacks, rather than a dress, was because he was a man.

Miss Thomas was an able and learned attorney who had a great respect for not only the law, but for the practice of law as well. She was courteous, respectful and considerate of her fellow lawyers and their clients regardless of their station and plight. She encouraged and mentored young lawyers, and older ones, as well. To say that she was a pioneer in the practice of law in this community would be a great understatement. As evidenced by the exceptional number of awards bestowed upon her throughout her life, her achievements did not go unnoticed. Her diligence and passion for the law were a credit to both herself and our profession. Numerous lawyers have indirectly benefitted from her life in ways that truly can never be measured. She will be sorely missed by members of the Bar and those whose lives she touched.

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THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Nashville Bar Association that we honor the life and work of Rebecca Thomas and mourn in her passing, the loss of a loyal friend and able lawyer.

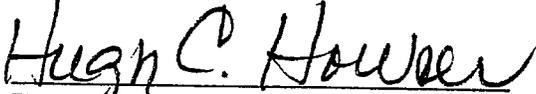
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Memorial Resolution be placed in the permanent records of the Association and entered on the "In Memoriam" minute book of the Chancery Court of Davidson County, Tennessee; and that copies hereof be furnished to the surviving members of her family.

This the 21st day of November, 2002.

Chancellor

Approved for Entry:

The Rebecca M. Thomas Memorial
Resolution Committee



Hugh C. Howser



Hugh C. Howser, Jr.