

JUDGE RUTH B. KLOTZ MEMORIAL

IOWA JUDGES ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 2022

Judge Ruth B. Klotz died in November 2020 from complications of Covid-19. Judge Klotz was a pioneering Iowa female attorney and judge, graduating from Drake University Law School in 1955 as the only woman in her class (and at the top of her class). She was appointed associate probate judge for the Fifth District in 1978, making her one of Iowa's earliest woman judges. She served as a probate judge until her retirement in 2013 at the age of 90.

Judge Klotz held court in her fourth floor chambers at the Polk County Courthouse. She was hardworking, intelligent, patient, and meticulous. Attorneys knew that Judge Klotz would spot every error in a proposed order, and would return it to them for correction. Attorneys also knew to leave their fee award blank; Judge Klotz would use her own discretion to award attorney fees. Her calm demeanor was a great asset to the often contentious hearings over which she presided. Judge Klotz was an inspiration and mentor to several generations of women attorneys and judges.

Judge Klotz was born on November 10, 1922, to Inez Morgan Babcock and Lloyd Babcock in Mason City. She grew up in the home of her Morgan grandparents in Iowa Falls, where she graduated from high school in 1940 and from Ellsworth Junior College in 1942. She then moved to Des Moines, where she did secretarial work at the Iowa Department of Employment Security.

She married Earl Fritz in 1950, and earned her BS from Drake in 1954. Judge Klotz enrolled in the Drake Law School. Just prior to graduation from law school she was suddenly widowed while eight months pregnant. Nevertheless, she graduated on time and at the top of her class. Ruth married Richard Klotz in 1956.

After graduating law school, she had a solo practice in Hampton, then joined the Dickinson firm in Des Moines, followed by several years with Bankers Trust. She was appointed to the bench as Probate Referee for the 5th Judicial District in 1978, and retired as an Associate Judge in 2013. During her 34 years on the bench she sponsored judicial interns and was an instructor at the Drake Law School.

Judge Klotz was recognized for her service by the Iowa Organization of Women Attorneys' Arabella Mansfield Award, the Polk County Bar Association's Lifetime Service Award, the Iowa Supreme Court's Commendation of Distinguished Service, the Polk County Women Attorneys' Willie Glanton Award, and by being named the Drake Law School's 1999 Alumna of the Year. In 2019, she was inducted into the Iowa Women's Hall of Fame.

Judge Klotz joined an affiliate of the Soroptimist service club in 1948, and served as an officer at the local and regional levels before serving as president of the Soroptimist Federation of the Americas from 1974-1976. Her time in the presidency included trips to Japan, Turkey, and South America, and a White House conference. Her program theme of "Women Helping Women" is now central to the organization's mission. She served two terms as president of the Soroptimist Foundation.

She joined Plymouth Church in 1959. She served for many years as treasurer of the church and the Plymouth Foundation. She also served on the Calvin Community board.

She is survived by her daughter Holly Klotz (David Simpson) of Des Moines, and her grandchildren Jane Simpson of Des Moines and Andrew Simpson of Justice, Illinois. She was preceded in death by her husband Richard Klotz.

I request that a copy of this memorial be shared with Judge Klotz's family, and that a copy be spread upon the minutes of the IJA.

Submitted by Eliza Ovrom

District Court Judge (Retired)