



Press Release

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KCMBA Spotlights 2009 Deans of the Trial Bar and Barons of the Boardroom Award Winners

The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association (KCMBA) has selected Thomas G. Kokoruda, Robert L. Langdon and Karen A. Plax as this year's recipients of the prestigious Deans of the Trial Bar Award; and William E. Carr and Richard N. Nixon for the Barons of the Boardroom Award. This year's recipients will be recognized at an awards dinner on Thursday, April 30 during the 36th Annual Bench-Bar & Boardroom Conference to be held at Tan-Tar-A Resort.

Deans of the Trial Bar:

Presented annually, this award spotlights individuals whose superb litigation skills and professional demeanor are viewed as exemplary by their peers. Recipients of the honor must have practiced for at least 30 years or have reached age 60.

Thomas G. Kokoruda

Thomas G. Kokoruda, Polsinelli Shughart PC, is Chair of the Firm's Trial Department and the Health Care Litigation group. He was previously with the firm of Shughart Thomson & Kilroy, PC before the firm and Polsinelli Shalton Flanigan Suelthaus PC merged in early 2009. Kokoruda is a commercial trial lawyer with a focus on hospital liability, physician malpractice and medical staff privilege litigation. He received his Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Kansas in 1968 and his J.D. from the University of Kansas School of Law in 1972. A political science professor got Kokoruda interested in the practice of law during his undergraduate years at the University of Kansas.

Active in the community and the bar, Kokoruda is a Fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers; past chair of the Circuit Court Advisory Committee and Hospital-Medico-Legal Committee; and served on the Civil Jury Study Committee of the Missouri Supreme Court in

2000-2001. He is also involved in the American College of Legal Medicine, Kansas Hospital Attorneys, Missouri Society of Hospital Attorneys, National Health Lawyers Association, and the University of Kansas School of Law—where he was on the Board of Governors from 1991 through 1993. Kokoruda served on the KCMBA Executive Committee from 1986 until 1994 and was President of the Association in 1993.

Kokoruda has achieved success in this business, but he believes the definition of success means different things to different people. “Beyond the basic need to be able to provide financially for our families, I believe success to be the ability to provide quality legal work to quality clients. Nothing is more gratifying than earning the respect of other lawyers and members of the judiciary before whom we appear. Lawyers have a special opportunity to take advantage of their profile by providing leadership in the community, and most lawyers who are perceived to be successful have external community involvements outside the practice of law.”

Robert L. Langdon

Robert L. Langdon is a Partner at Langdon & Emison in Lexington, Missouri, practicing in the field of products liability. He received his undergraduate degree from the University of Missouri with a B.S. in Education in 1970 and a J.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1972. He has been in practice since his admittance to the Missouri Bar in 1973. Langdon brings more than thirty years experience in civil litigation to the firm. Following his graduation from law school, Langdon narrowed his practice to representing those individuals injured by negligence or defective products. Within the last fifteen years, he has focused on defective vehicles and products that have injured and killed his clients.

Langdon has been a board member and executive board member of the Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys, and is a Past-President of MATA. He is also a past member of the Board of Directors of the American Association for Justice. Langdon is currently an Executive Board Member of Attorneys Information Exchange Group. He received his Certificate of Trial Advocacy from the National Board of Advocacy in May, 1985, and is an Associate Member of the ABOTA. Langdon is also a member of Lafayette County Bar Association—where he is a past president.

Langdon said he is honored to receive the Deans of the Trial Bar Award. “When you look at those chosen before you, you can only feel humbled to be among those legal giants. The KCMBA has always been a great organization that has brought all sides of the bar together to create unity among lawyers. Its outreach in the Kansas City area has helped raise the public’s opinion about lawyers. I am and always will be proud to be a trial lawyer.”

Karen A. Plax

Karen A. Plax is a solo practitioner with offices in Kansas City, Missouri. She limits her practice to family law matters. Plax graduated from UMKC School of Law with distinction in 1976 and is admitted to practice in Missouri and the United States Supreme Court. She is a member and past president of the Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, a national organization of the top divorce lawyers in the United States. The AAML has rigorous standards and admits as fellows only those attorneys who have passed intensive screening and testing. She is also an AAML certified Matrimonial Arbitrator.

Active in many professional organizations, Plax served as vice-chair and legislative chair of the Missouri Bar Family Law Section and is a member of the ABA Family Law Section. She also chaired the Family Law Committee of KCMBA and served on the KCMBA Alternative Dispute Resolution Committee. Plax is a founding member of The Collaborative Law Institute of Missouri, Inc., which promotes an innovative approach to the resolution of family law disputes through negotiated settlements. She served as president of the organization from 2002-2005. She is also a past chair of Division Three, Region IV of the Missouri Supreme Court Committee which reviews ethical conduct of lawyers.

Plax doesn't think in terms of accomplishments when it comes to her proudest moments in her life and career. "I am happy that I have close friends and family and that I have practiced law with integrity. My idea of success has always been and continues to be that I have worked my hardest and given my best effort on each case. Looking to client approval, win/loss record or the amount of money earned are not good measures of success in my view. As I get older and witness the recent changes in our country and the world, I think we have even a greater need for honest and creative lawyers committed to preserving our Constitutional rights and liberties than we did when I first began to practice."

Barons of the Boardroom:

The recipients of the Barons of the Boardroom are William E. Carr and Richard N. Nixon. This award recognizes a distinguished career representing corporate and business clients.

William E. Carr

William E. Carr was born in Kansas City, Missouri in 1946. He graduated from Shawnee Mission East High School in 1964 and went onto receive his A.B. Degree in Economics at the University of California at Berkeley in 1968. Carr then received his J.D. from the University of Chicago Law School in 1971. He went to work as a law clerk to Judge William Becker at the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Missouri. Carr then joined the Kansas City office of Lewis, Rice & Fingersh L.C. in 1973 (then Brown, Koralchik, Fingersh and Sildon) and became Managing Member in 1996. He is a past chairman of the Real Estate Department of the firm and practices in the areas of Commercial Real Estate, including Finance, Development, Acquisitions and Sales, Joint Ventures and Leasing.

Carr served on the Board of Governors for the American College of Real Estate Lawyers from 2005 through 2008 and has been active in the Missouri Bar, Kansas Bar and American Bar Associations. He is also a past chairman of the Real Estate and Managing Partner committees of the KCMBA—where he helped to draft the Diversity Action Plan. Carr was an Adjunct Professor of Law (Real Estate) for the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law in 1994 and on the Advisory Board for Georgetown University Law School Advanced Commercial Leasing Institute from 2000 until 2006.

Grateful to be recognized by his peers and humbled at the same time are the thoughts Carr had when he learned of the honor he would be receiving. "I appreciate the good work KCMBA does and feel honored to receive this award. I would tell young lawyers to practice law in the best way you can adhering to high ethical standards. Find a niche that you enjoy and stay with it, and look

for good mentors to learn from. My idea of success is to be the best lawyer I can be—to understand the law, apply common sense and deal fairly and truthfully with others.”

Richard N. Nixon

Richard N. Nixon, Partner at Stinson Morrison Hecker LLP, has served the firm's clients in a wide range of general business matters, from the organization and financing of the business, to day-to-day operational/legal issues, to expansion of the business through acquisitions and the sale of the business. His experience includes representation of both private and publicly-held companies in acquisitions, dispositions, debt and equity financing and joint ventures. Nixon has also worked extensively with not-for-profit and cooperative organizations, not only in general business matters, but also in dealing with issues that are unique to such entities. Nixon has been with the Firm for 40 years.

Nixon received his A.B. Degree from William Jewell College in 1964 and his M.Acc. from Florida State University in 1966. He went onto to receive his J.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia in 1969. He is admitted to practice in Missouri and serves on the Business Law Committee of the American Bar Association and the Business Law Committee of The Missouri Bar. Nixon has been listed in each of the annual editions of *The Best Lawyers in America* since 1987.

After practicing law since 1969, Nixon has learned a lot and can offer some great advice to young lawyers. “I have to assume integrity, dedication, commitment, hard work, being thorough and respect for the law and the practice is still pre-requisites for a satisfying and successful career. Try to take to yourself the best characteristics from those you work for and discard the rest. And don't misspell your client's name! My idea of success has probably not changed. I have always wanted to be a ‘professional’ with a higher calling than making money. My net worth will attest to my success. I would wish all of you could be as fortunate as I have been when making the big decisions that come along during a lifetime.”

Photo's available upon request.

The Kansas City Metropolitan Bar Association serves approximately 5,000 members in the nine-county Kansas City metro area: Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas and Cass, Clay, Jackson, Johnson, Lafayette, Platte and Ray counties in Missouri. The mission of this Association is to serve our members and our community by promoting justice, professional excellence and respect for the law.