



Joseph Branch Professionalism Award Winner

Carlyn Poole

By Wade Smith

Carlyn Poole, this year's winner of the Joseph Branch Professionalism Award, is a person Mr. Justice Branch would have admired and whose friendship he would have cherished. Carlyn was born in Taylor, Texas, a small town thirty-five miles north-east of Austin. They grow cotton and corn out there and people are as tough as the hide of an armadillo. The favorite Texas bumper sticker reads: Don't Mess With Texas. People who know and love this year's winner of the Branch Award would change the bumper sticker to read: Don't Mess With Carlyn Poole! She is tough, wiry and quick. She is an excellent scholar and a wonderful lawyer. But, most of all, she is the consummate professional. She is what the Joseph Branch Professionalism Award is all about.

Carlyn was raised in a family of frugal and sturdy people. Both her grandmothers lived in the home with the family. How they all survived under one roof Carlyn is hard pressed to explain. Her father was a civil engineer and her mother was a school teacher. The family valued education and hard work. And so she was packed off to Lubbock after high school where she enrolled at Texas Tech University. She earned both a BA and an MA in English there. After graduate work at Vanderbilt University, she took a teaching position in Nashville, Tennessee. She married and two children, Henry and Hays were born.

One day, at the age of thirty-six she found herself thinking about law school. Could a thirty-six year old mother of two return

to law school and survive? She decided to take the LSAT. The rest is history. She enrolled in the Law School at UNC and in 1979 graduated with honors. She was managing editor of the Law Review and a member of the Order of the Coif.

That fall Carlyn came to Tharrington Smith. Neither Carlyn nor the firm were ever the same again. Within a very few years she rose through the Executive Committee to Chair the firm. She guided the firm skillfully and with great wisdom for several terms as its chair before moving on to bar association leadership. In 1991 she was elected first woman President of the Wake County Bar Association. While serving in all these leadership roles she served her clients equally well, earning a place in Best Lawyers in America, an honor she has achieved during each succeeding year for a period of twelve years.

Carlyn is deeply respected by her fellow lawyers all of whom admire her professionalism and her sense of fairness and honor. Her demeanor toward judges and toward her adversaries has earned her great distinction as a lawyer.

Excellence as an advocate and as a bar leader are some of the reasons Carlyn is so well suited for the Joseph Branch Professionalism Award. But, she is a superb friend and companion and she is a marvelous conversationalist. These are trademarks Mr. Justice Branch admired as well.

Carlyn is now grandmother to twins, Spencer and Thomas, age seven.

We salute Carlyn Poole who joined the legal profession at age thirty-nine and who rose to the top of her profession as an advocate. We salute her leadership in the Wake County Bar Association and in statewide bar activities. And we salute her as a friend, story teller, companion, and courageous human being. Carlyn, long may you run!