



NEWS RELEASE

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Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals Mourns Passing of Judge Pamela Ann Rymer

SAN FRANCISCO – The Hon. Pamela Ann Rymer, a distinguished judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, died Wednesday, September 21, 2011, after a long illness. She was 69.

Judge Rymer was diagnosed with cancer in 2009 and had been in failing health in recent months. She passed with friends at her bedside.

“Judge Rymer maintained her calendar throughout her illness,” observed Ninth Circuit Chief Judge Alex Kozinski. “Her passion for the law and dedication to the work of the court was inspiring. She will be sorely missed by all of her colleagues.”

Judge Rymer served on the federal bench at both the appellate and trial levels for more than 28 years. Nominated by President Reagan, she was appointed a judge of the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California on February 24, 1983. She was elevated to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals by President George H.W. Bush, receiving her commission on May 22, 1989.

During her 22 years on the appellate court, Judge Rymer sat on more than 800 merits panels and authored 335 panel opinions. She last heard oral arguments in July and her most recent opinion was filed in August. Her productivity was remarkable and every case received her full attention, colleagues said.

"Each case was intrinsically important to her. Finding the right answer for the parties and doing the law correctly were foremost in her mind in every matter. It said a lot about who she was and what kind of judge she was." – Senior Circuit Judge Ferdinand F. Fernandez of Pasadena

"In addition to being a brilliant jurist, Pam Rymer was the most efficient judge in the Ninth Circuit. Because she understood how slow the system can be, and how much our litigants need an answer, she got her work out in record time. She was always pleasant, thoughtful and collegial, a model for all judges to emulate." – Senior Circuit Judge Stephen Trott of Boise, Idaho

"Pam Rymer was a special person, whose strength, determination, and competitive spirit allowed her to continue to contribute greatly to our court, while battling her disease. Pam was a brilliant jurist, a loyal friend and a respected colleague; she will be deeply missed. I will remember her for her clever wit, playful sense of humor, love of sports and all things Stanford, joyful celebration of holidays and, of course, her frogs." – Judge Kim McLane Wardlaw of Pasadena

"Judge Rymer had an unparalleled ability to cut to the core of a legal issue and resolve it in a succinct gem of an opinion. Her strength, indomitable spirit, and incredible work ethic were barely slowed down by her struggle with illness. Any picture of Judge Rymer would be incomplete without a mention of her wicked sense of humor and her love of all things froggish. Her passing is a blow to me both personally and professionally." – Judge Sandra Segal Ikuta of Pasadena

In addition to her contributions to Ninth Circuit jurisprudence, Judge Rymer participated in judicial governance, including service on the Judicial Council of the Ninth Circuit, from 1998 to 2001, and on the circuit's Space and Security Committee, from 2005 to 2008. She was a member of the Commission on Structural Alternatives for the Federal Courts (the White Commission), which produced a comprehensive report in 2000 focusing on possible reorganization of the Ninth Circuit. She also served on the Ad Hoc Committee on Law Clerk Hiring, which sought to provide some order to the annual process of hiring new law clerks to assist federal judges.

Off the bench, Judge Rymer gave freely of her time in support of her alma mater, Stanford University, and was an avid supporter of Stanford sports teams. She was a member of the Stanford Board of Trustees from 1991 to 2001, serving as vice chair of the full board, and as chair of its Academic Policy, Planning and Management Committee and Ad Hoc Committee on Athletics. She also served on the Stanford Law School Board of Visitors and the university's Bill Lane Center for the American West. In 2010, she was presented with the Stanford Medal, recognizing at least 20 years of significant volunteer work on behalf of the school.

Judge Rymer also was on the faculty of the Judicial Clerkship Institute at Pepperdine University and served on the Board of Visitors at the Pepperdine Law School; was a frequent speaker at Federal Judicial Center programs for new judges; and chaired the Court Appointed Scientific Experts Advisory Committee of the American Society for the Advancement of Science.

Born in Knoxville, Tennessee, Judge Rymer was raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. She received an A.B. from Vassar College in 1961, and her LL.B. from Stanford Law School in 1964. After working on the 1964 presidential election campaign of Barry Goldwater, she began her law career in 1965 with Rus Walton & Associates in Los Altos, California. In 1966, she went into private practice in Los Angeles, becoming the first woman partner at the law firm of Lilick, McHose & Charles, and later starting her own firm, Toy and Rymer.

A skilled tennis player, Judge Rymer played competitively for most of her adult life, winning club tournaments well into her 60s. She also will be fondly recalled for the vast collection of stuffed frogs displayed in her chambers and home. They were given to her over the years as reminders of a prank she once pulled early in her career, surprising a senior partner with a live amphibian.

Per Judge Rymer's wishes, no services will be held.

Two scholarship funds have been established at Stanford in Judge Rymer's name. Contributions should be designated to the Pamela Ann Rymer Law Scholarship Fund or the Pamela Ann Rymer Undergraduate Scholarship Fund, and sent to:

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