

# ALICE G. HECTOR: A Star in the Courtroom

## **AS A YOUNG GIRL, ALICE HECTOR ENJOYED**

watching courtroom dramas like “Perry Mason,” “To Kill a Mockingbird” and “12 Angry Men.” A few years later, her TV hero was Angie Dickinson, star of the 1970s hit, “Police Woman.” Since then, Hector has played a starring role in courtrooms across the country, handling high-profile cases and opening the door to other professional women.

“I’ve always felt like being in a courtroom was like doing live theater,” says Hector, a shareholder at Akerman Senterfitt in Miami. “You have to learn all about the case, and then explain it to your audience – the judge or jury.”

Since starting her career in 1973, Hector has been a litigator whose practice areas have included criminal defense and environmental law matters. Today, she focuses on commercial, class action, products liability, trusts and estates and antitrust cases.

“For the last three years, I have been moving into will and trust litigation, and I’m loving the change,” says Hector. “For me, variety is the spice of life. Handling new types of cases gives me an opportunity to learn new things.”

A sixth-generation Floridian, Hector has deep roots in the state. One of her ancestors was Gen. John R. Coffee, who fought in the War of 1812 under Andrew Jackson and later built the “Coffee Road” from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. She grew up in South Florida, where her family was active in the oil and fertilizer businesses.

“None of the women in my family had been professionals, and I didn’t think about becoming a lawyer until I had been out of college for a year,” says Hector, who graduated from Wellesley College in 1967. “I did some traveling in Europe and then decided to take the LSAT. Once I arrived at law school, I knew it was the perfect fit for me.”

Hector earned her J.D. at the University of Texas School of Law, where she was associate editor of the *Criminal Law Journal*. She then became a criminal defense lawyer in New Mexico, where she also worked on a number of high-profile environmental cases. “I got involved in water, geothermal, uranium mining and nuclear waste disposal cases in the late 1970s,” she recalls. “It was a heady time for environmental law, and a lot of fun for me personally,”

Hector recalls that one day in the 1980s she was in three front-page articles in the Albuquerque newspaper, including a victory over the



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U.S. government, which wanted to dump nuclear waste in western Texas. “After we won, the government moved that program to Yucca Mountain in Nevada,” she says.

In 1989, Hector and her husband moved to Miami with her four children, in part to be closer to her aging parents. After a stint with Greer Homer & Bonner, Hector became a senior litigation partner at Steel Hector & Davis and then opened her own firm, Hector & Harke, where she handled product liability, contract disputes, intellectual property matters and other types of litigation. She then joined Broad & Cassel as head of litigation, and has now been with Akerman since 2003.

Hector has also been a teacher, serving as an adjunct professor at the University of Miami School of Law and as a professor of trial practice for the National Institute of Trial Advocacy,

as well as lecturing and participating in American Bar Association panels.

Meanwhile, her children are following in her professional footsteps as a lawyer, doctor, aspiring hotel executive, and college student. “My daughter and son-in-law work for the New York State government, working on environmental and alternative energy programs,” she says. Since her husband Gordon Ettie has three children of his own, Hector spends a great deal of her free time with their kids and grandchildren. “We also have a powerboat and travel a lot,” she says. “I enjoy my book club and playing tennis and golf”

Throughout her career, Hector has been an active mentor to younger women, and now serves as trustee of the Hector Family Foundation, which supports educational causes. “After 37 years as a lawyer, I still enjoy going into the courtroom,” she says. “The law has been a wonderful career for me.” <sup>1</sup>