

FACES IN THE CROWD

Alumnus dedicated to helping others

By KIM MORGAN CHRONICLE CORRESPONDENT
Dec. 21, 2009, 3:43PM



R. Clayton McKee For The Chronicle

GIVING BACK: Randall Sorrels, Houston Baptist University soccer star turned Houston attorney, was recently honored by the school which named its soccer stadium for him.

Resources

RANDALL SORRELS

- **Age:** 47
- **Community Connection:** Memorial Park resident
- **Career:** Partner at the law firm of Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto and Friend
- **Fast Fact:** Sorrels was recently honored with the 2009 Distinguished Alumnus Award from Houston Baptist University
- **Quick Quote:** "I have always felt there are causes that need fighting for."
Randall Sorrels

Turns out the second time is a charm for Memorial resident Randall Sorrels, who was recently named the 2009 Distinguished Alumnus for Houston Baptist University.

Sorrels, 47, was first nominated three years ago. When his name came up again this year, the decision was unanimous.

"We had several good candidates," said Timothy Rothberg, chairman of the Alumni Awards Committee, and a 2002 HBU graduate. "One of the things we look for is someone who has made an impact in their particular field. As a young lawyer myself, I had already heard of Randy. He's one of the most accomplished lawyers, not only regionally but nationally as well."

Sorrels, a partner at the law firm of Abraham, Watkins, Nichols, Sorrels, Agosto and Friend, graduated from HBU in 1984.

Originally from Virginia, Sorrels earned a double major at HBU, in political science and speech communications. From there he went straight to South Texas College of Law, graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1987.

Texas Monthly named him among the Top 100 Lawyers in Texas in 2007, 2008 and 2009. *H Texas* named him among Houston's Top Lawyers for the People each year from 2006 through 2009.

Sorrels said his legal passion is helping right wrongs for the little guy.

"I enjoy representing those who are not able to be represented well unless lawyers are willing to take a chance," Sorrels said. "Our job is to invest time and effort to make a recovery for them, often against large, multinational corporations."

Sorrels is currently preparing for a case straight from the headlines — that of the fire that ripped through an

office building on North Loop East at Gellhorn in 2007.

It took more than 100 firefighters several hours to extinguish the blaze.

“They pulled about 10 people out of the building through the windows,” Sorrels said. “But three did not make it. It’s our belief there were not any (emergency) warning systems in place.”

Sorrels' firm is representing the families of the deceased.

One of Sorrels' most memorable cases is one that has resulted in a long-term good deed.

Jack Phoummarath was a freshman at University of Texas-Austin when he died of alcohol poisoning after a fraternity hazing in 2005.

“The family hired us, and we pursued the people involved and we made a successful recovery of more than \$4 million,” Sorrels said. “But more important, we created an educational video about hazing that is now used across the country.”

The video can be seen at www.inmemoryofjack.com.

“I have always felt there are causes that need fighting for,” Sorrels said. “Sometimes those causes aren’t even politically correct, but you fight it for the right reason. I enjoy taking those on.”

Sorrels received the Distinguished Alumnus Award in November during the school's homecoming, an event the university centers around its basketball team since it does not have a football team.

But it does have a soccer team, one on which Sorrels was captain. The Huskies are an NCAA Division I team.

Sorrels went to HBU on a soccer scholarship and recently donated funds to improve the soccer field, including the installation of lights for night games, walkways, bleachers and bench improvements for players.

“I wanted to upgrade the field and keep Houstonians here to play college soccer,” said Sorrels, who began playing when he was 5.

In October, the soccer field was named “Randy and Cheryl Sorrels Field.” Sorrels' wife of 24 years, Cheryl, is also a former HBU student.

“We are grateful for their generous gift to upgrade our soccer field and are proud to give their name to the site that hopefully will produce many championship soccer teams,” said Director of Athletics Ron Cottrell.