



## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

### **Houston-based Holocaust Survivor to receive French Legion of Honor at ceremony Sunday, October 17**

Houston's Consul General of France Valérie Baraban will bestow France's highest civilian honor, the French Legion of Honor, on Holocaust Survivor Ruth Steinfeld at 3 p.m. Sunday, October 17, 2021. The prestigious ceremony will take place at Holocaust Museum Houston, Lester and Sue Smith Campus at 5401 Caroline St.

The history of the Legion of Honor stems back to 1802, after all French orders of Chivalry were abolished during the French Revolution. Napoleon Bonaparte, who was then the First Consul of the First French Republic, instituted a new order to recognize merit, the National Order of the Legion of Honor: this was meant to reward civilians and soldiers who had achieved great things in the service of France. Since its creation, the award has remained the highest, most prestigious, decoration in France. It is given solely as recognition of merit or bravery, being open to men and women of all ranks and professions.

Ruth Steinfeld was born in Sinsheim, Germany on July 8, 1933, to Alfred and Anna Krell. She and her sister Lea, just 14 months older, lived their early years comfortable and secure. In 1940, the Krells were deported to the internment camp of Gurs in the French Pyrenees, spending months languishing in the drafty barracks of the immense camp. They slept on straw and subsisted on watery soup. To save their daughters, just 7 and 8 years of age, Ruth's parents released them to the care of the French Jewish humanitarian organization OŒuvre de Secours aux Enfants. They spent the remainder of the war in French orphanages and with a foster family.

After the war, the girls' grandfather brought them to the United States in 1946. He died only six months later. Ruth and her sister moved in with an aunt and uncle who treated them unkindly. When a Jewish relief organization offered the sisters the opportunity to move to another city and complete their schooling, they chose Houston. Both sisters married, had families and were involved in numerous Jewish causes including serving on the board of Holocaust Museum Houston. Ruth and her sister Lea were among the first survivors to talk publicly about their experiences. Lea passed away in 2008. Holocaust Survivor Ruth Steinfeld, now 88, continues to speak with young people about her experiences while teaching the dangers of hatred, prejudice and apathy.

**WHAT:** Holocaust Survivor Ruth Steinfeld to receive French Legion of Honor, France's highest civilian honor

**WHO:** Valérie Baraban, Consul General of France in Houston; Holocaust Survivor Ruth Steinfeld; Holocaust Museum Houston CEO Dr. Kelly J. Zúñiga and Board Chair Carl Josehart; friends, family and fellow Holocaust Survivors



**WHEN:** Sunday, October 17  
Ceremony: 3 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.  
Reception: 3:45 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Holocaust Museum Houston, Lester and Sue Smith Campus  
5401 Caroline St., 77004 - 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Herzstein Theater & Moral Choices Hall

**MORE INFO:** <https://houston.consulfrance.org/-english->

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**

MUSEUM: Robin Cavanaugh / [rcavanaugh@hmh.org](mailto:rcavanaugh@hmh.org) / 713-851-4478

CONSULATE: Jane Buckner / [jane.buckner@diplomatie.gouv.fr](mailto:jane.buckner@diplomatie.gouv.fr) / 857-205-9517