



January 2014

For Sarah

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Recommended Citation

Christopher Dolder, *For Sarah*, 67 SMU L. REV. 467 (2014)
<https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol67/iss3/3>

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FOR SARAH

*Christopher Dolder**

I would like to start off by saying that I am here today less to mourn Sarah but more so to celebrate her and to express my sincere gratitude for having her in my life.

The first time I saw Sarah, she was walking up Fondren Drive in front of our house. Her youthful yet confident appearance, piercingly blue eyes, and stunning crimson hair at first led me to believe that she may be a graduate student at the university. The stylish cut of her business dress, upswept hairdo, and weighted portfolio bag provided a few more clues that she may very well be faculty or staff in the Cox or Lyle schools. But it was the elegant posture, firm-set jawline, and calmly assured gait that led me to believe that this was likely a woman of great power and intellect. Little did I know at the time that she was soon to become a proverbial “rock star” in the Dedman School of Law.

The very next time I saw Sarah, she was sitting cross-legged on her lawn. She was dressed in threadbare bell-bottom jeans and a loose-fitting long-sleeved blouse, her hair all flyaway and rife with blades of grass. This seemingly care-free “flower child” held little resemblance to the somewhat staid “career woman” I had previously encountered. At that moment FarrahSofia came romping out of the house with little Jimi in tow, eyes intent and ablaze in anticipation of the next round of “mommy wrestling.” It seemed at that time that my experience in getting to know our new neighbor was going to be quite intriguing at the very least. My ensuing invitation to Sarah, Thuan, and family to join us for Thanksgiving dinner was as much neighborly as it was personally inquisitive.

It was at this Fondren Thanksgiving that my understanding of Sarah crystalized and became quite clear. Tales of first love in Berkeley; law school in D.C.; adventures in Saudi Arabia, Nepal, and the Philippines; equestrian events; and the Peace Corps all provided the necessary data for my burgeoning profile on our new neighbor from up the street. But truthfully, it was the “Tofurkey” that was the final piece of the puzzle. While politely choosing not to inform us that she was a vegetarian and

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respectfully honoring our avian-themed culinary tradition, Sarah and family showed up on our doorstep with a piping hot, freshly-baked, soy-bean-based entrée, craftily molded into the shape of a Turkey breast—fittingly earning the questionable title “Tofurkey.”

So much became clear that evening. This Sarah was an “everywoman” of our contemporary world: Internationally educated, world-traveled, respectful and curious of diverse traditions; a wife, a mother, a friend to many; a professional, a teacher, a contributor, a volunteer; a fierce competitor. From Armstrong Elementary to Highland Park Presbyterian Day School, from the Dedman School of Law to Fondren Village, each of us here today has experienced one of the many forms that Sarah could take, and we all have been enriched by her open and welcoming presence.

As I came to know Sarah more over time, I began to recognize three different ways in which she expressed her thoughts on a subject. If she completely agreed with you on a matter of opinion or decision, she would squeeze her hand into a fist, pull it towards her body, and belt out an enthusiastic “YEAH”. If she felt that your opinion had merit but might conflict in some way with hers, she would give you a supportive, yet, inquisitive “Oh REAL-ly?” If Sarah disagreed with you, she would, under a demure veil of politeness, voice no opinion at all. But after a brief pause would come the subsequent delivery of the thoroughly devastating “Hmmmmm.” Maybe it’s just me, but had Sarah not chosen law, I feel that she could have been a VERY wealthy poker player.

I consider myself quite fortunate to have experienced even only a few of the many facets of this remarkable woman. Somewhere amongst her girlish humility, fierce competitiveness, passionate dedication, and familial love is the woman who became first my neighbor and later my friend. This woman, who could as easily rein in a thousand pound animal as bring a small child to laughter, will continue to live on within all who she has touched.

Again I repeat, I am not here today to mourn Sarah, but to celebrate her very existence. I close with the words of the inimitable Dr. Seuss:

“Don’t cry because it is over, smile because it happened.”