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Eulogy

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EULOGY

PAUL GLEISER*

We, the members of Hibernia's family, thank you for being with us today and we hope that somehow we can adequately express to each of you who have reached out to us since Friday how keenly we have felt your presence and how deeply we appreciate each act and word of sympathy and kindness.

My name is Paul Gleiser, and I am Hibernia's great nephew. This is a noun and not an adjective. She is my grandmother's sister, my mother's aunt and thus, my great aunt. This is *both* a noun and an adjective.

We are going to ask your indulgence as we speak a few moments this morning to her memory. Toward that end, some nomenclature is necessary. Her name is Hibernia Prather Turbeville. Now that name was just as big a mouthful in the early part of this century as it is now. I don't remember ever calling her that. When my uncle Sam was a small boy, he heard Hibernia and his mother refer to each other as "sister," and he, in the way of a small boy, called his aunt "sister." No little kid could get his lips successfully wrapped around Hibernia. When presented with the news that his mother had delivered a second child, a female, it was explained to Sam that he now had a little sister and a big sister. Big sister was contracted to "Big," which stuck—and Big is the only name most of us in the family have ever used to call her.

It's by no means the only name by which she is called. If you earned a law degree at Southern Methodist University from just after World War II until 1974, you knew that the librarian was called "Miss T," and that's the only name that most of the legal community in the Southwest has ever used to call her.

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She was also known to many of you as Bernie, a name used also by my mother, whom Big loved as her own child.

Big was a study in contrasts: inept beyond belief with anything mechanical or physical, yet capable of conceiving and executing the creation of the Underwood Law Library at SMU, which will outlast us all as both a physical landmark and community resource. Compassionate and caring of her fellow man yet capable of saying anything that came to her mind with no thought of the social consequence. When asked at a Washington dinner in 1958 by William Rogers, the Attorney General of the United States under Eisenhower, how the Republican Party was doing in Texas, she informed him that she wouldn't know, the Republicans in Texas could hold their meetings in a phone booth.

A visiting professor from Greece once blew into the library and demanded of her, "Where is my private study?" She told him, "Well, I guess it's in Greece," and that subject was closed.

Big was a woman of the nineties. The trouble is, she started being a woman of the 90s in the 30s. She earned two degrees *de jure* and several more *de facto*. She was a career woman when women didn't have careers. She managed what today would be a multi-million dollar organization, and she did it in such a way as to earn national recognition.

Her life covered the bases. She worked hard and diligently. She took pride in her work. She was a faithful member of this church, and she fulfilled her promise to uphold it by her prayers, her presence, her gifts, and her service. She loved her family, put them first, and delighted in every birth and mourned every death.

She was by profession an educator. She didn't so much teach as she taught the means by which to be taught. She listened, cajoled, scolded, encouraged, lifted up, swatted down, congratulated, chastised, pushed forward, held back, and otherwise mother-henned four generations of *students* in the broadest definition of that word. Throughout her life, she facilitated learning at the point of the student's need to learn.

We grandchildren never quite knew what to make of Big. Never married, and, by the time we came along, never close to being married, she occupied a space somewhere between parent and grandparent. It was only later in life for us that we learned, as the family produced children, Big adopted them and helped raise them along the way.

It was my mother who first put Big in perspective for me. Big was the topic of discussion one day as we were riding in the car. My mother said to me that the important thing to realize about Big was that she was a *practicing* Christian. And she went on to make herself clear. She told me that being a practicing Christian had little to do with religion and everything to do with living life day by day in a way that reflects God's love for his children.

I can tell you that since that day in the car I have been utterly humbled by the simple truth of that conversation with my mother. Big *was* a practicing Christian, and it was by practice and not by words that she touched and *taught* so many people in so many ways.

One of the things I have most enjoyed is listening to Big and my grandmother tell stories about growing up and coming of age in a country town at the down of the depression.

She told me many times of teaching grade school in Delta County—of little girls who wore panties made of grain sacks and their embarrassment, and how she would find a way to get some better material into the hands of parents struggling to maintain both dignity and household. Christianity in practice.

She told me of always preparing more lunch than she needed so that she could offer some lunch to a child who would otherwise go hungry. Christianity in practice.

She told me of law students who had no money to live on and how she could *always* spot them. There was always work to be done in a law library, and there was always a way that she could find to pay them a small sum. There have been senior partners in major law firms and federal judges along the way who were spotted by Miss T and quietly shown a way to be of service and, in turn, be served. Christianity in practice.

When my mother became acutely ill with leukemia eight years ago Big drove her to the hospital and stayed for hours on end as the drama of my mother's death played itself out. Christianity in practice.

When my grandfather and grandmother reached the point in life that they could no longer maintain a home by themselves, she made available the lower floor of her duplex on Binkley.

When my father got caught in what we now call a downsizing and was struggling to keep his family afloat and his dignity intact, she made available the upper floor. Christianity in practice.

When friends got sick, died, lost family members, or suffered financial setback, she called, visited, listened, spoke, or wrote a check. Christianity in practice.

You never had to ask Big what she believed. What Big believed she lived.

John Wesley, the eighteenth century clergyman credited with founding the Methodist Church summed up Big's life.

Do all the good you can,
By all the means you can,
In all the ways you can,
In all the places you can,
At all the times you can,
To all the people you can,
As long as ever you can.

In closing I'd like to share a poem that I know that Big liked. I memorized the poem but not the author. It goes . . .

One ship drives east, another drives west,
With the self same winds that blow.
'Tis the set of the sail, and not the gale,
Which tells it the way to go.
Like the winds of the sea are the winds of fate,
As we journey along through life,
'Tis the set of the soul which sets its goal,
And not the joy or the strife.

It's not the collection of law books or the magnificent edifice in which they are housed that will define the lasting importance of Hibernia Turbeville's life. It's the simple set of her soul, which made possible everything she accomplished.

We thank you for coming and God bless.