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Ellen K. Solender

William V. Dorsaneo III

Southern Methodist University, Dedman School of Law, wdorsane@mail.smu.edu

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ELLEN K. SOLENDER

*William V. Dorsaneo III**

EVERYONE wants to be a success story, a part of the American dream, someone who makes the world a better place, but most of us do not have a very good idea about how to do that. As a teacher, scholar, friend, confidant, and colleague for more than two decades, Professor Ellen K. Solender has done all of these things.

I believe that I know Professor Solender well. She is multifaceted and complex. She is a feminist in the best sense of the word. For all of the years that I have known her, she has spoken to community groups and counseled numerous community and professional organizations on the rights of women and children under Texas law. I know that Ellen gave them all good advice.

As a result of having an extremely successful marriage for more than forty years and after having raised three grown children, Ellen's value system combines respect for men, women, children, as well as the institution of marriage. Ellen will tell you that there is value in being a care giver, a part of a family unit, that a "me first" attitude is stupid and self-defeating. Ellen knows what is important, what is worth wanting. Ellen is a very wise person.

When I first met Ellen, I was impressed by her work in the public sector as a professional advisor and counselor to Hope Cottage Children's Bureau, an agency that handled adoptions as a charitable enterprise. As a professor and a scholar in the subjects of Family Law and Torts and as a very savvy practitioner, her advice and professional counsel made a solid contribution to our community and made the world a little better place. At about the same time, in the late seventies, she co-authored a senate bill concerning spouse abuse, which amended the Texas Penal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure and served as counsel to a project of the Department of Pediatrics of the University of Texas Medical School called the children and youth project. These efforts enriched the lives of others. Ellen is also a realist who knows that there are wolves who masquerade as benefactors. As a result, while engaging in the charitable work described above, Ellen used her professional skills while serving as a consultant on revisions of a Dallas City ordinance regulating the solicitation of charitable funds in the City of Dallas. More recently, she has served as an advisor to the City of Dallas Task Force on Domestic Vio-

* Professor of Law, Southern Methodist University School of Law.

lence. Ellen knows what is worthwhile and she pursues it carefully and well.

As a scholar and a professional colleague, Professor Solender has authored the annual article on the subject of Family Law: Parent and Child for the Annual Survey of Texas Law published by this journal for the past fifteen years or so. These articles have chronicled and evaluated legislature changes at both the state and federal level and interpreted United States Supreme Court decisions as well as the decisions of other courts. These articles constitute solid contributions to the body of legal literature and to the profession. As a professor of torts, she has maintained a keen scholarly interest in the First Amendment and has also written and spoken extensively on the subject of defamation. Indeed, in 1989 as a visiting scholar at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, Ellen lectured on the American law of libel at Auckland and at Victoria University.

Professor Solender has also served her university in the best professional manner. As one of the first women members of SMU's Law Faculty, and in my view, as clearly the best and brightest of these early pioneers, Professor Solender paved the way for all of the other professors who also happen to be women who have followed her. By example, by effort, and by being willing and able to serve as a sensible and intelligent colleague, Ellen has made SMU a lot better than it might have become without her, and the respect that she earned from all of us made it easier for her successors and for all of us to be better.

I personally will miss seeing Professor Ellen Solender on a daily basis because she has been a solid professional colleague as well as true friend to me and to my family. She is an extremely good person.

The chapters of her life that I have been privileged to share are a true success story, a part of the American dream, which can come true. Thank you, Professor Solender, for showing us how to go about it.