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Maureen Armour

Honorable Jane J. Boyle
Northern District of Texas

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MAUREEN ARMOUR

*Jane J. Boyle**

I have many memories of Maureen, but some stand out. Like how she was the smartest person in our class of 1981—bar none. She was unorthodox. She wore army pants and t-shirts to school and wore her hair in a bushy style. Though she readily made law review, she quit. She already had her eyes set on a different career path than most of us. This unique passion for the law and helping others was truly fulfilled when she came back to the law school after ten years of practice at a big law firm to teach the Civil Clinic. There she fell in love with the work and it reciprocated. Her students and their cases were her life's work. She approached each of her cases—be they employment, civil rights, or just a simple contract case—with an intensity that could not be matched. This intensity, combined with her incredible intellect, was absolutely unstoppable.

I remember the time she came down to try a case in my court with her students. This was in federal court where everything is very formal and can be slightly intimidating. It was a civil rights case involving a client who had been shot by the Dallas Police Department while he was standing at the door of his house. Officers of the Dallas Police Department had gone up to the door of a house where they suspected drug sales were being transacted. The client opened his door just a little bit and while he was talking to them, something happened and the officer shot him. The client had no gun on him. He ended up going to jail for drug transactions. But he filed a civil rights lawsuit against the City and the Dallas police officer who shot him. His case survived pretrial motions and proceeded on to trial. Enter the Civil Clinic and Maureen Armour.

Maureen and Professor Mary Spector came to court with ten law students to try a jury trial in this heated civil rights law suit. They were up against the City with its very well-prepared and seasoned attorneys. Despite the odds against them, the students were also very well prepared and through opening arguments, direct and cross-examination, and then closing arguments, the students gained momentum. All under the watchful eyes of Professors Armour and Spector. Maureen was on her game. She brought with her ten years of practice in a civil firm representing clients and appearing in the courtroom, which ultimately showed in her students' work. They zealously represented this man in a hard-fought case

* The Honorable Jane J. Boyle is a District Judge for the Northern District of Texas. Before being appointed to her judgeship by President George W. Bush, Judge Boyle served as the United States Attorney for the Northern District of Texas. She received her Juris Doctor degree from SMU Dedman School of Law.

so very well. From my perspective, I thought they had won, but in the end, the jury returned a verdict in the City's favor. You'd think that they would be really upset but they were not, they knew they had done a great job. I saw each of them giving the client a big hug on the way out of the courtroom. Not only that, the City had newfound respect for the Clinic and their work. And I was a fan of the Civil Clinic at SMU—and Professor Armour—for life.

What you really need to understand is that this story is one of hundreds like it that mark Professor Maureen Armour's time at SMU. She was so smart, but she was so much more than that. I recall saying to her at one time: "How is it that someone so intelligent is also even more good-hearted and dedicated to her students?" I guess that every once in a millennium a Maureen Armour comes along. I am so fortunate to have known her and to have shared one small piece of her incredible career. Good luck Mo.