



ELIZABETH F. DEFEIS

A TRIBUTE TO ELIZABETH F. DEFEIS

Dean of Seton Hall Law School 1983-1987

*Adrian M. Foley, Jr. **

Elizabeth Defeis is a prodigious figure in the law. She has managed to excel in many avenues of legal endeavor; three leap to mind immediately—Scholar—Teacher—Crusader.

A consummate constitutional law scholar, she has long been recognized as a writer, teacher and an acknowledged authority in all matters constitutional, both domestic and foreign. She has lectured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. A prolific writer, she has contributed greatly to the field of research in constitutional law, particularly in matters concerning the first and fourteenth amendments. Students by the score have recounted stories of her brilliant lectures on constitutional law at Seton Hall Law School.

Her signal success was of course no surprise to those who knew her from her early days. A Fulbright scholar, she gained deep respect for the law and its needs when she served as a litigator in the trial courts of New York City; first, in a prestigious Wall Street law firm and later as an Assistant District Attorney under Robert Morgenthau.

Her conviction that a full and complete knowledge of our constitutional system was the cornerstone of the law led her to accept a position as a teacher of constitutional law at Seton Hall Law School, where her outstanding career led almost inevitably to her selection as Dean of the law school.

As Dean, she was able to advance most forcibly a crusade which she had begun as a law professor. She was a pioneer both at Seton Hall and in bar association activities throughout the country in the cause of women-and-the-law issues; a cause which had long been neglected and perhaps would have been even longer in emerging if not for her efforts. The cause which she championed and to which she still responds is that of guaranteeing to women both in the law and society all of the full rights and privileges accorded to them as citizens and lawyers which are yet too often irrationally limited. She was one of the first to undertake making women-and-the-law issues an integral part of law

* Partner of the firm of Connell, Foley & Geiser, Roseland, New Jersey. B.S. *cum laude* Seton Hall University; LL.B. Columbia University School of Law.

school curriculum. In the early 1970's, her sponsorship and encouragement led to the first appointment of women delegates to the National Law Students Association, where issues specifically and peculiarly appropriate to women could be debated and acted upon. Dean Defeis continues to be one of the country's foremost spokespersons in that field as well as in all issues stemming from the first and fourteenth amendments.

Following an illustrious chain of Law School Deans at Seton Hall, Elizabeth devoted herself to the work of continuing the improvement of the excellence of the school and its faculty, and insuring that the true image of Seton Hall be projected and recognized beyond the borders of New Jersey. No one could possibly have worked harder and with more dedication than has Dean Defeis in bringing national recognition to the school. The excellence of programs initiated by her and shown throughout the land have brought to the Bar of the United States recognition of the superb quality of Seton Hall Law School, its faculty, and its graduates.

My own feelings for Elizabeth Defeis, the person, compel me to say a word of the privilege that has been mine to know her beyond her professional role. I have come to know her as one of the most warm, generous, ever helpful friend to all manner of men and women. She is always ready to offer her help making her own time and personal activities a secondary consideration. Her answer to every call for advice or assistance is "What can I do? Where do you want me?" The quintessential Manhattanite, she will leave even her beloved New Jersey Shore home whenever her aid is sought.

I salute Elizabeth Defeis—Teacher—Crusader—Great Lawyer—and most important of all, Lady. Perhaps John Gay had Elizabeth in mind when he wrote, "And when a Lady's in the case, you know all things give place."