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Barbara Salken: Additional Remembrances

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Barbara Salken

In the beautiful autumn, when all the world covers its fear of the coming bleak season with the glorious color of decay, Barbara died.

No sun ever shown brighter. No passing was ever more glorious. No winter will ever be bleaker.

She was one of those rare spirits that enriched everyone with whom she came in contact. Even those who found her exasperating, were better for the emotion. Without her vital energy, this year will be intolerable. Next year will be bad. The following year will be better. In time we will become so accustomed to the void in our lives that we will learn to forget why we are the lesser.

But, oh, how she shone when we knew her.

She taught with a passion for students that transcended concern for their knowledge of criminal procedure, or evidence, or whatever she was teaching at the time. She wanted them to be professionals, and happy, and fulfilled, and helpful to others. So they connected, Barbara and her students, in a way for which classrooms are inadequate. They learned from her at a level at which others of us can only marvel and envy. And she from them. Each student knew somehow that Barbara cared personally about her or him, not in a general sense, but with a very specific and individual attention. And they loved her—not just respect, or admiration, or awe—but love.

Love is the word most like her, most about her, and most of her.

Barbara loved this Law School beyond anything in her life, except her family. This was not a place in which she worked; it was a place in which she lived. She cared for it and ministered to it. When it was divided she brought it together. When it was limping, she grabbed on to support it. When it was going off in the wrong direction, she screamed and hollered until the place woke up to head in the right direction.

In the last months of her life, when she knew she had little energy and even less time, she spent none of it on herself, saving all of it for her son, Billy, for her students, and for her School. For them her light shown as brightly as ever, until the day it went out.

We who worked with her, laughed with her, and loved her will do a poor job of filling the void she leaves in our world. But as we stay at it—even in the bleak season—we will be warmed by the memory of her light. Maybe, in time, we will learn to reflect some of it.

—*Anonymous*