

DEAN GARY VAUSE—SETTING A STANDARD FOR LIVING

Hon. Elizabeth A. Kovachevich*

*That shadow my likeness that goes to and fro . . . How often I question and doubt whether that is really me . . .*¹

The measure of a man is usually more than his physical stature—but when I close my eyes and see the image of Dean W. Gary Vause, I clearly recall the imposing presence of the gentle giant that he was.

From the moment that he assumed the position and obligations as Dean of Stetson University College of Law, his enthusiasm for expanding and achieving its preeminence in the legal world was his number one goal in life. On the occasions when I spoke with him, it was clear that he was painstakingly and doggedly pursuing these objectives, despite obstacles that had to be surmounted and overcome. Whenever I requested his assistance regarding service on court committees and involvement in Stetson's Federal Judicial Internship Program at our courthouse, he was always eager and willing; he knew that it was good for Stetson and for the profession.

Many people consider it a tragedy that his departure from this life left so many things that he sought to achieve unfinished; on the contrary, the tragedy would be failure to realize the great genius that he started, and to lack confidence in ourselves to follow through in fulfilling them, as he would expect us to do.

As both Gary and I shared a common belief in our Creator, it is not a measure of success that the task be finished, but rather that it be commenced; that you give it everything you have. Then, in the Ultimate Judgment of the Almighty, whoever continues the

* © 2003, The Honorable Elizabeth A. Kovachevich. All rights reserved. Judge, United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida. B.B.A., University of Miami, 1958; J.D., Stetson University College of Law, 1961.

Judge Kovachevich was the Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Middle District of Florida from January 1996 through December 2002.

1. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* 137 (Sherman & Co. 1900).

task finds that it is his or her opportunity to prove their worth in the total Plan of life.

When we enter Stetson's Tampa Law Center and Campus for the first time, I intend to close my eyes and sense the presence of the visionary who conceived its existence. And, when my eyes open, I know that there will be a glimpse of a shadow that will catch my gaze; it will be tall and imposing, and it will be smiling.