

Oklahoma City University School of Law

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2004

Reflections on the Career of Nancy I. Kenderdine

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OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY LAW REVIEW

VOLUME 29

SUMMER 2004

NUMBER 2

TRIBUTES

REFLECTIONS ON THE CAREER OF NANCY I. KENDERDINE

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It is altogether fitting that this issue of the *Oklahoma City University Law Review* be dedicated to Nancy I. Kenderdine in recognition of her retirement in the spring of 2005 after 28 years on the faculty of Oklahoma City University School of Law. It is my honor to introduce the tributes written by several of her long-time colleagues.

Nancy Kenderdine came to Oklahoma City University in 1977. While she came from a teaching post at another law school, it was here that her academic career took shape. But it was more than her personal career that matured here. Her time here has also involved a significant commitment to the business of institution-building. The law school she joined was still in the process of transforming itself from what had been for decades strictly a part-time, evening school, serving a predominantly local constituency, to a dual-division school, seeking to serve students from throughout the nation. The institution Nancy leaves has grown up. It is a self-confident, respected national law school. Its alumni are found in every state and several foreign nations. Today's graduates have career opportunities that could not have been hoped for when Nancy first came here. During Nancy's tenure, the Law School gained membership in the Association of American Law Schools.

The essays that follow demonstrate why Nancy Kenderdine can take personal pride in the growth and development of the institution of which

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she has been a part for more than a quarter-century. She leaves with the affection and admiration of her colleagues and the good wishes of thousands of satisfied students whose paths have crossed hers. One of those satisfied students is my wife, Gay, who, in March of 1978, went into labor with our first child after attending Nancy's Family Law class. Another is our son, Eli, who was born that night. He had the good fortune of taking classes with Nancy twenty-five years later. Thus, Nancy holds an especially warm place in our hearts. The depth of these personal ties explains why it is no cliché to speak of the OCU "family."

I close with something I wrote in Nancy's first year at Oklahoma City University. Nancy and I did not know each other well then, so I cannot say that it was written with her in mind. But it sums up the significance of the career of Nancy Kenderdine at Oklahoma City University.

A school of law is an institution that is composed of people interrelating with other people. There are buildings and books, water fountains and copying machines; but, from the student's perspective, the essential component of the law school is the collectivity of people who devise policies and procedures that affect them. The point is that law schools develop institutional personalities, and every policy, every decision, and every attitudinal nuance expressed by a law school affects the process through which law students formulate and redefine their professional and personal self-image. To the extent that law school decision-makers . . . are aware of the impact of institutional attitude or personality upon the students' value-formation process, then to that extent the school as an institution can attempt to contribute to the formation of positive rather than negative values. By its actions, a law school can signal its highly alert student body that the responsible professional attitude is one of sensitivity to social problems and commitment to their just resolution. Law schools should seek to be leaders rather than followers when it comes to recognizing and dealing with social issues affecting the law school community – issues such as race, sex, age, and handicap discrimination. Such an institutional attitude can go far toward minimizing the alleged

tendency of legal education to foster attitudes of indifference to social problems and social justice.¹

Nancy Kenderdine has helped to shape the institutional personality of Oklahoma City University School of Law into one that serves students well. Ours is an institution that is in tune with the world and determined to exert a constructive influence on it. Through the strength of her character and her seriousness of purpose, she has guided thousands of students to care about “doing right” and “doing good.” Every time one of her former students touches the life of a client, Nancy’s influence is there. And her influence on the law school she served so long and so well will be ever-lasting.

1. Lawrence K. Hellman, *Considering the Future of Legal Education: Law Schools and Social Justice*, 29 J. LEGAL EDUC. 170, 193 (1978).

