

INTRODUCTION AND DEDICATION TO JUDGE ALAN COOPER

ELEANOR TORRES, ESQ.*

The late Honorable Alan Cooper had a distinguished career as a family law attorney and as a Family Court judge. Prior to becoming a judge in Family Court in 2005, he was a director in the law firm of Berkowitz, Schagrin & Cooper, P.A. and practiced law for 20 years.

Judge Cooper contributed to his community and the legal profession in a way that few others have done. While in private practice, Judge Cooper was committed to ensuring equal access to justice for all. He volunteered for the Office of the Child Advocate, the Domestic Violence Victim's Advocacy Program, and Delaware Volunteer Legal Services (DVLS). He was a dedicated volunteer, representing indigent victims of domestic violence with civil protective orders, custody, visitation, and divorce matters. When called upon by DVLS, Judge Cooper always agreed to take the case, or mentor another volunteer attorney. His contributions to the program included recruiting other attorneys to volunteer, and in one such effort, he suggested the slogan for a bumper sticker "Pro Bonos do it for free; I'm doing it with DVLS." In 2002, he received the Delaware Bar Association's Outstanding Pro Bono Service Award.

As a Family Court judge, his commitment to issues impacting victims of domestic violence continued in his role as domestic violence liaison judge. As a liaison judge, Judge Cooper became an engaged partner in the domestic violence community on behalf of Family Court. During this time, he participated on the Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and attended numerous domestic violence committee meetings. He quickly became a valuable resource to the domestic violence community due to his ability to educate advocates on the legal system's response to domestic violence while appreciating the victim's experience navigating that system. Neither the significance of the issue nor the time commitment involved was ever a deciding factor. If Judge Cooper was asked to help, he accommodated the request with a smile and made everyone feel as though their issue was of the utmost of importance to him and to Family Court.

A few years ago, through his association with the domestic violence community, Judge Cooper mentioned the concept of having a symposium focusing on domestic violence at Widener University Delaware Law School. The idea quickly picked up momentum, with Dana Harrington Conner taking the lead to approach *Widener Law Review* with the idea. That year, *Widener Law Review* selected another topic for the symposium, but relentless as they were, Judge Cooper and Professor Harrington Conner made the proposal

* Eleanor Benjamin Torres is a member of the Delaware bar and the Executive Director of Delaware's Domestic Violence Coordinating Council. Ellie previously served as the Director of Legal Affairs for the Family Court of the State of Delaware. She is a graduate of the Delaware Law School where she was a member of the Delaware Journal of Corporate Law.

again the following year. At this time, a domestic violence symposium seemed a perfect choice to highlight the new Family Health Law & Policy Institute at Delaware Law School. With the continuous support of Judge Cooper and the enthusiasm of Professor Harrington Conner, a committee met throughout 2014 to develop an agenda for what would become “Strengthening and Protecting Families: The Intersection of Family Health Law and Domestic Violence.” The Symposium was promoted by Judge Cooper and was filled to capacity within days of registration opening. The Symposium featured a presentation by Judge Cooper entitled “Child Custody and Domestic Violence in the State of Delaware.”

Judge Cooper planned to write an article based on his remarks at the Symposium to be included in this publication, but due to his illness and his untimely passing, he was unable to complete that contribution. While he may not have an article included in this issue of *Widener Law Review*, it is only fitting that this publication be dedicated to him, given his contribution was the Symposium itself. It was his idea, and it was his eagerness and determination that brought the Symposium to life. It was his enthusiasm and tireless energy that kept committee members determined to ensure that the Symposium became a reality. And it was Judge Cooper’s commitment to eradicating domestic violence and the harms it causes to children and families that filled the Ruby R. Vale Moot Courtroom to capacity with his colleagues from the bench and scores of family law attorneys and advocates, with the understanding that Judge Cooper was committed to the issues to which he spoke, and that he was truly dedicated to strengthening and protecting families.

Beyond his work on domestic violence, Judge Cooper was a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), the Delaware State Bar Association, and the American Inns of Court. He was a past president of the Melson-Arsht Inn of Court and a past chair of the Family Law section of the Delaware State Bar Association. He was named to the NCJFCJ’s Family Violence and Domestic Relations Advisory Committee. Judge Cooper presented at numerous seminars on family law topics. He was a contributor to *The Delaware Handbook of Appellate Practice* on the subject of Family Court appeals and also published an article entitled “A Small Firm Perspective on Pro Bono Work.” He taught Family Law at Delaware Law School as an adjunct faculty member. Judge Cooper had received his JD from Delaware Law School in 1985 where he was a member of the *Delaware Journal of Corporate Law*.