

## THE TALE OF TWO FAMILIES: A TRIBUTE TO KATHRYN VENTURATOS LORIO

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## I. INTRODUCTION

On July 19, 2020, the Loyola New Orleans College of Law lost a dear and distinguished member of our faculty, Professor of Law and former Interim Dean Kathryn Venturatos Lorio. An accomplished attorney, law teacher and scholar,<sup>1</sup> she was a leader of two Loyola law “families.” The first family is the one she created with her husband Philip D. Lorio III, also a Loyola College of Law graduate. Their two children, Elisabeth Lorio Baer and Philip D. Lorio IV, are also Loyola College of Law graduates. The second Loyola family she led is the family of law deans who have been at the helm of the College of Law during her time there. This essay collects the memories of her two families, shared in their own words, with much gratitude for her life and achievements.

## II. HER FAMILY

### A. HER HUSBAND PHILIP D. LORIO III FOUND HIS INSPIRATION AS FOLLOWS:

#### A MUSE ON MY MUSE: KATHRYN VENTURATOS LORIO

For those of you who knew my wife, you knew she was of Greek descent. Therefore, I use the word “muse” judiciously and with full knowledge of the historical reference to the eight muses who peppered ancient Greek mythology. I also use the word as a personal reference to the inspiration which she was, and continues to be, to me. Out of all the a-musing stories I was tempted to relate, perhaps an appropriate topic at this time might be the pride she had for her longtime association with, and the many hats she wore for, Loyola College of Law. . . The Law School.

I was introduced to Kathy by a close friend my first day of my freshman year at the Law School. She was a junior, as was our introducer, Dick Chopin. My first class was after our mutual lunch. To my delight, Kathy was taking the same class. We were seat mates for Federal Civil Procedure and I almost immediately noticed her note taking skills and the quality of her questions to Professor, then later Dean, Thomas Sponsler. That was fifty years ago.

This begins my musing: Kathy’s many and varied associations with The Law School. Growing up, Kathy’s often stated goal was to become a kindergarten teacher when she grew up. When she

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1. See Table 1 for a list of all Dean Lorio’s publications.

grew up, she became a law professor, something not far afield from a kindergarten teacher as she would often opine.

As one of only a handful of women, and fifth in the graduating class of 1973, Kathy was hired as an associate at Deutsch Kerrigan and Stiles, one of the “large downtown law firms.” At that time, these firms were hiring very few females and hardly any Loyola Law graduates. After three years of practice at Deutsch, her inner desire to teach came to the forefront. She was invited to interview for a teaching position at Tulane Law. As the then dean perused her record, he remarked with astonishment that considering her excellent undergraduate record at Newcomb College at Tulane and her LSAT score, which certainly met and exceeded the requirements for entry to Tulane Law, he wondered why was she not admitted to Tulane, noting she was a Loyola graduate. With pride she replied, “I was admitted to Tulane, I chose Loyola!” Loyola offered her a generous scholarship; Tulane offered a seat in a classroom. Thus, her love for Loyola began and lasted throughout her life.

She graduated from Loyola Law. She married me, a Loyola graduate. Both our children had the option to attend the undergraduate schools of their choice: Elisabeth - Georgetown; Philip IV - Vanderbilt. But any post-graduate studies were strongly encouraged to be at Loyola Law School. Both children graduated from Loyola Law. Our daughter married a Loyola Law classmate, Jason Baer.

As a teacher, she became the first chaired professor at Loyola University New Orleans, the Leon Sarpy Professor of Law, a distinction which afforded her great pride throughout her career. As was noted by Former Dean Marcel Garsaud when Kathy received the St. Ives Award, she was the only person in the history of the School to receive every major award and honor. From her first “Best Teacher” award to the announcement by Dean Madeleine Landrieu at the same luncheon that a professorship was being created in her name – The Kathryn Venturatos Lorio Professor of Law – held today by Professor Sandi S. Varnado, its first recipient. Kathy’s accolades were abundant and sincerely appreciated.

As an author, she wrote several textbooks and numerous law review articles. Along with her summer teachings abroad in Greece and Austria, the Loyola flag flew both nationally and internationally. She served as chair of several national groups, including the Women’s Section of the American Association of Law Schools, and

numerous local and state committees. Her longtime service to the Louisiana Law Institute afforded Loyola a meaningful voice in the formation of state laws in the areas of Successions, Donations, Trusts and Alternative Means of Reproduction – her major areas of interest. She was a true “civilian” in the Louisiana Civil Law scheme.

Kathy loved teaching; but when asked, she reluctantly served in the school’s administration as associate dean. Then after the untimely death of Dean Brian Bromberger, she assumed the mantle of dean for one year, becoming the first female dean of a Louisiana law school.

Student, wife, mother, teacher, scholar, author, chaired professor, associate dean, dean: Loyola touched and enriched her life immeasurably. In turn, Kathy touched the lives of three generations of attorneys and judges, so many of whom expressed such warm and meaningful thoughts upon her passing to our family for which we are eternally grateful.

So, throughout the balance of my life, my muse will continue to be my love and my inspiration. Thanks Loyola. Thanks K, it was a fun ride! Love ya, P.

#### **B. HER DAUGHTER ELISABETH LORIO BAER REMINISCES:**

I guess I can say my overlap with mom’s career at Loyola dates back to around 1984 when I was approximately 2 years old. I remember tagging along and sitting in the back of the class coloring while she taught. This was evidenced by the fact that, about 25 years later, when I was her student, she was still using the same notes with my scribble scratch all over them.

Mom taught in Vienna the summer my husband Jason and I met and started dating. You could say she first got wind of our relationship during her Comparative Bioethics class. She always said she could tell something was different by the way my attention had shifted to the boy in the class rather than her lecture. Mom never called on anyone in any of her classes, but in almost every class you could always hear her say with a little snicker, “And what do you think, Ms. Lorio?” After that summer, she called on me even more.

I took many of my mom’s classes, not just because she was an amazing teacher, but because we shared passion for the same subject matters. Her passion for families and children is what sparked

my interest in family law, which I practiced for six years of my career.

### C. HER SON PHILIP D. LORIO IV RECALLS:

There have been several times in my life in which my mom's career overlapped with her raising me. I will always remember when I took her International Comparative Reproduction class in Vienna. She literally did not call on anyone during the entirety of the course with the exception of the time we were addressing developments in reproductive technology. Specifically, she presented the novelty of a 65-year-old woman being pregnant. While listening to see where she was going with this, she looked directly at me and posed the question, "Now, Philip, how would you feel about having a baby brother or sister right now?" I went red, smiled, and simply responded, "Well, Mom, that would be splendid."

My mom had it all. She was an off-the-charts academic who pioneered law in Louisiana to expand and protect the definition of "forced heirs," while she also had the compassion, warmth, and humor such that anyone who she met loved her. Reciprocally, she loved them. As a practicing lawyer, I am constantly reminded about the positive influence my mom was in teaching and mentoring attorneys throughout the state. When I hear stories of how she encouraged students to persevere through the challenges of law school, which often bled into challenges of life, I am reminded of all of the times she consoled me and lifted me up. While so many others have had the honor to be taught by her, I thank God every day that he blessed me and made me her son.

## II. THE FORMER DEANS OF LOYOLA COLLEGE OF LAW

Loyola Law's former deans were all close colleagues of Dean Lorio and wrote the following tributes in her memory. We share our diverse experiences of her as a student, colleague on the faculty, dean and predecessor dean. We all worked closely with Dean Lorio in various capacities and at different times of her illustrious career. The dates shown next to each dean's name are those of their years of deanship.

**A. MARCEL GARSAUD JR. (1970-1982; 1994-1996)<sup>2</sup>**

Dean Garsaud recalls Dean Lorio's reputation in the legal community. Here are his thoughts:

Kathy Lorio will be remembered as one of the giants in the history of Loyola Law School. Her contributions to its solid reputation are immeasurable. Her compelling scholarship, her enthusiastic teaching and dedication to her students, and her unselfish service to the law school were hallmarks of her career. Her students loved her, and she loved them back. In her long career, she garnered the respect and esteem of the entire legal community of the State.

Kathy was a model for young teachers as well as her colleagues. She never lost the zest for teaching, even during her most challenging times. She always left the classroom with a smile on her face. Kathy was a person of deep faith. She put her beliefs into practice. Her family, her faith, her friends, and her school were her life. May she rest in peace

Recently I asked one of Kathy's former students how Kathy was regarded by her students. The reply is worth quoting verbatim:

'As a young student who began law school in 1980, I was fortunate to have Professor Lorio as an instructor for several classes. She mirrored the grace, compassion, and professionalism I came to seek and to respect in others. She not only presented a gracious model of the professional woman for female students, but for all students as well. Professor Lorio exuded the energy, curiosity, and desire to share with her students the love of learning the history behind the law she taught and the ability to recognize and challenge laws that never, or no longer, reflected the aspirations of making life right for those who had limited, or in some cases, no voice in directing business decisions in their lives.

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2. Dean Garsaud introduced Dean Lorio with a powerful speech when she was the recipient of the College of Law St. Ives' Award, an award that is presented to a Loyola College of Law graduate who represents the highest standards of the profession of law and has furthered the cause of the College of Law. *See* College of Law St. Ives' Award, <https://www.loyno.edu/alumni-giving/alumni/alumni-awards-honors/college-law-st-ives-award> (last visited March 21, 2021). Lorio received the award in 2019. Portions of Dean Garsaud's speech are incorporated above.

Professor Lorio challenged us to become aware of our own biases and cultural beliefs in order to recognize the law's ability to protect more than our own self-interest. Professor Lorio welcomed and treated the students as colleagues, long before we passed the bar. We certainly appreciated her humorous presentations, her firm, but gentle, prodding, and her professionalism. She delighted in seeing students 'get it.' (Not a universal quality in law professors.)'

Time does not permit me to describe all of Kathy's remarkable achievements, both professional and personal. Her curriculum vitae was fifteen pages strong. However, I will mention one. Kathy was a member of three scholarly and professional communities. The community of lawyers of this state, the community of the faculty of Loyola University, and the community of the alumni of this law school. Each of these annually present their highest awards—the Louisiana Bar Foundation's Professor of the year, the University Faculty's *Dux Academicus* award honoring the outstanding faculty member of the University, and the Loyola law school alumni's St. Ives award. Kathy was the only person that has won all three prestigious awards, a tribute to who she really was. In her area of expertise, she was Loyola's face in the national and international communities.

### B. THOMAS SPONSLER (1983-1989) <sup>3</sup>

Dean Sponsler remembers Dean Lorio as follows from his years at Loyola:

Kathy was a Loyola Law School student. She was well known, respected, and liked by everybody on the faculty. There came a time when she was considered for a position on the faculty. I do not remember if she applied for such a position or the faculty reached out to her to ask her to do so. Normally faculty recruitment is a controversial subject. Faculty candidates are seldom unanimously supported; Kathy was. It was a wise decision. She was a star of the legal profession, a wonderful teacher, scholar, and colleague. The world is a poorer place without her.

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3. Dean Sponsler returned to Loyola as a Visiting Professor in 2011-2012 and wrote about his experiences at Loyola teaching in the same institution, noting the changes both at the school and in his life. See Thomas Sponsler, *Coming Home Again*, Loyola University Lawyer Magazine Spring 2012, available at <http://magazine.loyno.edu/coming-home-again> (last visited August 11, 2020).

**C. JAMES KLEBBA (1999-2003)**

Dean Klebba reminisces on Dean Lorio's service on campus and abroad:

I knew Kathy Lorio for many years. I recall her intelligent and erudite participation in faculty meetings and various committee meetings. I also remember her companionship at a number of informal lunches and dinners with colleagues and Loyola graduates.

For the past 20 or so years, the projects we worked on together involved summer abroad programs. Kathy taught in the Vienna program and was instrumental in starting a program in Greece that had previously been operated by Tulane Law School. She also was very helpful in administering, along with Gaya Davidyan and myself, a program which brought law students from Moscow State University to Loyola for several summers. Kathy taught a "mini-course" on Louisiana Civil Law and its relation to the Napoleonic Code. Kathy and Phil invited the Russian students to their house for cocktails and dinner, followed by a sing along around her piano. Our student guests particularly enjoyed the piano session.

**D. MARÍA MERCEDES PABÓN (2011-2015)**

Dean Pabón, who is Dean Lorio's immediate successor at Loyola's deanship, fondly remembers moments with her mentor:

I remember the first time I met Kathy on a cold January day in 2011 at an AALS meeting in San Francisco, when I was a finalist for the deanship. We met for coffee and in just those few moments, I felt completely at ease and excited at the prospect of joining Loyola. She was so warm, kind and welcoming! Once I joined Loyola, she and Phil were so hospitable! They went out of their way to ensure my family and I were embraced here in New Orleans. Phil even gave his sandals to my daughter Lucia when she lost them while we were in Spetses, Greece! (Kathy was the inaugural director of the Spetses summer abroad program when Loyola took over the program from Tulane Law School<sup>4</sup>). Kathy, Lucia and I had

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4. Dean Lorio was responsible for another handover, that of the Spetses Summer Law Program, which her mentor, Prof. Athanassios Nicholas "Thanassi" Yiannopoulos handed over from Tulane Law School in 2013. The program exists to this day. See Loyola University New Orleans College of Law website "Spetses, Greece" <https://law.loyno.edu/academics/study-abroad/spetses-greece> (last visited March 24, 2021). Dean Lorio was extremely proud of her Greek heritage and it was a great gift she left for Loyola to have this program.



traveled from New Orleans to Athens and we shared string cheese I had brought along during the flight delay—it made the time pass faster and easier. Later on, Kathy took Lucia to the Greek Orthodox Church in Lakeview and explained the tenets of her faith so Lucia could write a report for junior high school. We were so lucky to have Kathy in our lives!

I recall the handover at the law school in June 2011 when Kathy and I sat next to each other at the long table in the dean's conference room for days, working out the details to ensure the smooth transition in law school leadership. She was exceedingly gracious and amazingly organized—there was no detail overlooked as she passed the baton to me! Kathy told me she thought I would do very well as dean because I took copious notes on everything we discussed each time we met. The confidence she instilled in me as a new dean helped me become the best law dean I could be. I will always be grateful to Kathy for her role in my career.

Over time, I got to know her as a friend, and she told me how she remembered as a child being with her grandfather at the Roosevelt Hotel and seeing the actor Clark Gable. Kathy told me stories of her high school years at Ben Franklin. She was one of the first 100 women lawyers in the Greater New Orleans area<sup>5</sup> – I attended a luncheon where she was so honored. Her whole family accompanied her on that occasion, including her dear mother-in-law, Mrs. Helen Lorio. I was so impressed with how she had managed to balance family and career back in the day when many women could not do so.

When I had to leave the deanship for family reasons, she was supportive of my decision, sat by my side and comforted me when I cried. I cried again when she was diagnosed with cancer and kept in touch with her as often as we could. The dignified way she fought the disease and lived to see the birth of three granddaughters and one grandson after the diagnosis is evidence of her tenacity and will to live (and Phil's extraordinary support!). Kathy was truly an outstanding person—one of a kind. I was fortunate and very honored to have known her and her family, and that they considered me a friend. I feel her loss deeply, and often think to myself when faced with making a difficult decision as a faculty and as a family

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5. The Women in the Profession Committee of the New Orleans Bar Association researched and organized the program for the First 100 Women Lawyers in the Greater New Orleans Area. See <https://www.neworleansbar.org/committees/women-in-the-profession/first-100-women-lawyers-in-gno> (last visited March 24, 2021).

member: “What would Kathy do? What would Kathy say?” As I recall the advice she gave me, I am heartened thinking I am on the right path. In my mind, Kathy was the soul and conscience of Loyola College of Law. I am glad to continue on at Loyola Law and be able to keep her indomitable spirit and her legacy alive.

#### E. REV. LAWRENCE W. MOORE, S.J. (2015-2017)

Rev. Moore fondly recalls the religious experiences shared between him and Dean Lorio:

Kathy could be earthy and direct, but the memory of Kathy that I most treasure is a religious practice that she shared with me. Before she spoke on a controversial and usually contentious topic at a faculty meeting, she would ask for divine guidance about what to say by inconspicuously moving her thumb over the palm of her hand in the shape of the cross. I smile now as I realize that she as an Orthodox Catholic would trace the crossbeam from right to left. I as a Roman Catholic would trace the crossbeam left to right.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The two families which Dean Lorio led have shared their stories about her as a tribute to her unique, unparalleled influence in our lives. Reflecting on her life and career allows us to learn how to grow ourselves, and how to empower our law students and future leaders in these very difficult times. Her memory encourages us to strive to be our best selves, something Kathy did by learning from her life lessons. It is fitting that we honor her with this tribute essay. May her memory live eternally in our hearts.

#### TABLE 1

##### LAW REVIEW AND JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *He Taught us to Dance*, 64 Loy. L. Rev. 281 (2018). (Foreword to symposium in memory of Professor Athanassios N. Yiannopoulos)

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *From Cradle to Tomb: Estate Planning Considerations of the New Procreation*, 57 La. L. Rev. 27 (1996).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Roman Sources and Constitutional Mandates: The Alpha and Omega of Louisiana Laws on Concubinage and Natural Children*, 56 La. L. Rev. 317 (1995).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Making History— Loyola University New Orleans College of Law Welcomes Dean María Pabón*, 58 Loy. L. Rev. 1 (2012).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Reflections: A Generation Later*, 80 UMKC L. Rev. 745 (2012).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *The Changing Concept of Family and its Effect on Louisiana Succession Law*, 63 La. L. Rev. 1161 (2004).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Louisiana Civil Law Tradition: Archaic or Prophetic in the Twenty-First Century?*, 63 La. L. Rev. 1 (2002).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *The French Civil: A Model for Louisiana*, 51 Loy. L. Rev. 35 (2005).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Alternative Means of Reproduction: Virgin Territory for Legislation*, 44 La. L. Rev. 1641 (1984).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *"I Didn't ask to be born either"*, 14 Loy. J. Pub. Int. L 237 (2012).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Forced Heirship: The Citadel has Fallen-Or Has it?*, 44 La. B.J. 16 (1996).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Conceiving the Inconceivable, Legal Recognition of the Posthumously Conceived Child*, 34 Actec J. 154 (2008).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *The Process of Regulating Assisted Reproductive Technologies, What We Can Learn From Our Neighbors- What Translates and What does Not*, 45 Loy. L. Rev. 247 (2009).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Experiential Teaching- On Steroids: Unexpected Pedagogical Discoveries*, 15 Loy. J. Pub. Int. L 195 (2013).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *The Experience of a Civil Law Jurisdiction with the Trust*, 42 La. L. Rev. 1721(1982).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *The New Forced Heirship Legislation: A Regrettable "Revolution"*, 50 La. L. Rev. 409 (1990).

#### BOOKS AND TREATISES

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Successions and Donations*, 10 La. Civ. Law Treatise (1995).

Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Successions and Donations*, 10 La. Civ. Law Treatise, (2d. Ed. 2009-2011).

Monica Hof Wallace & Kathryn Venturatos Lorio, *Successions and Donations in* 10 La. Civ. Law Treatise, Successions and Donations (2d ed. 2020)