

Preface

In a prior edition of *Pennsylvania Family Law Practice and Procedure*, author Joanne Ross Wilder noted that the years since the first edition “witnessed the metamorphosis of family law from a fault-based, quasi-criminal regime to a remedial legal system designed to focus on the realities of family life and to provide a workable means to resolve the issues that flow from the inevitable tension between the interests of children, the state, and the various adults who interface with each other, often requiring difficult decisions, the balancing of some interests and the subordinating of others.” It is these last items, the balancing act, and the inevitable subordination of interests, which render family law so difficult to practice effectively. This book was and is meant to be a starting place.

Joanne went on to remark that the “federal government is a growing presence in Pennsylvania family law. . . . Federal law has addressed custody jurisdiction, adoption assistance, taxation, retirement and employee benefits.” To that list marriage must now be added. The legalization of same-sex marriage was a seismic shift in family law; as progressive a thinker as Joanne was, she likely did not contemplate this change happening so rapidly.

For eight years my office was adjacent to that of Joanne. It was my privilege to step into Joanne’s office and ask for advice, which advice was always matter of fact, and usually emphatic and certain. Although the law might, Joanne did not, second-guess. She enjoyed her work, because, as she put it, her job was to solve problems. When interacting with members of the bar from Allegheny and other counties in Pennsylvania, I would continually hear from attorneys and judges that I was “learning from the best.” I do not believe I ever met someone more networked than Joanne, but her connections were genuine. After every trip she took for meetings there would be a stack of pictures in her office to send out to people with whom she had spent time. This edition is dedicated to Joanne Ross Wilder.

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