The following speech was delivered by Brett Gallagher, daughter of Jeanne P. Gray, on the occasion of the ABA Center for Professional Responsibility posthumously honoring Ms. Gray with the 2014 ABA Michael Franck Professional Responsibility Award. The Award was presented by ABA Treasurer Lucian T. Pera.

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"Stories My Father Told Me About My Mother"

Brett Gallagher

I cannot express the tremendous honor that I feel to be here today accepting this award on behalf of my mother, Jeanne Gray. My family and I are so grateful for this recognition of her many years of service to the profession and her significant contributions to the field of professional responsibility law.

When I hear about all the contributions my mother made to the profession, it is almost hard for me to believe. That is most likely because, for many years, my family and I were victims of her early morning work habits… which always included a blaring alarm clock that would go off at approximately 3 a.m., the television blaring at full volume in one room, the radio on inexplicably in the next room, every light on (making the house resemble a prison yard), and every window open (even in the brutal Chicago winter). It was in that environment that she poured over endless Center reports, tinkered away in her email, made copious notes in her tiny memo pads, talked to herself, and then left herself phone messages as reminders, which inevitably, began “Good Morning, Jeanne. Here are a few things to remember today.” Madness. Complete madness. Most mornings I thought, I cannot believe they let this mad woman run the Center for Professional Responsibility!
BUT then she would gather herself, stride out the door to work, flinging one of her classic scarves over her shoulder, looking calm and collected, and head into the office. As if the last few hours never happened. If only you all had known!

She made it all look so easy. Everything was done with grace.

My father told me a story recently about one of his fondest memories on my mother in action.

After years of hard work and negotiations, the all-important Kutak Commission Recommendations were finally up for a vote before the ABA House of Delegates meeting in New Orleans. The discussions and arguments stretched on so long that an unprecedented dinner break was called. My mother and father escaped for a long walk and some oysters at a small out-of-the-way cafe. They noted piles of orange sawhorses along the broad sidewalks but thought nothing of it.

They left the cafe early to make sure they had plenty of time to get back before the House reconvened. Then disaster struck! All of the streets had been magically blocked off. Sawhorses lined all the curbs and an army of policemen with batons stood grimly nearly shoulder to shoulder or on horseback along every possible route back to the ABA convention center.

They tried every side street to get around the blockade. No luck. Meanwhile an endless parade of floats and bands swept by with showers of beads and gold candies bouncing off them. Finally my mother said, “Well this is just ridiculous,” pushed aside a sawhorse, and started with determination across the broad street. My father, gallant gentleman that he is… stayed put and pretended he did not know the mad woman as a policeman started after her blowing his whistle and another on horseback took off after her. She, briefcase on her shoulder, never broke stride and then she disappeared into the revelers on the other side. Later, when my father finally arrived perspiring at the House meeting… there she was sitting coolly at the CPR table, listening intently, taking notes, and leaning forward with her chin jutting out--a familiar pose for her. My father thought, not for the first time, "What a woman!"

As her daughter, I would confirm what a woman, indeed!

But that’s what she did best. She was not afraid to cut through everything else in the background in order to get to what was important.
Her passion for the law was infectious. At an early age I would look up at that beautiful, brilliant, strong woman and all I wanted was to be exactly like her – madness and all.

Like many of us, I wanted to be a part of her club. For me, that meant that I wanted to be lawyer. For most of my life, that was the plan.

But, like any good daughter, at one point in college I decided to rebel! I was going to become a filmmaker instead. To my mom I might as well have wanted to run off and join the circus.

Upon announcing my intended rebellion, in typical Jeanne Gray fashion, she calmly asked me to dinner—I’m sure more than one of you here today has been on the receiving end of one of those Jeanne Gray dinners. She listened to all my concerns, she asked all the right questions, and she got straight to the important issues and invited me to look at the bigger picture. Finally, she told me (with the kind of sincerity only she could exude) that I was meant to be a lawyer and that is where I was needed most. She had me! I joined her club after all.

It was one of the greatest gifts she ever gave me.

She had an incredible ability to truly listen to the people around her, to put everything in context, and then make you consider the bigger picture. This is what made her a tremendous advocate for our profession. It is that spirit that lives on in the work of the Center and in the heart of our profession. And our profession is better for it.

For all her accomplishments, she would be the first to say (as she had on many occasions) that nothing she accomplished would have been possible without the dedicated contributions of so many of you here today---CPR staff and volunteer lawyers who have done such meaningful work to build the field of professional responsibility to what it is today.

She truly believed in the duty that we, as lawyers, owe to the public we serve, and she inspired us all to do the same.

She certainly inspired it in me. Everyday I spend in the practice of law, I always think of her example. I strive towards it, I try to practice as though she is watching, I try to make her proud.
It has definitely made me a better lawyer, but I think it has also made me a better person.

I would like to close with one more story that my father shared with me when we learned that Mom would be honored with this significant award.

This encounter occurred during an ABA meeting in San Francisco. During a break in the action, my mother and father were running to catch a moving cable car. She grabbed a pole, but she was carrying her inevitable briefcase and needed a hand up. Suddenly, my father recalled, a hand reached down and pulled her up. My mother and her rescuer both started laughing and chattering away, having a damn fine time. It was obvious to my father that they knew each other well. Finally, she turned to my father and said, “Oh, I'm sorry. Paul, this is Mike Franck”

I would like to think today, on this special day, that Michael Franck is again reaching down to pull Mom up and they are laughing and having a damn fine time.

Thank you again, on behalf of my Mom, for this tremendous honor.