

Thank you all for taking the time to come here today to celebrate the wonderful life of Elizabeth Dennis Rockwell. As shared by many, Elizabeth knew what she wanted and worked hard to put her thoughts into actions and her actions into the many legacies we see here at UH that will touch the lives of our grandchildren's grandchildren. Elizabeth pre-arranged everything she could. Her lifelong wishes were for no funeral and no memorial service. We talked about this specifically and I often explained that she could haunt me if she wanted, but I knew her friends would gather for a Celebration of her life. It took a while, but she finally agreed that an event like this would be OK. And so, here goes.

I have learned that you find out a lot about a person when you travel with them or when you help them move. John can share many travel stories about trips together in his plane – from the take-off guided by the car headlights of the folks they had just met with to the time there was an evening meal of BBQ and onions followed by a bit of a turbulent flight home. Elizabeth and I took several unusual trips and enjoyed the ride there and back again. Like the time she was speaking for a group of high school students at a Rotary Conference in Waller or the trip to Galveston for dinner with the Galveston Historical Society followed by a Galveston City Council meeting scheduled to honor Elizabeth. Elizabeth always liked the role of navigator, getting us to the event and keeping the driver, ME, entertained with stories.

But let me concentrate on the area of moving. When a person moves, there is often an element of vulnerability that surfaces in the time of change and unrest. I accompanied Elizabeth in 4 major moves of her life. The first was in 2001 when she said it was to be partial retirement. John knew it was time to say adios to CIBC Oppenheimer – he knew there was nothing partial about this change. This was a very difficult time for Elizabeth. We had just gone through a fall in front of this building and a broken wrist. Now we were shutting down her office at 1600 Smith. The office staff thought all could be packed and easily moved in a day. Elizabeth and I worked more than a week. This chapter of her life was so dear and so precious to her and she was not going to close the book quickly. I think we read every paper in every file and she told me every story about every item IN her desk and ON her desk and ON the walls and IN adjoining rooms like the conference room and the waiting room. There were

rows of champagne bottles in the conference room, gifts from very appreciative clients that Elizabeth and John had “retired”. Elizabeth knew them as friends and could tell the story of the school teacher with limited funds or the oil executive with a large retirement portfolio. She told me about one client who loved retirement and said she should try it – and then quickly recanted – saying no, you need to keep working so you can take care of us in retirement.

Next came the move from her Yoakum residence of half-a-century to a retirement community close by. This move took longer than the office move – over 6 months. It seemed everywhere she turned, she saw something with a great story. The dishes reminded her of many fun dinner parties. She loved to entertain. She was well known for her very tart home-made orange marmalade – the secret ingredient being lemons along with the oranges.... or her highly prized biscuits – she told me about her yeast culture she had named “Herman” that came from a friend. She always kept enough yeast growing so that she could share “Herman” with others. Elizabeth loved sewing, crocheting ribbon dresses, needlepoint, and creating special outfits for occasions like twinkling lights sewn into a skirt or hat for Holiday parties. She often mentioned “Myrtle”, the Singer Sewing Company exact replica body form to fit dresses. Myrtle even had a dimple on one shoulder like Elizabeth had. From early childhood, Elizabeth did not need a lot of sleep. We had an agreement that even though she was up, she would not call me after midnight or before 6 am. She filled her hours with all the activities that she loved, including reading for business, but never for pleasure. She explained that after a grade-school teacher criticized her reading, she did not enjoy reading for fun.

One night at The Terrace, Elizabeth slipped and fractured her hip. Even in St. Luke’s Hospital, she enjoyed questioning the doctors about everything. This is where she learned that broken hips are not fixed with “pins” but with 3 inch titanium screws. So the next move was from the Terrace to The Hampton at Post Oak. This brought more stories about pivotal life moments. She reminisced about her grandfather’s “blow out” for her 7th birthday – a Circus theme party at River Oaks Country Club. She remembered children in costumes from animals to clowns. She wore a pink tutu from dance class. Elizabeth and Jim Elkins led the grand march around the grounds of the country club. She couldn’t recollect how many children were

invited, but she did remember opening birthday packages for weeks. Her favorite gift was a gold thimble with her name etched inside. She also remembered this event being filmed and shown at a theater on Main at Texas before the feature movie. – Or there was the story about piano lessons from Martha D.. Willis at the Warwick Hotel twice a week. The recitals were in the ladies lounge on the lobby floor of the Warwick. Ms Willis lived on the 4th floor. One thing you quickly learned with Elizabeth was her attention and memory for details. She remembered when a student finished playing, someone would bring the performer a basket of flowers. She loved getting flowers. This began a life-long love for keeping flowers around her always. At The Hampton, Elizabeth loved sharing her personal knowledge of Houston. She gave several talks to fellow residents. One time a group of girl scouts were interviewing residents so they could earn a badge. Elizabeth not only taught them about being a girl in Houston, she shared a story about being a girl scout at Camp Tejas – property given to the Girl Scouts by Houston millionaire Jim West. She explained to these young girls how rustic Camp Tejas was – no flushing toilets. Even the boy scout camp had flushing toilets. Luckily, her stay was shortened when she cut her hand with her girl scout pocket knife and had to be picked up. That was her word, luckily, because she was ready to go. Then there was the story of the early entrepreneur. Elizabeth discovered a simple recipe for paste (flour and water and salt) – so she found every empty jar in the house and made the paste and went around the neighborhood selling her product. Or there was the story about getting her dad to send off for “free samples” of beauty supplies. Then getting a hat box from her mother and setting up a business giving facials to her mother’s friends. Or the story about the Christmas when her mom and dad were at the Palace Theater and invited lead actor Stanley Smith and his “second” to Christmas dinner. Before they ate, the “second” helped Elizabeth maneuver her new 2 wheel bike from March Bike Shop. This second actor was none other than Clark Gable. Or the stories about how her family spent the hot Houston summers alternating between trips to the Bay and trips by train to California. The summers spent here were spent at The Palms, a 30 acre property owned by her grandfather on Red Bluff Road half-way between Laporte and Seabrook. It was at The Palms where she kept her Shetland pony, Daisy Dimple. When her grandfather sold The Palms, Daisy Dimple moved to stable behind her home on Sleepy Hollow Court. The stables were at

San Felipe and Larchmont. Elizabeth's friends loved to visit her so they could ride Daisy Dimple. Every other summer was spent in California. Elizabeth loved the weather and the nature of early California. Her mother often visited a classmate from Galveston, movie director King Vidor, and told Elizabeth about the movie studios. The rule was no children on the set and Elizabeth was not too happy about missing all the fun.

Then there was the move from The Hampton to Lovett Place – back to Elizabeth's neighborhood of so many years. By now, Elizabeth was winding down. By now, there would be no more annual Melange – many here will remember the letter sent to hundreds of friends around Thanksgiving that outline her year's activities. A typical Melange letter was four pages with 2-3 events per month from galas to space shuttle launches. She had many more items to share, but stopped the letter at 4 pages because of the cost of postage.

By now, Elizabeth was happy and tired. She was comfortable and smiling. Then early on Friday morning, January 28th, Elizabeth made a move without my help. No boxes to pack / no fragile glass to wrap. Quietly she alone packed up those things most important in life – love and trust and peace and kindness and sharing and knowledge – and she headed on to her next adventure.

Elizabeth left so much for us all – and I don't mean the things we can touch like buildings or rooms. She left an example of a life well-spent. A lifetime of teaching others and helping others be the best they could be. She also left a challenge for us to follow in her footsteps – as she often told us, “Uncle Sam or a Charity – Pick One!” Elizabeth was always a pioneer, paving new paths so it might be a bit easier for others to follow. I am so very grateful to have known Elizabeth and to have been her friend. Like the characters in Fahrenheit 451, I will keep her stories alive and share them with others for all of my lifetime.

Now you know Elizabeth was a stickler for being on time. We have a few minutes left and if anyone wants to share a story about Elizabeth, Carolyn and I will bring a wireless mike to you. Then you can visit with each other