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A Gathering to Remember Jacob D. Hyman, Dean and Professor

Jacob D. Hyman, former Dean of the University at Buffalo Law School and long time faculty member, died at his home in Edgewater, Florida, on April 8, 2007. He was 97. Known to his friends as Jack, and to former students as Dean Hyman, he was born in Boston. He attended public schools in that city and in Brookline, before earning both his bachelor's degree in 1931 and his law degree in 1934, both from Harvard.

After graduation he went to work for Blumberg & Parker in New York City, a medium sized firm with a significant administrative practice before federal agencies. Fascinated with the energetic New Deal lawyers who worked for Federal government agencies whom he encountered in practice, in 1939 Hyman moved to Washington and joined the legal staff in the United States Department of Labor's Wage and Hour Division. Three years later he moved into the Office of Price Administration where he worked for John Kenneth Galbraith and eventually became Associate General Counsel in charge of litigation in the special court that reviewed price control orders.

In 1946, when price control had wound down after World War II ended, Hyman moved to Buffalo to teach at the Law School, then located downtown on Eagle Street. His teaching and scholarship centered in the areas of administrative law, constitutional law, jurisprudence, and state and local government law.

Hyman became Dean of the Law School in 1953. He held that post until 1964, when he returned to full-time teaching. He retired for the first time in 1981, but kept teaching part-time until 2000, when he again retired after fifty-four years at the Law School.

A fierce champion of the Law School, Hyman was especially proud of its history. No one who talked with him
at length could not know of the illustrious faculty who had taught there, including Frank Shea, later founder of the Washington law firm Shea & Gardner; David Riesman, the noted sociologist; Mark DeWolf Howe, the legal historian; Ernest Brown and Louis Jaffe. He was also very proud that the Law School’s building was named after the prominent Buffalo and Washington lawyer, John Lord O’Brian, well known for his work in defense of civil liberties during the McCarthy years.

During all of his teaching career Hyman was active as a labor arbitrator, both in the public and private sectors. He also was engaged in many public service activities, serving variously as chair, board member, committee chair, or simple committee member of such organizations as the City of Buffalo’s Charter Revision Commission, the Community Welfare Council of Buffalo and Erie County, the Citizens Council on Human Rights, the Children’s Aid Society, and the Legal Aid Society of Buffalo and Erie County.

Devoted to what some saw as “his” Law School, Hyman also championed the University, working hard in support of its merger into the SUNY system in 1963 and later as the first Chair of the President’s Review Board. Former University President and present Law School Faculty member, William R. Greiner, noted that, “It was Jack who recruited Carol and me to UB by convincing us that it was a good place to teach and that the region was a wonderful place to live. For 40 years that has been the case, in part because Jack continued to be a friend and mentor.”

Prominent attorney, former student, and fellow faculty member, James L. Magavern, remembered that Hyman’s teaching “was always connected to the fundamental political issues of the time” and that, “his intellect was in another world, but he never looked down on his students. For us he was a decent guy who was concerned about our education.” Nils Olsen, former Dean of the Law School, observed that Hyman’s “concern for what was going on at the school and his willingness to assist in any way that he might in the school’s improvement, never failed. He was a great, good man.” John Henry Schlegel, a younger colleague and friend, said, “Jack was an amazing scholar, a true intellectual. Until just a week or two before his death Jack continued to read and comment about articles, suggested topics for research and urged me to read important new books. None of us whom he mentored and so befriended will retire as he did—with all his marbles and some of ours.”
Hyman was married to the late Marion (Posner) Hyman from 1933 until 1979. After their divorce, he married Clarice Lechner-Hyman in 1979 who survives him. He is also survived by two daughters, Susan Kraut, of Chicago, Illinois, and Joan of Buffalo; and a son, Jonathan, of Newark, New Jersey; six step-children, Pieter M. Lechner, of Sierra Madre, California, Kezia Lechtner of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Sarah Lechner of Minneapolis, Minnesota, Lucy Reichenstein of Honeoye Falls, New York, and Donnie and Paul Funch, of Groton, Massachusetts, as well as six grandchildren and seven step-grandchildren.

What follows are the presentations made at A Gathering to Remember Jacob D. Hyman, Dean and Professor, held at the Law School on October 13, 2007, a brief reminiscence by Professor Alfred S. Konefsky, and a bibliography of Dean Hyman's works.