

# UB Law Forum

---

Volume 9  
Number 1 *Winter 1996*

Article 51

---

1-1-1996

## In Memoriam

UB Law Forum

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum)

---

### Recommended Citation

UB Law Forum (1996) "In Memoriam," *UB Law Forum*: Vol. 9 : No. 1 , Article 51.  
Available at: [https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub\\_law\\_forum/vol9/iss1/51](https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol9/iss1/51)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Alumni Publications at Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. It has been accepted for inclusion in UB Law Forum by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University at Buffalo School of Law. For more information, please contact [lawscholar@buffalo.edu](mailto:lawscholar@buffalo.edu).

## IN MEMORIAM

### Law School Mourns the Loss of Provost Aaron N. Bloch

**A**aron N. Bloch, Ph.D., provost of the University at Buffalo, died suddenly April 8, 1995 in his home in East Amherst. He was 53.

Bloch had served since June 30, 1992 as UB's chief academic officer, overseeing all undergraduate, graduate and professional academic units in the university's 15 schools and faculties. In addition, he was a professor of chemistry and physics.

He joined UB after serving four years as vice provost of Columbia University, where his responsibilities focused on science, engineering and technology.

UB President William R. Greiner praised Bloch's accomplishments in the less than three years he served as the university's provost.

"He was a terrific leader for the university who had a real ability to pull together faculty," he added. "Everyone, from the deans to faculty leaders and colleagues, had the highest regard for him. He was able in the short time he was here to encourage the deans' creativity and self-reliance."

Greiner described Bloch as "a great teammate and exceptionally nice man. He brought superior intellectual perspective and extraordinary experience to the job."

Dean Barry B. Boyer said, "He was a great friend to the Law School. He encouraged us to be more innovative, to depend on our wits, and to respond to students more adroitly than we had in the past.

"He felt especially close to our alumni, and they to him. He was a frequent guest of the Law Alumni Association and the board named our new non-alumnus award after him."

A native of Chicago, Bloch received a bachelor's degree in chemistry from Yale University and a doctorate in chemical physics from the University of Chicago. He was a postdoctoral research associate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before joining the faculty at The Johns Hopkins University in 1969. He achieved the rank of full professor in 1977.

Bloch left Johns Hopkins in 1980 for a senior scientific position with Exxon Research and Engineering Co. While at Exxon, he recruited and headed groups in theoretical chemistry and physics and in condensed matter physics before being named director of the Physical Sciences Laboratory in 1984. He held that post until he left for Columbia in 1988.

As vice provost at Columbia, Bloch helped coordinate the evaluation and planning of broad academic programs, took the lead in devising and administering research policy, organized major interdisciplinary initiatives and developed working partnerships with industry.

Bloch is survived by his wife, the former Enid Greenberg; a daughter, Sarah, of East Amherst; two sons, Adam and Michael, both of East Amherst; his mother, Judith Bloch of Chicago; and two sisters, Merry Jones of Gladwin, Pa., and Janet Martin of Miami, Fla. ■



UB LAW

FORUM

Winter  
1996

## IN MEMORIAM



### A Remembrance of Alan Freeman

*UB Law School Professor Alan Freeman died on May 26, 1995, after a long illness.*

*Freeman, whose wide-ranging intellectual pursuits encompassed areas as diverse as constitutional law, animal rights and critical race theory, had taught at the Law School since 1982. Previously he had taught at the University of Minnesota Law School.*

*His many articles and books with his wife and colleague, Elizabeth Mensch, also a UB Law professor, included the recently published "The Politics of Virtue: Is Abortion Debatable?"*

*The following remembrance of Alan Freeman by Ross Mackenzie was delivered at a memorial service held at St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo, N.Y., on May 30, 1995.*

To spend an evening with Alan and Betty was a fusion of a graduate seminar, conversation with Karl Barth, Saturday Night Live and a Jesuit retreat. All these, mark you, after a meal deliciously prepared and provided by a man whose curiosity and incredible zest for life embraced lively obsession after lively obsession: Indian and Chinese food, manic gardening, hikes up a riverbed, power walking, horror movies, classical music and medieval chant, a love of bears, rabbits, dogs, goats and gorillas, a quest to find constructive common ground in the heat of the abortion debates, and a childlike glee at discovering fossils in stones. His eyes glistened when he spoke, his arms gesticulating with the excitement of a little boy, exploring a magic world.

He was born and made to be a teacher, immensely popular among students who found in him a warmth and caring. He changed the whole attitude of generations of law students through his down-to-earth, sitting-down and talking kind of love for them. He brought to them his amazingly well-stocked mind, and he taught in a way that sparked their sense of justice. As author of an influential text arguing that racism can be legitimized despite the positive force of anti-discrimination laws, the law fails, he argued, if it looks only for a perpetrator and a victim: It must rather take account of the forces that legitimize injustice.

I invited both Alan and Betty to lead a seminar at the Chautauqua Institution in 1994 on the theme "Is Authority Dead? Right and Wrong in a Pluralist Society." As you would expect, they preferred climbing ethical mountains to conquering moralistic molehills. None came better pre-

A memorial service for Alan Freeman was held at the Law School on Oct. 12, 1995. Following are some excerpts from comments made by the speakers at that gathering.

Barry B. Boyer, Dean, UB Law: "What stands out for me in memory is Alan the human being and the great joy that he found in life and in all the people around him. Being invited to dinner at Alan and Betty's house was not just an opportunity to sample Alan's great cooking and to enjoy some wonderful conversation. It was really a chance to become part of his extended family. ... He had a real gift for touching the lives of the people around him."

Peter Gable, Professor of Law, New College of California School of Law: "One of the most important qualities he had as a teacher was a lovingness toward his students. Even though his classes were rigorous and challenging, every student knew they would not be hurt in Alan's class, that whatever the experience would be for them, it would be one of validation and acceptance."

Thomas E. Headrick, Provost and Professor of Law, UB Law: "His empathy for people may actually have been exceeded by his concern for animals. He was never without his animal friends. We all know the enormous stir he created among our local alums when he and Betty first offered *Animals and the Law*, which later became *Nature, Ecology and Law*. ... Only a few years later the joke was really on his detractors. Indeed, his was the last laugh. The area of animal rights regulation and legislation exploded. ... Alan was well ahead of the curve; as usual, Betty was right there with him."

Sara Nichols '88: "The thing that was the most wonderful for me about having Alan as a teacher and as a mentor was seeing him work with Betty and seeing them be a family in front of us and give this family feeling to Section 2. They were truly the father and mother of Section 2 when we were in it. ... One of the things that I really learned from watching them was

that a married couple could work together and could be really an energizing and exciting force for each other in the workplace."

William J. Magavern '88: "He was the kind of person who would become physically animated, very visually, physically possessed by the power of ideas. That was really a wonderful thing to see in somebody."

Thomas E. Schofield Esq. and Lecturer, UB Law: "In the last days of his life, as Alan was fighting, he decided to change roles. He wanted to cease to be a patient and become a lawyer again. There were, he believed, opportunities for hope, if he could only convince a hospital, a health insurer, a group of doctors, a drug manufacturer and the FDA to allow him to take a

treatment that was not yet approved. Alan rallied as a lawyer in defense of his own cause, and he left this world fighting as a lawyer and not submitting meekly as a patient."

Alan Katz, former Professor of Law, UB Law: "The year that the faculty decided to offer Constitutional Law in the first year, Alan became very ill. Alan was determined not to let his illness get in the way of the experiment, so he decided to make audio tapes of his lectures. The tapes were made in Alan's den. He would sit

in a robe at one end: I would sit at the other, mostly silent. So silent, that after a while I said, 'Look, I'm enjoying this tremendously, but do you really need me here?' 'Oh,' he said, 'That's out of the question. Me in a room talking with a machine? No way! No way!'"

John Henry Schlegel, Professor of Law, UB Law: "Alan loved children — at least once they were out of diapers. And he understood them well. I can remember him saving Joanne's and my sanity at my son's fifth or sixth birthday party by inventing the game of Dead Bugs. 'Now pretend that you are all bugs and I just sprayed you and you're all dead. The best dead bug gets a prize.' It was he who understood that for kids that age, the uglier the monster, the better." ■

*"Even though his classes were rigorous, every student knew they would not be hurt in Alan's class, that whatever the experience would be for them, it would be one of validation and acceptance."*

pared — massively better prepared — than this amazing couple to see if there can be ways of moving beyond the impasses in the issues of abortion, homosexuality or euthanasia. Alan as a teacher would have approved the task that Herodotus defined for the historian: to speak the true word.

He insisted to the end in his teaching and in his way of life that society will perish if it does not recover moral authority. Only someone who himself was a product of the rebellions of the 1960s could dare to be so bold. Give him a phrase in these electric, energetic discussions, and he would draw as easily from medieval theology as from Colonial history. I wanted to prove that I was justified in taking over an unused office in our complex. Like a flash it came: "Prior public possession is good against all the world, save the true owner." That was Alan, an exuberant, witty man, whose mind never ceased exploring.

Of his gifts as a writer, who sought to restore a level of complexity to enrich public debate and his profound theological reflection in that debate, others have spoken most favorably in their reviews. Alan's and Betty's book on abortion gave Christopher Lasch — and you couldn't fool him — "cheer and hope." For many of us, the very title of the book, *The Politics of Virtue*, opened a window and allowed us to see a region that has a light in it — a meaningful, public morality — where elsewhere we had seen only fiery angers and mutual exclusions. Alan was in quest of, indeed a participant in, a revived public theology after the fashion of Karl Barth, whose mind and writings he so admired.

I cannot speak of Alan's depths, for there is an interior castle in each of us that is known only to God. As an expression of what he always was, the prayers for the dead were spoken at a service yesterday by a rabbi. Yet he was more than that. As an expression of what he also was, prayers are being

said today in the very cathedral in which his sons Jeremy and Jimmy were baptized on Holy Saturday, just before Easter.

Thomas Merton once said: "God is beyond, beyond our heart and mind, beyond our feelings and thoughts, beyond our expectations and desires, and beyond all the events and experiences that make up our life. Still, God is in the center of it all." I don't know if Alan would agree in whole or in part. But he would want me to say it.

What I also say is that the experience of God's presence is never void of pain. Perhaps that is why, at the onset of his struggle with pain, Alan turned over and over to the Book of Job. The unalterable fascination of Job is this: For every question about suffering that Job flung out at God — "Why this? Why me?" — God flung back a larger question at Job.

There is no satisfactory, rational answer to Alan's suffering. He endured it courageously. He fought to the end against it. He had no final defense when death, the last enemy, came.

For every question that we fling out in our pain at losing Alan, God flings back the larger question: "Were you there when I laid the foundation of the earth? ... Who shut in the sea with doors" and said, "Thus far shall you come and no further."

The meaning must be that God has purposes and goals that only God can comprehend. The meaning must be that the evil and suffering that humans encounter remain within unsearchable darkness. Ah, yes, but listen to Alan again. These words he and Betty wrote as the conclusion of their book: "Our religious traditions have served for many hundreds of years to offer hope in the face of despair, to offer life in the face of inevitable suffering and death. We discard those traditions at our peril."

What did that tradition mean for Alan? If I know him at all, it is that Alan was looking for ways to move

away from the craziness of life when it loses its center. Healing for our society, or for us as people, cannot come without love, compassion and an understanding of sin.

Alan's creed, I think, is that to embrace is more human than to reject, to kiss is more human than to hurt, to inquire is more human than to pass by, to be friends is more human than to be rivals, to make peace is more human than to make war, and to change our human consciousness is more human than to assume that we have everything under our control. In a word, responsibility.

Religious belief is not a well-fluffed nest, nor a well-defended castle atop an unassailable hill. Don't think of Alan as an easy believer. Faith is more like a rope bridge over one of the gorges that Alan loved to explore. All you have to do is to believe in the bridge more than the gorge. You don't even have to believe in it all by yourself. There are others who believe with you, and some, I think, who believe for you. Alan has crossed the bridge ahead of us, one foot ahead of the other, one step at a time.

For Betty, for the boys, for his family and for those who love him still, we pray that they may be lifted above their distress and know that they do not walk alone in the valley of the shadow of death. For Alan, we ask that God will grant safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at the last. ■