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## Tribute to Professor Steven M. Block

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## A Tribute To Professor Steven M. Block

Steve was a member of the faculty of the Law School for just over one year. But in that relatively brief period of time in the long history of this institution, he made an *impact*, upon the Law School and upon the faculty, students and staff. We grieve Steve's untimely passing and are shocked by the suddenness of his death. But we also appreciate the many gifts he brought to the Law School that enriched our lives. As a teacher, he was caring, sensitive and witty. As a colleague, Steve taught us all about toleration, about humor in the face of adversity, and about friendship.

The faculty and I first met Steve in February of 1983. He had expressed an interest in law teaching and scholarship, and we invited him to Minnesota in order to become acquainted with his abilities. Steve had an extraordinarily impressive record. He had received his bachelor's degree from the University of California at Berkeley "with great distinction." He had been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, and received the California Alumni Association's "Sproul Award," presented annually to a male and female student for excellence in scholarship and leadership. He served in many leadership positions in the student body at Berkeley.

Steve's exceptional academic record continued at Stanford Law School where he continued his studies. Upon his graduation from Stanford in 1976, Steve received the Urban A. Sontheimer Award, presented to the person in the graduating class with the second highest cumulative grade point average. Steve was also elected to Order of the Coif.

Following graduation, Steve served as a law clerk to the Honorable Robert F. Peckham, Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the Northern District of California. After his clerkship, Steve entered the private practice of law with Heller, Ehrman, White and McAuliffe in San Francisco, where he was when we first met him. He had already pursued his interest in legal education, teaching as an adjunct professor at the University of California at Berkeley School of Law.

And so we knew, even before Steve joined us, that he possessed an impressive intellect and an exceptional record of accomplishment. What we learned in the time that he was with us is that he also was an extraordinarily fine human being, who

was committed to making more secure the civil rights and liberties of all of us, who cared about others, who cared about his classes and his students and his colleagues, and who was one we came to know as a very special friend.

In her poem, "To A Poet That Died Young," Edna St. Vincent Millay laments the song that was never sung. What is so difficult to accept about Steve's untimely death is that it silenced the many songs he had within him—the many ideas he had yet to share.

The greatness of the Law School is determined in large measure by the contributions of its most faithful servants—those who have lived with us and died with us and enriched us while they were here. During the last twenty years that I have been associated with the Law School, four new names have been added to that pantheon. One was a teacher who was near the end of a long and rich career. Another was in mid-life, whose work had already borne much fruit and would have borne even more. And the last, most tragically, were two young teachers—both full of promise—who died at the very start of their careers.

There are seven hundred and fifty students enrolled in the Law School now who never had the good fortune to know Stanley Kinyon or Allan McCoid or Morris Clark. Three years from now this place will be filled with students who never will have had the great privilege of taking a course from Steven Block. But none of these scholars is forgotten. We do remember. There is here an institutional memory that is the sum total of the experience of all of our students, our graduates, our faculty and our staff.

Steve Block, we miss you. And we will remember.

*Robert A. Stein*  
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