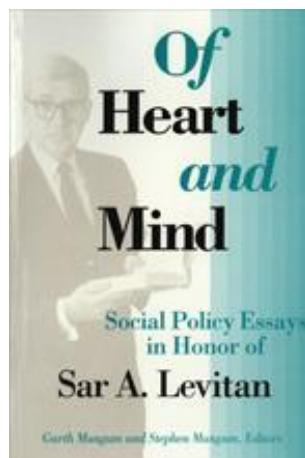


Upjohn Institute Press

Secular Rabbi: The Life and Times of Sar A. Levitan

Garth L. Mangum
University of Utah



Chapter 2 (pp. 13-62) in:

Of Heart and Mind: Social Policy Essays in Honor of Sar A. Levitan

Garth L. Mangum, and Stephen Mangum, eds.

Kalamazoo, MI: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1996

DOI: 10.17848/9780585280295.ch2

CHAPTER 2

Secular Rabbi

The Life and Times of Sar A. Levitan

Garth Mangum

Trust the always self-directed Sar Levitan to even choose his own name. Born September 14, 1914 in Siauliai, Lithuania to Rabbi Osher Nissan Halevi and Yocheved Rappaport Levitan, he was the youngest of four brothers: Joseph, Nathan, Meyer and, himself, Abraham. But the patriarch Abraham had been called in the Book of Genesis the Prince of God, prince being Sar in Hebrew. Therefore, the young Hebrew scholar, after arriving in the United States in his late teens, decided to call himself Sar Abraham Levitan, soon reduced to Sar A.

Family Background

Sar's father was a third generation rabbi, half-brother of two other rabbis and nephew of another. Blossom (Bluma) Kuşelewitz Neuschatz, one of Sar's three living cousins and one of the two who are the only living persons who knew Sar's family in Lithuania, remembers "Der Onkel," as she and her siblings and even her parents in his absence called him, as "a handsome man with small features, a fine, light complexion, and a flowing bifurcated beard." But, she adds, "he was very short-tempered, intolerant and tight-fisted man and a strict constructionist in his interpretation of Halacha (Jewish religious law and tradition); a difficult man as father and husband." One of Sar's other cousins, David M. Levitan, adds that his father, Rabbi Solomon L. Levitan joined Sar's father as teaching colleagues about 1922-23 when the latter was dean of a Yeshiva in Shavel (now Shavly), the city

in which the family lived throughout Sar's childhood and early teens. David, his father, and brother lived with Sar's family until they obtained their own quarters. Typical of such extended families, the term "cousins" does not imply that the fathers were brothers. David's father was the son of Sar's father's older half-brother, though there was less than ten years differences in their ages. The two men served *pro bono* as rabbis in their respective communities, their wives operating handicraft businesses to help support their families.

"Tante Yocheved," daughter of a founder of one of the early, pre-Israel Palestine settlements, was, on the other hand, according to Blossom, "a saint. While it was almost impossible to get close to her—she was so quiet and reticent—she was nevertheless sharp-witted and demonstrated an ironic sense of humor in few words. Nothing escaped her. She was a short, round woman with a pretty face (Sar resembled her in appearance), very low-voiced, great tolerance, long-suffering and very wise. When she spoke, which was infrequent, her voice was so low that one had to listen closely to hear. But what she said was always on the point, diplomatic and pacifying. I never heard her complain or gossip. She suffered for many years with an unnamed illness and died as quietly and as unobtrusively as she had lived."

Blossom, who was only a year older than Abraham, does not remember the older brother, Joseph, who emigrated to South Africa when she was a child. "The next brother, Nathan, was the tallest, handsomest, and the most outgoing of the brothers. Meyer was short, intense and good-natured but not good-looking. Abraham, the youngest, was short for his age. We called him Avrom'ke, the diminutive form of Abraham. He was a shy child, and we all considered him a mathematical genius because he could instantly add and subtract, multiply and divide any numbers thrown at him."

She remembers no pogroms motivating the family's exodus from Lithuania, but her family emigrated and settled in the Bronx during 1927 with Sar's family following in 1930 and settling two miles away. There Blossom's father became rabbi of a small Bronx congregation and teacher at a Yeshiva in Brooklyn. "Der Onkel secured several positions as Mashgiach (Rabbinical inspector of Koshrus) with several well known Kosher food producers." David Levitan also notes that, though his father served as rabbi of a community in the United States, Sar's father never did.

Blossom completes the family history by recounting that Nathan married a gentile who changed her name from Mary to Miriam and claimed to be a familyless orphan in order to keep that secret from her father-in-law, though Nathan's mother knew and helped keep the secret. Nathan, a chemist, died of cancer in his late forties. According to Blossom, Sar subsequently supported the daughter of Nathan and Miriam through medical school. Meyer, who married a Holocaust survivor, specialized in food chemistry, became an expert in cheese production, and worked as a quality control inspector in California where he also died relatively young from cancer.

Sar often said in later life that his family had expected him to continue the rabbinical tradition, but Blossom has no memory of that and doubts that expectation would have focused on the youngest son, even if it had existed. Of the teenage Sar she says:

While seemingly shy, he was given to little tricks, challenging his older siblings and cousins. While low man in the pecking order, he was actually observing and digesting all that he saw and heard and storing it in his heart and head. I suspect that he had an almost photographic memory which, to us, was phenomenal and mysterious. He came in for much teasing but he took it all good-naturedly while he continued doing what he wanted to do. I realize now that this was a characteristic of his that persisted all through his life. In the family, on the whole, he was underestimated because he was self-abnegating and did not promote himself and his many achievements.

Education

Arriving in the Bronx at age 16, the soon to be self-named Sar attended Yeshiva during the mornings and spent the afternoons and evenings studying English and secular topics taught in a Catholic high school after its sessions. In 1933, three years after arriving in the United States without any knowledge of English, he graduated from Morris High School.

His best friend during that stage of his life, Philip Gordis, remembers visiting in the Levitan household. Philip's brother Robert Gordis was then making a name for himself as a conservative rabbi. When

introduced to Philip and told of the relationship, Rabbi Levitan responded, "If he is so devout, why does he desecrate the holy name?" referring to the fact that a conservative could read the Lord's name directly from the scriptures rather than substitute a synonym as did the orthodox.

After completing his high school studies, Sar continued on to City College of New York. A list of courses taken extending from June 1934 to June 1937 reveals a broad liberal arts curriculum with no apparent emphasis. During this period, according to Blossom Neuschatz, Sar served, along with herself and her future husband, as Hebrew teachers, helping to organize and being active in the Hebrew Teachers' Union. Blossom recalls that she and others considered themselves to be Marxists, while one of their number fought in Spain and was listed as "missing in action." However, though Sar read the radical press and was in general sympathy with their antifascist activities, he never took part in them. Philip Gordis also remembers that while he and others of Sar's friends of the late thirties considered themselves radicals and Marxists, Sar seemed amused at their protestations. Blossom's assessment is that "Sar was never politically 'left.' He was progressive, politically aware, humanist, liberal, basically a very decent human being, interested in and working hard to further his own career, but always aware of the struggle of people in the world around him."

Sar once recounted that he had intended to study philosophy but that an uncle had warned him, "who would ever hire a Jewish philosopher?" Blossom reflects that was more likely her paternal uncle rather than Sar's, Chanan Saks, eleven years older, handsome, and articulate, and very influential in Sar's life, who was at the time studying labor and economics at Columbia. At any rate, Sar enrolled in the Graduate School of Political Science at Columbia University in September 1937, completing a Masters in Economics in 1939. His thesis, "The American Federation of Teachers: A Study of a Union for Professionals," ranged across the importance of teachers in society, the problems they faced in gaining adequate recognition, salary, and security, the need for extension and equalization of educational opportunity for all children, and the need for teachers to organize themselves effectively to accomplish those objectives. Tracing the history of teachers union organizing efforts, he stressed the need for affiliation with rather than aloofness of "professionals" from the broader labor movement. Moving directly

into a doctoral program, he thereafter continued taking classes from Paul F. Brissenden, Leo Wolman and Eli Ginzberg of labor economics fame, among others, until interrupted by the outbreak of war.

Military Service

Eli Ginzberg, who joined the Columbia faculty in 1939, was to become particularly influential in Sar's subsequent life. Sar had become a citizen of the United States on October 14, 1940 at age 26. He was described on his certificate of citizenship as being white, of dark complexion, having brown eyes and black hair, standing 5 feet 6 1/2 inches tall and weighing 140 lbs. Drafted into the U.S. army in the spring of 1942, Sar soon found his way into Officer Candidate School and came out with an administrative designation, including a stint as assistant personnel officer of a training center at Grinnell College in Iowa. Meantime, Eli Ginzberg had become personnel consultant to the Commanding General of the Army Service Forces. As Eli tells the story, "Sar had succeeded in getting himself commissioned but was looking for a meaningful job, not easy for a lieutenant to find on his own. I got him an assignment in the Transportation Corps in the Port of New York where he spent the war carrying out a number of constructive assignments," all of them undoubtedly more attractive than what the army was then expecting of most other newly commissioned second lieutenants.

Assigned to the Port of Embarkation in Brooklyn, not far from his home in the Bronx, Sar served out the war as Chief of the Statistical Branch of the Control and Planning Division. Philip Kaplan, who served under Captain Levitan as a civilian statistician remembers that their responsibilities "consisted principally in preparing a top secret monthly summary of activities at the Port for distribution to higher authority." He also remembers that "Sar was not a military type. The office operated in a manner that left no doubt who was in charge but without any outward sign of authority." (Hyman Minsky, who was later to pursue a distinguished career as a Washington University economist, was an enlisted man among the usual complement of about a dozen military and civilian personnel.) Kaplan also remembers that Sar

reported to a Major Flicks of the regular army. Flicks had little love for nonregular officers who moved up the ranks much too quickly for his taste and even less love for statistics, so Sar was not his favorite person.

Relieved from active duty in February 1946 and discharged as a captain on May 1, 1946, Sar remained in the active reserve until 1961, attaining the rank of lieutenant colonel, then moving to inactive status until final retirement on September 14, 1974.

Marriage

Though he does not remember just when it occurred, Sar's long-time friend Philip Gordis was present at what Sar would likely have designated as the most important event in his life. A group of old friends had the habit of having dinner together occasionally. One evening, he recalls, a beautiful blond daughter of Danish immigrants was present. Her name was Brita Ann Buchard Kohle. He remembers Brita and Sar as being immediately attracted to each other, conversing together throughout that entire evening. Gordis does not remember who brought or invited her, but has the impression that she was a singer with Dean Dixon, an African-American musician who became popular in England after having a struggle getting a start in New York. Blossom Neuschatz remembers that the group was enamored of Dixon but doesn't remember Brita being involved with him. Seymour and Ethel Brandwein, close friends of the Levitan's throughout their Washington years, remember no mention of Dixon but do remember Brita recalling with some pride spending a year during her youth with a theatrical touring company playing in Blossom Time. However, she also reminisced that she found the touring so wearing that she decided to leave the theater after that year. Of her subsequent employment nothing is known, though her social security benefit record shows substantial years of contributions.

There exists in the Levitans' files a 19 October 1945 certificate of annulment of the marriage of Brita Anna Kohle and Otto Kohle, justified by the "fraudulent representation of the defendant" and awarding \$8 per week for the support of an infant son, Gary. The Brandwein's recall Brita having recounted how her first husband failed to warn her

that he was a victim of Huntington's Chorea, a disease which is passed on to male descendants. Her outrage upon learning of that fact after the birth of their son led her to seek annulment of the marriage. Huntington's is a progressive and incurable disease of the central nervous system which includes progressive brain deterioration and loss of control of bodily movements. Whether there were signs at birth that Gary would suffer throughout his life and finally die of the disease is not known. The Levitans were never prone to share their personal tragedies, though they participated for years in a support group of Huntington's disease families and, at their death, left a substantial bequest to the Huntington's disease research program at Johns Hopkins University. Gary suffered throughout his life from the rigors of the disease until dying from it in about 1967 or 1968, barely into his twenties. Sar and Brita were never to have children of their own.

There is also in the files a Certificate of Marriage of Sol (sic) Levitan and Brita A. Kohle dated October 15, 1946, certified by the Brooklyn Deputy City Clerk who performed the marriage and witnessed by Valia Hirsch and Philip Gordis. According to Gordis, Rabbi Levitan did not know for some time of his youngest son's marriage, was at first told that his new daughter-in-law was Jewish, but finally learned the bitter truth via "the family grapevine." Blossom Neuschatz doubts that the father would have been that unaware, but has the impression that father and son were not close after the death of Sar's mother.

Launching a Career

Leaving active military duty in February 1946, Sar was employed as a statistician with the Veterans Administration from that month until his marriage in October. Simultaneously, he began work on his dissertation, which would be completed and published in 1950 as *Ingrade Wage-Rate Progression in War and Peace: A Problem in Wage Administration Techniques*. As recounted by Sar years later, that topic did not impress his father. Rabbi Levitan who, according to Sar, had published such learned papers as one debating whether or not an orthodox Jew could open the refrigerator door on the sabbath knowing that the action

would switch on the light, thought Sar's topic choice to be of limited significance. "In-Grade Wage Rate Progression? That's a dissertation?"

Eli Ginzberg remembers another instance related to Sar's completion of graduation requirements. Sar, for whom English was already a second language, wanted to substitute Hebrew for French as the other language required for the Ph.D. Upon approving the substitution, the question arose about who on the faculty was qualified to assess his facility. Finally Eli offered and the faculty accepted Eli's own distinguished rabbi father as the judge who attested to the completing student's impeccable Hebrew.

But receipt of the doctorate did not come until 1949. Meantime, in the fall of 1946 with ABD (all but dissertation) in hand, the newly formed family of three were off to Sampson, New York where Sar had been hired to teach economics on that campus of the Associated Colleges of Upper New York. There he served as chairman of an eight-person economics department and dean of business administration at a munificent \$5100 salary. After two and one-half years, that institution was taken over by the State University of New York, opening the opportunity for Sar to transfer to Champlain College in Plattsburg, New York, where he remained from 1949 into 1951. His final salary in the New York system was \$6200.

Wage Stabilization Board

Perhaps it was his expertise in internal wage administration attested by his doctoral dissertation which, despite his active reserve status, saved him from further military service in the Korean "police action." At any rate, within a month of the outbreak of U.S. involvement in Korea, Sar Levitan's name was back on the federal payroll as director of the National Case Division of the Office of Case Analysis of the Wage Stabilization Board, along with special assignments as a technical expert on internal wage administration problems. Involved as members or staff of the WSB were most of the academic labor economics fraternity who had served the War Labor Board during the Second World War, with the addition of younger men such as himself who had been in military service during the earlier conflict. John Dunlop,

Nathan Feinsinger, and Benjamin Aaron were public members of the Board to whom he reported. Morris Horowitz, later of Northeastern University, was his immediate superior. He directly supervised Ethel Weiss, who later married Seymour Brandwein, another Wage Stabilization staff member. The Brandweins remained lifelong friends of the Levitans and administrators of both their wills upon their deaths. Other WSB colleagues were Curtis Aller, Beatrice Burgoon, Frank Kleiler, Mollie Orshansky and Al Weiss, all of whom were to serve later in the U.S. Department of Labor, as well as some of them in other government, union and university positions. Lifetime friendships were established which would be important to Levitan's later role as policy kibitzer. Sar described his Wage Stabilization assignment on a later application for federal employment:

The Office of Case Analysis was responsible for the analysis of all wage and compensation adjustment petitions under the general policies of the WSB. As Director of the National Case Analysis Division, I was responsible for the technical adequacy and conformance to policy of the analyses of all cases involving large scale enterprises covering more than one region of the Board, and novel and precedent establishing issues. As top level staff, I participated in recommending policies and issues in existing policies for the submission to the Board itself. I had full responsibility for organizing the staff of the division [averaging 60 Grades GS-3 to GS-14], the final selection of personnel and management of the staff and direction of all of its activities.

Seymour Brandwein adds:

His initial position, with a staff of 60, was to direct analyses of petitions for approval of wage changes involving large firms in more than one region and all cases involving major new policy or precedent. In September 1952, he was named a public member of the Board's Review and Appeals Committee, a tripartite body which was delegated authority to decide certain types of cases, make recommendations to the Board on others, and to hear and make recommendations to the Board on all appeals from decisions by regional boards and special industry commissions and panels.

Legislative Reference Service

By the time of his appointment to the Review and Appeals Committee, it was apparent that the Korean conflict was of limited duration, and it was time for Levitan to be looking for the next step of his career. General and President of Columbia University Dwight D. Eisenhower was campaigning for president, in part with the promise that “If elected, I will go to Korea....” Sar and Brita had resolved to stay in Washington, but no immediate permanent employment appeared when the Wage Stabilization Board went out of business in mid-1953. Sar sought consulting work for some months without success before taking a temporary six-month appointment in January 1954 as an analyst with the Legislative Reference Service (LRS) of the Library of Congress. He then moved on to work for two months for the Social Security Administration on a study of compensation systems for veterans. In August 1954, he accepted an economic analyst’s position with the Puerto Rico Planning Board, but after six months in San Juan the Legislative Reference Service contacted him to offer a regular position as a specialist in labor economics and industrial development.

Levitan was to remain with the Legislative Reference Service until 1961, preparing upon request from individual members of Congress and congressional committees reports analyzing pending legislation or precedent to the preparation of legislative proposals. Increasingly, that included special assignments with the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency, and the Joint Economic Committee, as well as the Hoover Commission on reorganization of the federal government. Not forgetting his academic background, he availed himself of the opportunity to spread his reputation beyond government by publishing results of his studies in scholarly and public policy journals. His yearning to teach was also partially fulfilled by adjunct lecturing at Johns Hopkins and American Universities.

One high point of his LRS assignments was service from October 1959 to March 1960 as research director of the Senate Special Committee on Unemployment Problems, chaired by Senator Eugene McCarthy and including among its members Senators Joseph Clark, Winston Prouty, and Jennings Randolph, the first two of whom would

become architects and supporters of the Manpower Development and Training Act and the latter of public works and area development legislation during the 1960s. That was a transition, both for Levitan and the Senate and senators. Now it was recognized that unemployment had been creeping upward since the close of the Korean conflict. The watchword was John Dunlop's declaration before the committee that the problem was now class unemployment in contrast to the mass unemployment of the Great Depression.

But before moving wholeheartedly into the emerging antipoverty concern, there was to be one more assignment in the collective bargaining realm in 1960-61 as assistant director of the Presidential Railroad Commission, appointed by President Eisenhower to determine the need for firemen on diesel locomotives and other railroad labor issues. It was probably more than coincidence that John Dunlop was also a member of that commission.

The first blood in what was to become characterized later as a war on poverty and structural unemployment was drawn by Senator Paul Douglas, former University of Chicago Economics professor and World War II soldier, in pursuit of legislation to aid depressed areas, particularly the coal mining areas of southern Illinois. Completing the Presidential Railroad Commission assignment in 1961, Levitan moved back to his future by assisting Senator Douglas with the culmination of his depressed areas legislation. How Sar became involved with Douglas is not known. It may have been an accident of the LRS assignment, though the likelihood of their attraction to each other is obvious. At any rate, immediately following Levitan's Unemployment Committee involvement, Douglas sent him to Germany in early 1960 to study that country's area development experience. As a matter of fact, the area development legislation was old business. Douglas, looking to his downstate Carbondale and adjacent Illinois coal country constituency, had agitated from the late 1950s for federal aid to depressed areas. The Douglas bill had passed the Senate twice and the House once during the 1950s, only to be vetoed by President Eisenhower. All it needed was an endorsing president, so the Area Redevelopment Act (ARA) was S.1 in the new Congress and was signed by President Kennedy on May 1, 1961. The ARA experience was to point the direction of the rest of Levitan's career, not as a triumph but because it was such a disappointment to him.

To attract votes, Congress had defined depressed areas in such a fashion that one-third of the nation's 3,100 counties were so designated under the new legislation. The \$389 million appropriated the first year followed by \$455 million the following year seemed like big money in those years, but did not go far in the attempt to get at least one project into every congressional district. Sar served briefly as a consultant to the director of the new Area Redevelopment Administration, then sought and received a grant from the Ford Foundation to study and evaluate the results of this first program of the Kennedy New Frontier. That grant, which he took to George Washington University for administration, began what he later described as his personal Ford Foundation welfare program which would last the rest of his life.

The resulting *Federal Aid to Depressed Areas* (1964) was also a pattern-setter, both for Levitan and for review of federal programs. Data would not have been available for a formal cost-benefit study, even had that been his predilection. Instead, his evaluation was a narrative process of describing the problems leading to legislative concern, tracing the legislative path, following the passage through to administration, and comparing the potential of the new machinery to the realities of the problems. Awaiting results, measuring them, and then comparing benefits to costs was a lengthy process Sar knew from his LRS experience that Congress would not stand still for. Some assessment must be available before the next election. Better to identify legislative misconceptions and emerging administrative problems before their inevitable negative results threatened potentially productive programs.

A familiar Levitan technique emerging during the depressed areas study was early circulation among program administrators of drafts of what he intended to say about them and their programs. This was followed by informal, and often hotly contested, conferences. There, errors of fact could be identified and perceptions tested against those most knowledgeable and most concerned and under pressure to be persuasive. Levitan later reminisced about his first such encounter, reviewing a draft of his book with ARA staff:

I thought I had written a sympathetic account, while calling the shots as I had seen them. I had come to realize that the tools of ARA, which I had helped design, were a very weak reed for helping depressed areas. Well, I anticipated a nice discussion at the Cosmos Club where I had set up the meeting, after which we

would part happily ever after. Were they mad at me! One of the most stinging attacks came from a fellow who had told me earlier that he had not had time to read the material. After another six-hour session the comments cooled down somewhat.

But the reader is not surprised. What comes through the pages of *Federal Aid to Depressed Areas* is sincere concern for the residents of depressed areas, a strong commitment to the essentiality of the legislation, but totally honesty in recognizing limitations in both structure and application, reassessing the experience in pursuit of improvement, let the chips fall where they may. It is not surprising that the program administrators did not perceive the book as supportive. The conclusions of that first social policy study also set a pattern which would become identified with Levitan. He was forthright in his criticisms. The focus of the new program was to fund infrastructure and promise to train the workforce to attract employers from prosperous to depressed areas. But not only had the money been spread “too thin” so that few of the projects were of meaningful size, but more than half of the designated areas were already growing in population while others were too isolated to be viable. That did not mean abandon the effort, however. The Levitan prescription was to do more but do it better and more selectively. Not every depressed community could or should be saved:

Many resource-based depressed communities are located in isolated areas where new economic activity can be introduced only at prohibitive costs. Other depressed areas, particularly rural, have never developed an adequate economic base and the social capital invested in such areas is normally insignificant. . . . A depressed areas program can be effective only when the number of depressed areas is reduced to manageable proportions and only areas with a potential for development at a reasonable cost are made eligible to participate in the program.

For greater potency, according to Levitan, preferential tax treatment should be given to companies that move to depressed areas. Only then would “blue chip companies” be persuaded to move. At the same time, he thought the only solution to unemployment in many depressed areas was to “equip the unemployed with skills which would be marketable in other areas.” (“Early Supporter Now Doubts ARA Value,” *The Washington Post*, 3 November 1963, p.2) Obviously, *Federal Aid to*

Depressed Areas was not likely to be favorably quoted in either congressional or administration circles.

Center for Social Policy Studies

But Levitan had found his niche. By the time the depressed areas study was completed and the George Washington University grant expired at the end of 1963, the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) had been enacted (1962) and numerous alternative youth programs and other initiatives were under discussion. But a more secure base was needed. George Washington University had provided office space and administrative responsibility for the depressed areas grant but had not incorporated the activity into its structure, nor had the initial Ford grant provided for any staff. Now Levitan sought not only a base but company.

Moving to the Washington, D.C. office of the W.E.Upjohn Institute for Employment Research at the beginning of 1964, Levitan broadened his activities to include congressional testimony, presentations at a variety of conferences, and Upjohn Institute publications on vocational education legislation, the new Youth Employment Act (which he could not know would soon be subsumed into the emerging Economic Opportunity Act), the need for adult retraining, reduction of work time to reduce unemployment, and increasing the minimum wage to combat poverty, along with continued advocacy of expanded but improved and concentrated area development efforts. Then, after a lapse of one and one-half years, he returned to the Ford Foundation for a grant to study the administration and impact of the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to be administered through the Upjohn Institute, reestablishing a relationship with the Foundation which would continue until his death. A Foundation staffer later recalled of Levitan's application that he was challenged for having no outline of his intended antipoverty assessment. He remembered Levitan responding, "If you give me the grant, I will give you a book with a table of contents and an index too!"

Welcomed among Sar's more informal LRS services had been his role as personnel matchmaker. His professorial instincts included looking out for career opportunities for friends and acquaintances as well as

students. His recommendations had come to be trusted by congressional staff recruiting to meet the needs of their principals. That matchmaker role would expand as his acquaintance broadened from the legislative to the executive branch. As one example, at the Presidential Railroad Commission he had taken under his wing Garth Mangum, a 35-year-old former teaching assistant of Commission member John Dunlop, brought aboard for the summer of 1961 and continued as a consultant on that and other Dunlop involvements operating from his Utah base. When, in the spring of 1963 Senator Joseph Clark, now chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Employment and Manpower, was searching for an economist to serve as research director of an investigation into emerging manpower issues, Levitan introduced Mangum for the job. The congressional position led to related assignments within the administration, but when in 1966 his protegee began yearning for a more academic environment, Levitan was there to supply it. He served as middleman, negotiating for Mangum a parallel Ford Foundation grant at the Upjohn Institute to evaluate the 1962 MDTA, amendments to which had been part of Mangum's 1963-64 Clark Committee responsibilities.

Levitan and Mangum initially took their new Ford grants to the former's Upjohn Institute base for a pleasant and productive year. But the transition proved difficult from Levitan's previous staff position to the new role as independently funded tenants, and both yearned for teaching opportunities. Therefore, when their Ford grants came up for renewal in March 1967, they sought and received Foundation cooperation and the assistance of program officer Marvin Feldman in moving to the George Washington University. There they were given academic status as research professors of economics, authorized to launch the Center for Manpower Policy Studies in their own off-campus facilities and to teach in those facilities their own annual seminar in manpower policy. The new grant also allowed for the hiring of clerical staff. The greatest reward of the Upjohn Institute attachment was that they acquired there two personal secretaries, Iris Steele for Levitan and Audrey Barber for Mangum. Both women had long experience and wide contacts on the Washington scene; both were devoted to their bosses and jobs; and both remained with those bosses until retirement, Barber for Mangum under other auspices.

At the end of 1968, Mangum was offered and accepted an endowed chair at the University of Utah. Levitan became the sole director of the Center, changing its name in the early 1970s to the Center for Social Policy Studies, as the “manpower” term had come under attack for its sexist connotations.

Meantime, the Ford Foundation relationship had changed from one of periodic reapplications to an assumption of continuity requiring only the submission of research and publication plans for a subsequent two or three years. Those plans, which extended over the entire range of economic development, workforce development, employment, family, welfare, and poverty issues and included labor force statistics, labor law, collective bargaining, military manpower and critiques of evaluation methodology were never questioned. Especially memorable were Levitan’s *The Great Society’s Poor Law*, an assessment of the Economic Opportunity Act, and *The Promise of Greatness*, an evaluative review of the entire Johnson administration’s Great Society and its aftermath. A total of fifty major books were eventually to carry his name and be the base for literally hundreds of articles, interviews, addresses, and congressional testimony. By the end of the eighties, he had become convinced that few of the people he wanted to reach had the time to read books. He therefore began to concentrate upon the policy monographs which he described as “shorties.” (A bibliography is included in this volume.)

His productivity and the policy relevance of his work had come to be undoubted. There was in Levitan’s files a negative confidential evaluation by a Ford Foundation staffer which someone had apparently leaked to him. It complained that Levitan’s methodology was not sufficiently rigorous and that he tended to pull his punches to protect advocated programs and favored agencies. But apparently the report found no favor among the Foundation’s decision makers. The frequent federal agency resentment of the supposedly favorable evaluations was already legend, and besides, Foundation officers were already finding Levitan to be a valuable consultant and advisor in their own internal activities.

The Center also became a productive apprenticeship program as well as a source of policy critique and recommendation. At first working alone and then with peers, Levitan soon learned to productively use research assistants, but he never publicly relegated them to that status.

They were coauthors. Usually drawn from among students in his GWU seminars but sometimes from recommendations of others, they were employed at comfortable salaries but given to understand that their positions were temporary. They would be expected to move on when their skills were honed. They became his legs, hustling among agencies in person or by telephone to gather data and interview program operators at all levels, as well as drawing upon libraries and among reports and issuances for published data. They were also to draft their descriptions and conclusions and then accept with good grace drastic revisions, also delivered with good humor. Then, after two or three years, there would be recommendations to government agencies, public interest groups, and research organizations known to be searching for newly minted journeypersons—a head start on a social policy career. What once had been an informal Levitan placement function had become a semiformal apprenticeship system. Only a few of these Levitan proteges can be listed here as examples: Robert Taggart, formerly director of the Office of Youth Programs in the Carter Department of Labor and now president of the Research and Training Institute; Richard Belous, vice-president and chief economist, National Planning Association; Clifford Johnson, director of programs and policy, Children's Defense Fund; Joyce Zickler, assistant director, Research and Statistics, Federal Reserve Board; Isaac Shapiro, formerly special assistant in the Office of the Secretary of Labor and now vice-president of the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities; and Gregory Wurzburg, principal administrator, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris. That career development activity was but a part of Levitan's continuing role of aggressive placement broker, at the request of either seeker or provider of human resources. Not only assistants but other students and acquaintances whom he knew to be competent were beneficiaries of the Levitan personnel service.

National Council on Employment Policy

Upon the entry door of the Center for Social Policy Studies (and its manpower predecessor) over the years at various addresses was to appear another sign identifying the home of the National Council on

Employment Policy. Senator Clark's Employment and Manpower Subcommittee in a 1964 report entitled *The Nation's Manpower Revolution* had recommended coordinating the emerging programs and functions through a cabinet-level President's Committee on Manpower, and the senator had recommended his research director, Mangum, as its executive director to implement the concept. Though the title had perhaps been overdone to attract political attention, the concept of a "manpower revolution" had been the result of no minor conceptualization. As the fertility of the soil had been the source of wealth for the agrarian age and capital investment for the industrial one, manpower, or as it would be more accurately described a decade later, human resources, was conceived to be the key resource of the emerging postindustrial society. Senator Clark, like Eli Ginzberg who was a trusted advisor, had served in a personnel capacity during the Second World War and was wedded to a notion of "staffing freedom." Others, such as John Dunlop of Harvard and Willard Wirtz of Northwestern University, had arrived at similar concepts from War Labor Board experience, or like Frederick Harbison of Princeton from a vantage-point of international economic development. In retrospect, a continuity had been perceived among the education provisions of the World War II GI Bill, the Employment Act of 1946, and the National Defense Education Act of 1958. The Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 was to be the charter for workforce development in general, as well as the specifics of retraining displaced workers as it sought to do in 1962, or as a weapon in the war on poverty as it became after 1964. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 was to broaden that activity from its restricted agriculture, trade and industry, and homemaking niches to the full range of nonbaccalaureate occupational preparation.

Within that vision, the President's Committee on Manpower was to be the means of coordination within the federal government concerning issues as diverse as meeting military manpower needs, mounting the scientific manpower capability to get a man on the moon during the decade without stifling other scientific development, rejuvenating depressed areas, and ending rural and central city poverty. Largely from the advocacy of Professor Frederick Harbison, a National Manpower Policy Task Force had been instituted as an adjunct to the President's Committee on Manpower as a device to bring the counsel of academic experts into the perceived and emerging manpower policy

process. Chaired by Harbison, its original membership included two future Secretaries of Labor, George Shultz and John Dunlop, along with other academics of similar stature such as Charles Myers of MIT and Charles Killingsworth of Michigan State University. The Task Force met regularly, usually quarterly, to discuss and formulate policy recommendations to Secretary of Labor Willard Wirtz, a long-time colleague whom many of the members served and advised individually in other capacities. Wirtz found the concept attractive, but the infrequency of the meetings and the inevitabilities of struggle for group consensus led him to once respond, "its reassuring to have you recommend what we have already decided upon in house and have begun to implement."

Levitan was not an initial member, but the Task Force enters his biography because of his subsequent involvement. The President's Committee on Manpower was soon swallowed up in the emerging anti-poverty effort. All other departments and activities atrophied as it became primarily a means of coordination among the Departments of Labor and Health, Education and Welfare and the Office of Economic Opportunity in the administration of the Economic Opportunity Act and MDTA. Then as soon as Labor won primacy in the administration of the war on poverty, the President's Committee on Manpower was abandoned and with it the Task Force.

But that was not the end of the story. Shortly after the launching of the GWU Center for Manpower Policy Studies, Howard Rosen, who was responsible for MDTA-funded research within the Labor Department, approached Levitan and Mangum with the request that they reconvene the Task Force to advise him on research priorities. To those members retained such as Shultz, Dunlop and Eli Ginzberg were added a younger tier among whom were future Secretary of Labor Ray Marshall and future Secretary of Commerce Juanita Kreps. With Mangum's departure, Levitan became permanent vice-chairman, providing continuity among rotating chairmen (there were always women members but, as it happened, never a chairwoman).

With the abolition of the manpower terminology, the Task Force became the National Council on Employment Policy at the same time the Center became the Center for Social Policy Studies. Confusion was generated as numerous name changes followed replacement of the MDTA by the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). in 1972. The Labor Department's Manpower Administration became

the Employment and Training Administration, and the advisory committee to those acts was renamed by Congress from the National Commission on Manpower Policy to become the National Commission on Employment Policy. Eli Ginzberg chaired the National Commission on Employment Policy while a member of the National Council on Employment Policy, the Labor Department financed both, and the Ford Foundation added to the funding of the National Council activities along with its support of the host Center for Social Policy Studies.

Advice was given and received on research priorities, and assistance was provided in preparing the annual Manpower Report of the President required by MDTA. But in the main, the National Council on Employment Policy (NCEP) became a vehicle for exploring emerging labor market-related issues, both in Council meetings and in broader conferences sponsored by the Council, and through the sponsorship of research and publication of policy papers. Council membership, changing over the years with aging and changing of status, would include most of those making major contributions to employment and training policy during the 1970s and into the 1980s. Housing the National Council at the Center for Social Policy Studies also brought a new position of executive director, a position filled at Levitan's choice, usually from among his graduate students. Since the logistics of meetings and even drafting reports concerning Council conclusions did not require full time and attention, the executive directors then became Levitan co-authors.

The Reagan administration was the cause of the Council's demise. The Council's Labor Department sponsors chose to retire, and the new departmental administration was not sympathetic to the Council's activist positions and saw no reason to fund a "viper in its own bosom." The Ford Foundation was not willing to pick up the whole load of the Council budget, impacted as the Foundation was by cries of distress from other social activists losing governmental funding, though their commitment to Levitan and his Center for Social Policy Studies did not diminish. In fact, funds for research staff were expanded to partially make up for the loss of the executive directors' contributions to Center productivity.

Levitan did not give up easily on the Council, however. He thought a respected academic voice in favor of employment and training programs to be even more important in the hostile environment. After

arguing unsuccessfully with the Ford Foundation, he solicited in vain alternative funding sources. Finally, when the funds were exhausted by the mid-1980s, he accepted the cessation of meetings. But he appealed to the final meeting to delegate a smaller group consisting of himself, Robert Taggart, Marion Pines, and Garth Mangum to serve as residual watchdogs while he kept up annual reports to the District of Columbia and Internal Revenue Service to maintain the organization's legal charter and not-for-profit status. Once, about 1990, he sought and obtained funding for a study which he could have pursued through his Center but instead took the grant in the name of the Council, prevailing upon Pines and Mangum to join in the research and the publication of *A Proper Inheritance: Investing in the Self-Sufficiency of Poor Families* under Council imprimatur in an attempt to restore its visibility. He also used that occasion to persuade Mangum, Pines, Taggart, Gordon Berlin, Mitchell Sviridoff, Andrew Sum, and Linda Harris to constitute a new Board of Directors for his Council, but without further funding he was unable to restore life to it.

That occasion laid the foundation for a resurrection which was only accomplished in Levitan's death. Despite the protests of Mangum, to whom he revealed his intent, the wills of Sar and Brita Levitan were modified to leave the single largest legacy of their estate (an amount that turned out to be larger than anyone ever imagined, for reasons discussed below) to the NCEP. (It was Mangum's view that the funds should be used to establish a Levitan Chair at George Washington or some other university or a Sar and Brita Levitan Trust Fund dedicated to good purposes, but Levitan refused to leave anything behind with his name on it.) The 1990 Board were surprised upon learning of the will, having forgotten the occasion of the aborted resurrection. But they took revenge for having been left with the unexpected responsibility by funding the creation of a Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies at Johns Hopkins University as the primary vehicle for carrying on Levitan's life work.

Extracurricular Activities

In addition to the Center's research and publications and those of the NCEP, the breadth and depth of Levitan's one-man role on the Washington labor scene is exhausting. Sharing a special affinity for congressional staff, he and Mangum began early in their Center's life to hold seminars on Capitol Hill, both to instruct congressional staff and to offer them a forum for interchange among themselves and with practitioners who would have to administer their programs. Those continued into the mid-80s under Levitan's solo leadership. But it was not only staff contact.

Levitan kept up a personal relationship with key senators and members of congress interested in employment and training and welfare legislation. Among those, he had a close affinity for liberal Republicans, figuring that the usually Democratic majority had its own extensive staff and the help of departmental staff during Democratic administrations and of advocacy and public interest groups at all times. He became an almost professional witness before congressional hearings, as his bibliography indicates. Lunch at the George Washington University Faculty Club until his mobility became limited and thereafter in a restaurant near his office where a table was always reserved was devoted to keeping up a wide range of contacts with policy makers and their staffs. Rarely was a conference held on employment, training, welfare or antipoverty matters in the Washington, D.C. environs without an invitation to Levitan, who almost always attended, participating vigorously in discussion if not invited to speak formally. His media contacts were legion because he was always available for interview by telephone or in person and could be depended upon for a quotable quote, generally an acerbic one.

A vigorous defender of public programs in his chosen field, he never pulled his punches in criticism of the manner in which they were conducted. In addition to his own program and policy evaluations, he urged the General Accounting Office to enter the program evaluation field and took pleasure in advising and encouraging them once they had done so. Of what he saw as more esoteric "numerologist" evaluators he was less enamored. He wanted a sophisticated institutional sense of the possible in public administration and an awareness that the

best of evaluation methodology could provide no more than an approximation of reality. Numbers were essential but they had to be tempered with judgement.

Though reluctant to be gone long because of the situation at home, to be explored later, he journeyed to New York for Ford Foundation meetings and occasionally accepted invitations to speak to academic or practitioner groups around the country. He never let that appear to constitute field work, however. His research domain was Washington government offices. He kept over his desk a Peanuts cartoon with one of its characters declaring that "If you have seen one field, you have seen them all." Upon an appearance at the University of Utah, Mangum took him on a dirt road high on one of his beloved mountains to overlook the valley and lake, only to have Levitan exit briefly from the car to comment, "If you've seen one mountain, you've seen them all."

In addition to his one semester per year seminar at George Washington, usually attended by part-time students already employed in the agencies he frequented, Levitan established a continuing relationship with Cornell University, both visiting the Ithaca campus frequently and conducting regular seminars in his office for students in Cornell's Semester in Washington program. He joined the faculty of a Harvard-sponsored three-week seminar for European academics in Salzburg, Austria. He made one pilgrimage to Israel, where his Hebrew impressed all hearers. And when Mangum and his colleagues at the University of Utah launched a weekend, external degree program held in federal offices around the country to offer Human Resource Management master's degrees to employment and training program practitioners, Levitan taught in all of those along the eastern seaboard. Whether in the congressional hearing room, around the conference table, or in the classroom, he was, as he put it, "first and foremost a writer of footnotes," but close behind it, a teacher.

National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics

After leaving the Area Redevelopment Administration (ARA), Levitan religiously refused any consulting assignments or research con-

tracts with federal agencies, avoiding even the appearance of accepting rewards from those he evaluated. However, he found great satisfaction in his one federal post after leaving ARA. Long-time friend and coauthor, Labor Secretary Ray Marshall prompted President Jimmy Carter to appoint Levitan in March 1978 as chairman of the National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics. The assignment was to review the adequacy of the nation's labor force data, considering the mammoth changes the American economy had undergone since the data system had last undergone a similar review by a comparable committee headed by Berkeley's Robert Aaron Gordon during the 1960s. Supported by a coterie of special studies, the Commission's report, *Counting the Labor Force*, issued on Labor Day 1979 has guided over the intervening years a variety of significant changes in the ways in which the nation counts and tracks its workforce, with other recommendations still under debate as enumerated by participant Markley Roberts later in this volume.

The Last Liberal?

With the advent of the Reagan administration, the Washington, D.C. intellectual environment began to change as it had not under Nixon and Ford. Throughout the 1960-80 era, social policy had been essentially bipartisan, with activist Republicans differing from their Democratic colleagues only in degree, and conservative Democrats as numerous as their Republican counterparts and allied with them in a decided minority. The same was true of their staffs, whereas cabinet members of either party tended to be academic experts devoted to their disciplines more than political parties and generally like-minded. "Think Tanks" were predominately liberal with even the Nixon era somewhat right of center American Enterprise Institute not all that far away ideologically from the only slightly left of center Brookings Institution and Urban Institute. Civil servants were overwhelmingly advocates of the programs they administered. Enjoying playing the "crusty curmudgeon," Levitan was more likely to generate the arguments he enjoyed by criticizing programs he believed in, arguing for their improvement because hardly anyone argued for their elimination.

Levitan was a consummate classical liberal who truly believed that all people could rise to prosperity if given adequate opportunity, as contrasted with the American version of the colonial British “white man’s burden” concept that “the poor are a different breed from us but it is our humanitarian duty to carry them.” Part of his crusty curmudgeon act was to address women’s groups as “you broads,” but that was only for effect. He harbored no prejudice, but was a little disturbed at appearing too politically correct. However, his intellectual convictions would not allow him to depart far from the liberal conviction that a faulty institutional construct was primarily to blame for human misconduct. For instance, he was reluctant to join with Garth and Stephen Mangum in a monograph entitled *The Economics of Rectitude: Necessary but Not Sufficient* until there was added to the primary message that poverty could be overcome only if social deviancy was abandoned the corollary message that society could expect rectitude only if it restructured the reward system to assure that such conduct did in fact return the promised rewards, hence the subtitle. He did not want to be accused of blaming the victims, but once convinced, was forthright in preaching the message of right conduct.

As the political climate shifted during the 1980s, conservative think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation rose to prominence, and some former liberals migrated to neoconservatism, Levitan began to speak of himself as the “last liberal in Washington.” That was not true, as his continued relationships demonstrated, but their ranks were certainly thinned, and the press seemed to believe it as they intensified their pursuit of him for quotes in defense of liberalism. However, liberal convictions did not narrow his range of affections, as note his close friendship with Charles Murray, whose *Losing Ground* blamed welfare programs for poverty and whose coauthored *Bell Curve* claimed evidence that the economically disadvantaged were characterized by intellectual deficiencies. He could argue vigorously without animosity and demanded of his friends only intellectual integrity and aggressive pursuit of their convictions.

The Home Front

The Levitans lived briefly at 318 Livingston Terrace in Southeast Washington and then settled in for a long stay at 1717 Harvard Street in the Northwest. Sar had given up driving during his Bronx youth after he wrecked a car while distracted by his own meditations. However, Brita drove for shopping, visits to friends and relatives, and sight-seeing.

Sar had cousins resident in nearby cities and others who came down from New York on business and kept in contact. There were also many friends of both from the earlier years and, for some years, they kept up a fairly active but quiet social life. However, as time passed, Brita became more reclusive. Gary's persistent illness, consequent to Huntington's Disease, was probably a cause, but his death in the late 1960s did not stop that trend. According to Sar's cousin, David Levitan, "Brita suffered from a disease which caused extreme dryness of the skin, and she got relief only from spending many hours daily in the bathtub." She was heard to say that she had no living relatives and no friends of her own who had emerged from other origins than Sar's work. Sar and Brita continued to take long walks together in the evenings, but went out less and less.

That reclusiveness had an economic payoff, however. Brita began playing the stock market vicariously and then in earnest. Sar's Ford Foundation-authorized salary had been set at the federal GS-18 level. He refused any honoraria which had federal origins as implying a possible conflict of interest. But an occasional honorarium from other sources, along with a minor amount of labor arbitration added to household income. That was more than adequate to their modest circumstances and tastes and allowed a surplus for saving and investment. Under Brita's care, the surplus income multiplied into a modest fortune, left by joint bequest to the George Washington University Home Care and Student Scholarship Programs, the City College Alumni Association, the Johns Hopkins Baltimore Huntington's Disease Project, the United Jewish Appeal of Greater Washington, the United Way of the Capitol Area, the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, and the National Council on Employment Policy.

As Brita ceased driving and the Harvard Street neighborhood deteriorated, they moved closer in to the St. George Apartments at 21st and N, NW, just a few blocks from George Washington University and Sar's various offices over the years. There they were to spend the rest of their lives. Sar worked six days a week, keeping the Christian rather than the Jewish sabbath as a matter of convenience rather than belief. Evenings and Sundays both were almost always at home except for evening walks and occasional eating out in neighborhood restaurants.

Though Sar appeared delicate, his health was generally excellent, as his long hours and regular attendance at work attested. However, he was persistently plagued with a skin cancer problem which almost took his life in 1968. He remembered having had x-ray treatments for a skin condition when he was seven or eight years old, his hair falling out temporarily as a result. Then a lesion appeared on his scalp in 1956 which was diagnosed as cancer and more x-ray treatments followed over the next two years. Another occurrence in 1959 resulted in further x-ray treatments and a 1960 eruption was surgically excised and covered with a skin graft taken from his leg. A further recurrence in 1964 resulted in several excisions, closures and grafting with further excisions of lesions as well as electrodesiccation in 1966 and 1967. However, as little as possible was said about the condition, and even his closest friends now have to reconstruct this sequence from medical records.

An eruption in early 1968 was too serious and too extensive to keep hidden, however, and he was referred to the University of Wisconsin Medical Center where he was to spend the months of February through April of that year. The entire scalp was removed from the middle of his forehead back and from ear to ear. The skull was exposed and in two places penetrated to remove cancerous growth. Extensive grafting then resulted in the full flowing wig which he thereafter described as his "goldilocks." Released on 27 April 1968, he returned home, minimizing the experience and manifesting more pride in having been written up in a medical journal than in any of his own publications.

But that was a temporary interruption involving no permanent change in schedule or productivity. Medical records show frequent returns to Wisconsin over the next five years as protrusions of bone would penetrate the grafted scalp and have to be chiseled away. There is a gap in the medical record from 1973 to a final recorded visit for

further chiseling in October 1978, but all of this was done with as much secrecy as possible. As age advanced, there were minor surrenders, though Sar continued to walk to work until the year before his death shortly before his 80th birthday. But as walking became difficult, the rigorous schedule did not change. There was merely more shuffle in the walk to lunch or to a taxi to be hurried around town to conferences or to GWU faculty meetings.

It was Brita's health that would first make a substantial difference. In the 1980s, Brita's eyesight began to fail. When she was no longer able to read comfortably, Sar arranged for books on tape from the Library of Congress and, through Metropolitan Washington Ear, for a radio device through which the daily newspapers and other matter were read to the blind. When she no longer felt comfortable out of the apartment, the walks and restaurant meals ceased. When she could no longer manage their portfolio, their accumulation was switched from stocks to bonds. When Brita could no longer see to do housework, Sar, now in his late seventies, dropped back to five days a week at the office and left promptly at five to shop and prepare the evening meal. No servants were hired, but the apartment manager and staff looked in on Brita during the day and were always on call.

The Final Chapter

But then cancer reappeared in 1993 at age 78, this time not in the head but in the prostate with the malignant cells spreading to other parts of the body. At first nothing was said to anyone, but by the late summer of 1993 the terminal nature had become apparent and it was necessary to start making plans for the end which might still be months away. Typically, there were five concerns: How was Brita to be cared for? How should existing projects be completed? What other projects could be undertaken and completed in the time remaining? What should be the future of the Center? What should be said to the Ford Foundation in fairness concerning the completion of the current grant which would end in mid-1994 and the desirability of beginning another round which inevitably someone else would have to complete?

There were no laments. There were jokes about Dr. Kervorkian, but in reality only stoic acceptance of the inevitable. Research assistants were recommended for other employment. A departing secretary was replaced by one knowing of her uncertain but short tenure. Wills were rewritten with old friends Seymour and Ethel Brandwein as administrators and charged to see to Brita's well-being thereafter. The Ford Foundation was informed and unspent funds returned. All studies underway were completed and published but one which was not far advanced. Others already planned with various coauthors but not begun were shelved. *The Displaced vs. The Disadvantaged: A Necessary Dichotomy?*, a May 1994 monograph coauthored by Stephen Mangum, turned out to be the last publication in a forty-five year stream of more than fifty books, over seventy shorter monographs, and literally hundreds of published articles and government reports.

When the daily trip to work became too painful, work was continued at home with the secretary going and coming with missives and manuscripts and coauthors telephoning or visiting for consultation. When, in May 1994, caring for himself became a greater burden than caring for Brita, his energy level became too depleted to get around, and a high level of pain-killer became necessary, Sar was off uncomplainingly to a hospice where staff affection was evident and visitors frequent. Those visits included a dignified ceremonious farewell visit from Secretary of Labor Robert Reich to celebrate long, faithful, but often critical service to that department and its assigned interests.

Then life ended quietly on 24 May 1994 with his wife of 47 years, to everyone's surprise, following after a brief illness on 25 July 1994. She had developed a bloodclot in her leg, was hospitalized for it to be neutralized, but just before being discharged simply collapsed and died, claimed by a clogged vascular system which her heart could no longer master. Her departure caused a memorialist to remark, "In life they were not separated, by death they are not divided."

In late May an invitation went out to a several hundred-name mailing list to whom Sar had regularly sent his publications:

You are invited to join the colleagues of Sar A. Levitan in remembering the contributions, wit and wisdom which made him such a unique and durable institution shaping our nation's social policy. Sar died on May 24. He requested that there be no memorials and testimonials. He wanted to be remembered for his work. We will

be gathered together on Wednesday, June 8, 1994 from 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. at 2175 Rayburn House Office Building. Some of Sar's closest associates will help us recall the epochs of his long and distinguished career. Honoring his wishes, we will try to emphasize what Sar brought to us, rather than what we have lost.

Some 200 of Levitan's closest associates gathered on the day designated. A transcript of that proceeding seems an appropriate ending for this biographical essay, before turning to the papers prepared in his honor by a selected few of his scholar-friends.

Remembering Sar Levitan

Garth Mangum
University of Utah

Born in Lithuania in 1914, emigrating to the Bronx in 1930, educated at City College and Columbia, expected by his family to be the fifth or sixth generation Rabbi, preferring to study philosophy but asked by a family friend, "Who would ever hire a Jewish philosopher?", accepting second best by studying economics under some of the greats, including Eli Ginzberg, serving four years in the U.S. Army during the Second World War and finishing in the reserves afterward as a Lt. Colonel, completing a Ph.D. in Economics at Columbia in 1949—His Talmudic scholar father exclaiming, "In-Grade Wage Rate Progression in Peace and War? That's a dissertation?", serving on the staff of the Korean War Wage Stabilization Board, followed by several years as collective bargaining expert for the Congressional Legislative Reference Service, assigned to staff the McCarthy (Eugene, that is!) Special Committee on Unemployment in 1959, serving as Deputy Director of the Eisenhower Presidential Railroad Commission in 1960 and 1961, assisting Senator Paul Douglas in the design and passage of the Area Redevelopment Act during the same period, and thereafter enjoying 32 years of what he called the Ford Foundation's personal welfare program as evaluator, critic and promoter of social policies on behalf of the poor and downtrodden at the George Washington University Center for Social Policy Studies, Chairman of the National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics, author of over

50 books and hundreds of articles (his bibliography goes on for 36 pages), constant testifier before Congressional Committees, confidante of Congressional staff, enlightener of journalists, teacher of many, husband of Brita and unselfish benefactor of everyone of us in this room and hundreds more—that is the unique human being we meet to memorialize this afternoon.

He opposed the notion of such a gathering, but he was wrong. We are not met here today for his sake but for our sakes—to draw lessons from his life and thereby to hope to make our lives better and our service more fullsome.

Realizing that everyone of you would like to speak in his memory and have choice Levitan anecdotes to impart, the committee of his office mates of 30 years duration have asked a few to represent us all. For no better reason than seniority, they have honored me by asking me to conduct this memorial service. In the following order we would like these people to reflect from their own personal experiences as well as representing different times and aspects of Sar's career: Ray Marshall, Gordon Berlin, Marion Pines, Jon Weintraub, Isaac Shapiro, Cliff Johnson, and Andy Sum.

Ray Marshall
LBJ School
University of Texas

Thank you Garth. I thought when I was contacted in Texas and learned of this event that I was sure that Sar would register his disapproval but that he would appreciate it just the same. Therefore, I thought it was a good thing to do and I'm glad that I got the chance to participate in it. It's hard to talk adequately about Sar because he had such a breadth of knowledge and understanding. The first word that comes to mind is scholar because he loved to study facts. He loved analysis and believed that if you are going to be in the policy world you needed to pay a lot of attention to gathering the facts and doing the analysis and that you needed to be broader than any particular discipline. That was one of the things that first attracted me to Sar. He let the problems define the method rather than the method define the problem. He made extremely important contributions to policy understanding in a broad range of areas. He believed in evaluations, learning by

experience and experimentation. I think one of the important lessons that he tried to teach everyone was never assume that what you are doing will work automatically because if everything you tried to do worked it probably was not worth doing. You just experiment and learn as you go along. He thought that you learned just as much from your mistakes as by your successes. He said you rarely know why you succeed. It might just be luck—I think that he said that particularly in respect to me. You almost always know why you mess up and you know that you can learn a lot from that if you pay attention to it.

Another term that comes to mind is intellectual integrity. Sar always called it the way he saw it. He was not timid about speaking up even when he knew that everybody else in the room disagreed with him. I have seen him do that many times and I always respected that. After he came to his conclusions on the basis of his analysis he called it like he saw it.

The next word that comes to mind is that he was a democrat with both a large and a small D. He had a strong belief in democratic institutions, in the ability of informed opinion to get things done. He particularly believed in the ability of the federal government to do things, which caused him to be at odds increasingly with a lot of the so-called “New Democrats” who, as Sar once said, were always trying to beat the Republicans to their conclusions. He wouldn’t have any of it.

He believed that there was a role for competition in politics as in other things and that the federal government could in fact do a great deal to improve the lives of people. And the reason he thought that is because it is true. He could see it in his own life as can most of us who have come down pretty much the same path that Sar came down. Think of all the things that the federal government did that we could never get the states to do. For all of those people who believe in states’ rights and want to turn everything over to the states, Sar believed that there is a role for the states but it had to be under the guidance of federal policy. This was particularly true of those things that were important to the whole nation. Someone has called him the last of the New Deal Democrats. I am not sure of that. I think that there are still a lot of New Deal Democrats around if you mean by that those who believe the federal government can do a lot to improve the human condition, can look out for the interests of all of the people in the country, and especially the least advantaged who would not have been looked out for if it had not

been for the federal government. Being a Democrat with faith in democratic institutions was a strong part of his character.

Sar also was communicative. He probably was one of the best communicators I have ever known. He communicated in all kinds of media. He wrote great volumes with great clarity. You never came away from any of his writings not knowing at least what he thought. He was also a good oral communicator. He was witty. He was a wordsmith. He had the best ability I've known of to name things, to give titles to things and also to capture a few words that said it so well that when you heard it you realized that was exactly the way it was.

Now I understand that his family wanted him to be a Rabbi, and in some ways he was a Rabbi. He was a teacher and realized that his synagogue was the world and therefore tried to communicate to improve the conditions of people in the United States, particularly workers and the people who needed the most help.

The last word that comes to my mind when I think of Sar is "friend." I don't think I ever spent an unpleasant moment in Sar Levitan's company. I don't ever remember him saying anything unpleasant to me, even when he was taking me to task, usually for some sin of omission. He was never really after me for sins of commission but was always talking about things I ought to be doing that I didn't do and always trying in a friendly way. I always found it a lot of fun to be with him. He never gave up on me; that's the way he looked at it. I felt a little distance from him as I suppose most of you did. But when he felt I needed some attention he gave me the attention. I always appreciated that. I'm going to miss him but I will always remember him. The fact that he communicated so well in writing means that he will always be with all of us. Thank you.

Gordon Berlin

Manpower Development Research Corporation

I have been asked to speak about Sar's relationship with the Ford Foundation. No institution or individual had a longer standing relationship with the Ford Foundation. That relationship spanned some three decades. It was extraordinary both for its longevity and its productivity. And also, I think, for the influence Sar had on the personal and profes-

sional lives of the individual Ford Foundation program officers who worked with him over those years. It was a period which saw the Foundation undergo several major changes in priorities, grant-making styles, and personnel. It was also a period in which the country underwent remarkable change—from the Great Society, the Civil Rights Movement, and the baby-boom to the New Federalism, the tax revolt, and the baby-bust. The country changed and the Foundation changed, but not Sar. His message always seemed timeless.

The Ford Foundation's first grant to Sar was at the forefront of an emerging interest in poverty and its alleviation. Victor Fuchs was the program officer responsible for making this first grant; it was to evaluate the Area Redevelopment Act. As many of you know, Sar worked for Senator Douglas on the drafting of the Area Redevelopment Act; yet the evaluation he completed was quite critical of the way the Act was implemented. That was the beginning of a trend for Sar in which he could be at the same time the strongest and most vociferous critic of social programs and their staunchest supporter. He took the implementers of the Area Redevelopment Act to task in a number of ways, expressing tremendous disappointment at the lost opportunity reflected in its early shortcomings, but also counseled keeping the faith and urging program managers to see that the program lived up to its promise. This was to be the central message of the many books that followed. "Keep the faith"—in government's ability to deliver on its promises, and in people's ability to use those programs to improve their condition.

After this first grant Victor Fuchs left the Foundation. Paul Ylvisaker was at the Foundation by then and just beginning the Grey Areas Program—the predecessor to what would become the community development and community organization movements and many of the Office of Economic Opportunity programs that comprised the Great Society. Because the Foundation wanted an independent view of these and other new social programs, Ylvisaker continued to provide support for Sar's evaluation work. After Ylvisaker moved on, the Foundation reorganized, creating the Office of National Affairs which was led by Mike Sviridoff. The new office focused on community development, and it continued to support Sar. As Mike said to me when I talked to him this morning, "Sar was a resource, another arm, that everybody at the Foundation drew upon in one form or another." Under Mike Svirid-

off's leadership, such luminaries as Stan Brezenoff, Basil Whiting, and Bob Schrank, were, as Sar called it, his benefactors. Lou Winnick, Susan Berresford, and Bill Grinker all had dealings with Sar at some point during this period.

In the mid-80s, the Foundation's leadership changed. Frank Thomas and Susan Berresford began a restructuring of its programs and personnel. A new Urban Poverty program was formed under Bernie McDonald and then Bob Curvin's direction. The new program was designed to better integrate the Foundation's U.S. and developing country work. I joined the Foundation as this restructuring was getting underway. It was clear from the outset that Sar's work would be an integral part of the Foundation's new future.

I discovered my role in Sar's ongoing relationship with the Foundation at a going-away party for Bob Schrank. Sar approached me, introduced himself, and said with a twinkle in his eye, "I understand that you are my new benefactor." As I reflect upon the Foundation's and my subsequent personal relationship with Sar, I think he saw his mission as helping us to make a difference in the world and, at least in my case, keeping me from embarrassing myself. He did a reasonably good job of both. He worried with me about youth unemployment and deepening poverty, and read and commented on virtually everything that I sent him for review. He was a terrific editor.

Sar had an uncanny way of seeing the future. Every two years he had to write a proposal to the Foundation telling us what he would work on over the next two years. More than once we argued about the importance of something on the list. "No," I would say, "that is not going to be the next big policy concern." "Trust me," Sar would say. Time usually proved Sar right. Remarkably, Sar took this list seriously. If something else came along that Sar wanted to do, he would just add it to the list rather than drop a study he'd promised.

My most recent experience with Sar's prescience happened about two years ago when we were both writing about homelessness. Having recently worked in New York City government, I thought I had a somewhat unique perspective to bring to the problem. I asked Sar to review an article I was writing, he agreed, and mentioned that he had just finished up a piece on the same subject. Since Sar seldom left the six-square block area between his home and office, and at the time not a lot was published about the problem, I didn't anticipate much overlap

between the two pieces. Two days later my article came back full of substantive and editorial suggestions, and attached was a copy of Sar's article. It was a first-rate piece of work, had covered much of the ground I had hoped to cover, and it was already published and thus much more timely than mine. That was Sar, always ready to read and edit anything I had written, always ready to give me advice and counsel, and already having written a definitive piece on the subject of the moment long before the rest of us.

I know, as all of you do, that Sar's helpfulness had very little to do with the fact that I was his benefactor. In fact, he gave that same kind of time and attention to virtually everyone who called him. He was a tremendous resource to reporters and many, many others.

Sar Levitan took a very strong personal interest in the people that he touched and worked with. Having met my future wife he would always ask me before I was married how my "pillow mate" was doing, and after my marriage, he continued to ask about her and to send us those funny little notes with a cartoon character complaining about being the last liberal. After my son was born, the first words from Sar in any conversation were to ask how my son was doing. He even asked about my family first when I visited him several weeks ago at the Hospice.

Sar worried about my career as well. When I left the Ford Foundation to join Ford alumnae Stan Brezenoff and Bill Grinker in New York City government, Sar and I continued to speak every Saturday morning. He worried incessantly about whether I would survive untarnished the political quagmire of that city's human resources department. And more recently, when the Clinton administration began its search for people, Sar urged repeatedly that I not try to get a job in Washington, arguing that the Clinton people would spend most of their time being constrained by the budget, prescient yet again.

For all of us who worked with him while we were with the Ford Foundation, Sar was a very special person. Throughout our post-Ford careers we stayed in touch with him, sought his advice and counsel, and leaned on him. Several years ago, having just left New York City government as first deputy mayor and before taking the job as president of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Stan Brezenoff was helping the Commonwealth Fund rethink its agenda. He called Sar. Similarly, when Mike Sviridoff was completing an article on community development for the Public Interest last year, he asked Sar to

review it, just as he relied on Sar when he was the head of the Foundation's National Affairs division and wanted Sar's advice in setting the division's agenda. And I know that Susan Berresford continued to call on Sar throughout her tenure as vice-president for Programs whenever the foundation was considering a change in direction.

In the month before his death, Sar called all of his former benefactor's to announce that he was going off of welfare!! He said now that the President wanted to "end welfare as we know it," he felt it was his responsibility to be the first one off of welfare, and so he had decided to stop accepting grants from the Foundation. I naively asked if that meant he might consider retiring, and doing something different, since he would no longer be able to mix work and welfare. "No," he said, "I have several pieces in various stages of completion, and I intend to try working without welfare. Isn't that what the president has in mind?"

He also spoke to me quite a bit about being Jewish. It had a special meaning for him, not so much in a religious sense, but in a secular sense. As Eli Ginzberg mentioned to me, when Sar was completing his doctoral dissertation in economics at Columbia, he had to be fluent in a foreign language, and convinced the school to let him use Hebrew. Everybody at Columbia was at a loss as to how to test whether or not Sar had the necessary competency. So Eli pressed his own father, a Talmudic scholar, into service. He spent an hour or two with Sar and reported he was as good as anyone he had ever spoken with in Hebrew. Howard Rosen, Sar's federal benefactor for many years tells a similar story: They went to Israel together and they were asked to say a few words to assembled manpower experts, Howard looked on dumbfounded when Sar stood up and gave a 30-minute speech in Hebrew.

In conclusion, I want to echo what Ray said, Sar had a tremendous amount of integrity and he was not afraid to be a critic. In that regard, he set a unique example because he did it without a lot of animosity. That is an unusual quality. I want to close in the way that Sar often concluded a meeting with me: "Keep the Faith," and in Hebrew, "LeChaim ZeleAvodah!"—to Life and to Work!

Marion Pines
Institute for Policy Studies
The Johns Hopkins University

In thinking about how to remember Sar today, I decided that the best way is to think back to some of his writings that influenced me the most. I'd like to share some of those quotes with you. As others have said, what we often remember about Sar is his rigorous mind. He had a way of cutting through the floss and getting right to the guts of an issue. In the most recent piece he wrote, coauthored with Steve Mangum, speaking of the current rhetoric about "one-stop shopping," Sar said, "What is most important to the concept of the one-stop shop is not the one stop, but what is on the counter at the shop." I remember when JTPA came in to replace CETA and all income supports for people who were in training were eliminated and we all were desperately trying to figure out what to do, Sar said, "That's simple. Let them eat training."

We all remember his absolute disdain for any kind of pomposity. I came across something last night that I want to share with you. He wrote a letter to the editor of the *Journal of Human Resources* at the University of Wisconsin: "As a contributor to the initial issue of your learned journal and as a cash subscriber ever since, I have watched with consternation your journal's progressive dedication to obscurity. When I reached the second article of the current issue, I decided enough was enough. A drop of 0.04363 percent of the paid circulation of the journal might not be statistically significant, but I wouldn't be surprised if other subscribers share my frustration with your propensity to confuse if not torture the English language. And then he went on to suggest that one of the favorite devices of those teaching Greek was to have the Greek on one side of the page and the English on the other. He suggested that the journal adopt that practice. He finished with the admonition, "If you ever decide to begin publishing in English again, please inform me that I might resubscribe."

Someone mentioned already his somewhat unorthodox approach to evaluation. He said, "The selection of priorities and the rejection of existing programs must remain largely a matter of value judgement and gut feeling, all models for computer-generated data notwithstanding." Well, obviously, that did not make him overpopular with the newest

generation of evaluators who were much more orthodox in their approach. He was aware of that but he enjoyed irritating people who he thought took themselves and their pet methods too seriously.

In a letter that Sar wrote to Garth, he said, "I am making slow progress on the random assignment project. As I may have mentioned, when I told Taggart about my plans to embark on this project, he warned me I was taking on an 800 lb. gorilla. He was right. However, he assured me that I was not about to be nominated as the most popular evaluator in the business and therefore I had little to lose."

Despite his acknowledged ability to intimidate others, I remember his comment when someone said he had written eight books that year. I said, "Nonsense, it is impossible for anyone to write eight books in one year." He responded, "Its not difficult. You just change the chapter headings."

But the one time that I found Sar faced with a challenge beyond his reach was when he ran into an audit problem with a federal grant to the National Council for Employment Policy. He could solve any economic policy problem in the world but he was completely thrown by this \$12,000 audit finding. He called me in absolute panic. I sent to him two people from my Baltimore City Prime Sponsor office who were magicians at making audit problems go away. I never knew how they did it but I never had an audit problem they couldn't handle. After they had handled Sar's problem, he wrote them a letter saying, "We mailed six boxes to the auditors as scheduled. Upon comparing your reply and our draft notes, the difference between professional communication and amateur reaction was only too clear. As an inveterate pencil pusher, I tried hard to find something to change in your draft but couldn't even find a misplaced comma. The record should show that the Baltimore Manpower Consortium came once more to the rescue of another employment and training organization." We were happy to have solved that less than major problem.

As much as he enjoyed the life of the mind, Sar was very, very committed to the practitioners in the field around the country. He was everybody's favorite speaker, everybody's favorite keynoter. He loved to take on the role of challenging them and pushing them onward to new thinking. He kept encouraging us to professionalize our activities. At his continued urging, we finally did about ten years ago and he honored the organization by becoming its first paid member. He was a practitio-

ner of research but understood and appreciated the challenges faced by practitioners of service delivery.

Several have referred to the fact that Sar was kind of a storehouse of information. He was my own personal *Book of Knowledge*. If I ran too late in preparing a speech. I could always call Sar because I always figured that he had the information needed in his head or at his fingertips. He would say, "You can find that in the census tapes," but I would say, "I don't have to. You know it already." Mike Sviridoff told me of a time when he had a last minute call from the McNeil-Lehrer television show about 4:30 in the afternoon when they go on the air at six. He didn't want to embarrass himself, so he called Sar and asked what he had written on the subject. Sar immediately faxed him five pages of the most important pertinent data and made an expert of him. That was part of his role. Above all, as everyone has said, he was a warm, loving friend. I found something that Garth wrote him in 1990. It is very apropos today. Garth said to him, "It is time for you to do what should be a fascinating and meaningful life story. No one I know has a stronger and more consistent commitment to serving humanity. You represent a people, a tradition, a time, an ideology and a methodology which should be recorded and examined, as well as an individual unique story." Garth even suggested to him a title, "The Secular Rabbi: The Life and Times of Sar Levitan." You can imagine Sar's response: "The title is enticing, the invitation is flattering, but I doubt if anyone would be interested." And then he compared himself to Eli Ginzberg and said, "I suddenly realized that I had never advised even one president, much less nine, and therefore I concluded that an audience that might be interested in the life of Sar Levitan is nonexistent." That is one time that Sar was wrong.

Jon Weintraub

House Committee on Education and Labor

I've asked Isaac Shapiro to join me because we were involved in presenting Sar with the Secretary of Labor's Lifetime Achievement Award. There were some of us on the outside that pushed and some on the inside that pushed to get this done. It is appropriate having this memorial service in this room because Sar is really the intellect and the

conscience of this committee. Although there are other pictures on the wall, Sar, like Carl Perkins, is a spirit which will always be in this room. His shadow will always be here. Sar, as Marion intimated, was really the adviser to many presidents through their staffs. His intellect drove policy for all of them. As he was presented with this lifetime achievement award, Secretary Reich just casually mentioned that, although labor secretaries come and go with each administration, Sar will always be the permanent labor secretary.

Isaac Shapiro
Office of the Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor

When Labor Secretary Reich said this to Sar, his immediate response was, "I accept." Here is what the award said: "In recognition of your numerous contributions to the Department of Labor over several decades, you have set the highest standards in your dedication to work, the American worker, and the fight against poverty. Your scholarship, wisdom, wit and kindness have inspired us all." Robert Reich, Secretary of Labor.

In response Sar had prepared the following:

My scribblings over the years have aimed to combine right and rationality to improve social welfare. This award, from those who share this goal, is gratifying recognition of these labors. I would gladly trade it for an indexed increase in the minimum wage to reduce hardship, a network of community learning centers to skill our youth, or a few thousand public service jobs to move people from welfare to work. But since these are not on offer, I am honored to accept this award. If right and rationality continue to be recognized, these critical education, employment and earnings policies may eventually come to pass to realize this nation's "promise of greatness."

As you can see, Sar remained feisty to the very end and a guiding light to all of us.

Cliff Johnson
The Children's Defense Fund

I will always think of Sar as a teacher and mentor. I had worked here in the House for a member of the Education and Labor Committee for several years and thought it best that I leave and try to get a master's degree. Most of the graduate courses at GW were pretty uninteresting but it was very hard not to pay attention in Sar's courses. He had a way of challenging students that put us in two different categories: You were either brain dead or you were engaged. There was no way to be in the middle. Even with the most apathetic of students, he managed to draw out and challenge us. He pushed arguments to the point of absurdity so that we had to fight back.

Sar had that instinct to be engaged intellectually in the battle and to stimulate others to do the same. By the time I was in his course, I assume he had taught the course a million times before, but the material and the approach was always fresh. He brought it to life and gave it energy that made it seem new.

I think Sar's first love was teaching. Had GW not had a mandatory retirement policy, I suspect Sar would have been teaching this past semester. (It is an indictment of retirement policies now mercifully expunged.) His commitment to teaching was a reminder to me of how much Sar really cared about people. There were very few personal effects in his office but there would be many plaques and photos from past or recent students such as the picture of a class from Cornell which he taught in his office as they studied in an external program in the nation's capital. There would be mementos thanking him for his wit and wisdom and guidance. It told me that it made an enormous difference to him that he was a teacher. It was in his way fulfilling his calling, even if not as a Rabbi. He fulfilled that in many other ways.

Barbara Dunn was telling me last night about a doctoral program that Sar was involved in for many years before I came to know him. He would take many of the brightest under his wing and work with them, afterward feeding them into government agencies, foundations and advocacy organizations in a way that enriched the human resources available to the social welfare community. I know that a lot of you in this room came up that ladder.

I think the luckiest ones, at least from my perspective, were those apprentices who actually got to work directly with and for Sar as research assistants. The numbers are not great—perhaps not more than a dozen or two over the years. If you saw his 30 or 40 books on the book shelf, you would see that most of them carry the name of one or more coauthors. Some appear more often than others depending upon their length of tenure. Yet there was an apprenticeship behind each of those books. There were tremendous opportunities for each of us who were able to work with Sar in that capacity, of rolling up our sleeves and working through an area of inquiry and being paid for the privilege.

I think that there was nothing that Sar loved more than to get a draft of a chapter from one of his apprentices, to read it and mark it up. He would be truly absorbed in the act of editing and commenting upon the text. He would tear it to shreds. When he was finished, you would come into his office, at first with trepidation and later with a sense of anticipation and excitement at the challenge that lay ahead. He would tell you all of the things that you had done wrong, all the ways in which you had missed the point. In the end you would have some wonderful battles with him, the chance to argue and fight and be part of that intellectual process leading to conclusion and recommendation.

Over time it was impossible not to recognize the caring and time Sar invested in that process. There was no way of thinking of it as just Sar's wanting to publish another book or finish another chapter or to get to the end of another work day. Rather, it was a deep and serious responsibility that he assumed to teach and nurture and contribute to the regeneration of young people who would think critically about things and take nothing for granted and who would care about those things which mattered most. Then in the end what was remarkable to me was that he was always ready to share the credit, whether you were a 24-year-old still wet behind the ears or whether you were further on in your career and widely published in your own right. While others in academia might be tempted to exploit young research assistants, it was never a matter of question with Sar. He was enormously generous in using his offices and his caring and nurturing ways as a wonderful path of career development.

When Sar received his award from the Department of Labor last month, I had the chance to tell him what an extraordinary impact he

had on his students and research associates. I told him that I believe his greatest legacy lies not in the dozens of books he wrote over the years but in the countless students and young researchers who he taught to think critically, write clearly, and argue effectively. I reminded him that the seeds he planted would bear fruit for decades to come. And while he did not reply, I believe with all my heart that he understood what I was telling him and knew the importance of all of his good work as a teacher and mentor over the years.

I think for all of us he will be the teacher of our lifetime. The best we can do is to use that learning and instruction as he would have done for the betterment of mankind.

Andrew Sum
Center for Labor Market Studies
Northeastern University

The only thing worse than being second to last speaker is to be the last speaker. I will try to make my remarks relatively brief and resist the temptation to give a lecture. I was asked to comment on Sar's work of the last few years. I felt honored, having known Sar since he came to Northeastern University in the mid-1970s to give a series of lectures on human resource development. Then I had the opportunity to get professionally involved with him when he took over the chairmanship of the National Commission on Employment and Unemployment Statistics, and I had the opportunity to draft a few of the reports of the commission.

I want to share a rule of work in Sar's personal life and secondly a rule of work in Sar's professional writing and then conclude with fifteen seconds of our role in carrying on Sar's life work.

I think it is fair to say that his commitment to work as an element of his personal life was the essence of what he truly tried to share with us in his writings over the years. Reflecting back on Sar's writings, I took a look at Sar and Cliff's 1982 book, *Second Thoughts on Work*. There at the beginning of the book is this quote: "Life grants nothing to us mortals without hard work." Yet Sar's hard work was both a pleasure to him and a source of joy and being delighted in the work of others. He was known to say to Barbara and Bob that Labor Day was the day to honor labor by working. He said, "If the day is productive, reward the

staff by letting them go home at 4:30.” I have a feeling that as September 3rd of this year rolls around, I am going to open the mail and, sure enough, there is going to be one last publication from Sar dated Labor Day 1994.

Sar’s professional work over the last three decades was devoted to three sets of issues: preparation for work, public policy to provide job opportunities to the unemployed and a guarantee of adequate pay to all of those who have the opportunity to obtain work. Again, in *Second Thoughts on Work*, Sar and Cliff noted, and I think it sums up much of Sar’s work, “As we continue to rely upon work as the mainstay of our lives and our economy, we must also continue to search for vehicles by which we can offer that role and its many benefits to all of society’s members.”

If you look at Sar’s work over the last few years, the monographs that he thought it was important for him to produce, this case about the need for jobs is made more evident than ever before. In *Spending to Save*, Sar persisted in making the case for a conscious public jobs strategy. As Sar used to say to me, “I told Thomas Jefferson, ‘Tom, we need a public service jobs strategy.’” Sar also noted in his book on welfare reform the clear need that to succeed in the JOBS program we had to have a comprehensive job creation strategy for welfare recipients. Sar also recognized work’s necessity if we were going to make a difference in the lives of young people. In his monograph, *You’ve Got To Learn To Earn*, Sar said that we’ve not only got to assure that there are jobs at the end of the line, but we’ve got to be sure that the young people have the education and training necessary to boost their earnings and allow them to achieve the American dream. And in his last monograph with Stephen Mangum, *Displaced vs. the Disadvantaged* on page 46, there’s Sar again: “If we are going to do well for the disadvantaged and the displaced and guarantee them a place again in the American dream, we need an expanding economy to make that effective displaced worker policy a reality.” And there again on that page is one last time Sar saying, “While also it will be helpful to have a standby public service jobs strategy.”

I think one ought to read Sar’s work as I’ve been told the great Rabbi said in the Torah, “One does not study to know but to learn.” There is always much to be learned in reading Sar’s monographs if for no other reason than to challenge your own perceptions and beliefs about what

we have thought was good for American employment and training policy. Let's all start with that and add the belief that public policy is not only to promote job opportunities but to add adequate compensation. His monograph on *Working but Poor* for Johns Hopkins, his work on the minimum wage, his previous works on employment and earnings adequacy, his works on labor market hardship were all devoted to the goal of guaranteeing that earnings and income standards for all Americans in the workforce were at least sufficient to guarantee everyone an adequate standard of living.

I think all of us gathered here today can best honor Sar's lifelong work by continuing that search for those appropriate public policy vehicles to achieve the goals of full employment and earnings adequacy. Part of that search will require faith in the ability of government to do good. As Gordon Berlin said in Sar's obituary in the New York Times, and Ray Marshall noted here today, that message was essential to Sar's beliefs throughout his life: that while government could make blunders, it was in the power of government to do the good that we all wanted for ourselves. But we all note that by itself is not enough. We don't need logicians or philosophers to tell us that necessary does not imply sufficient. For James 2:20 tells us that "Wilt thou know, o vain man, that faith without works is dead." but later on James tells us "through works was faith made perfect."

Let us continue. It behooves us to go on to update Sar's work on *Working but Poor*. But let's all work for the day when that particular series can be abolished and look forward to the day when we can change that title to *Poor No More*. No greater legacy I believe can we leave behind in the memory of Sar Levitan.

Garth Mangum

We have a letter from Sar's last living professor, Eli Ginzberg, who could not be with us today:

My friendship with Sar goes back to 1939 when he enrolled in my course at Columbia, "Economics and Group Behavior." He soon made all of us aware of his presence because his sharp comments revealed a broad and deep knowledge of events and people. Sar was enrolled in the PhD program in Economics and faced the

requirement to demonstrate competence in two foreign languages. Since he was still in the process of fully mastering English, he explored the possibility of substituting Hebrew for French as his second language. When the Chairman of the Economics Department, Roswell McCrea, asked my advice, I encouraged him to allow the substitution. McCrea then raised a second question. Who would examine Sar? I volunteered my father who reported after examining him that Sar had demonstrated good mastery of Hebrew.

Sar and I stayed in touch and early in World War II he sought my help. I had joined the Commanding General of the Army Service Forces with consulting responsibility for personnel. Sar had succeeded in becoming commissioned but was looking for a meaningful job, not easy for a lieutenant to find on his own. I got him an assignment in the Transportation Corps in the Port of New York where he spent the war carrying out a number of constructive assignments.

I recall a meeting at Princeton with Fred Harbison in the lead, the other participants being John Dunlop, Charlie Myers and myself, exploring what might be done to establish outside the federal government a point of strength in the development of manpower policy. I was pleased beyond words to hear my colleagues conclude forthwith that Sar was the logical, in fact the only person, to lead such an effort.

Two concluding observations that tie together Sar and my relations over a span of 55 years. Several years ago, out of the blue, Sar made a totally unexpected contribution to the Eisenhower Center with a brief note saying that it represented a small effort on his part to pay his indebtedness to Columbia. About a year following arrived another generous check, this time without a note.

Sar and I always exchanged books, but the one book that I authored that he really responded to was my autobiography—*The Eye of Illusion*. I heard from many, most recently Bob Taggart, that his last conversation with Sar was about my book. I believe I know what Sar especially liked about that book. Europe had helped to shape Sar and it had also helped to shape me via my father and my sophomore year at Heidelberg. Europe was our bond that tied us closely together,

Never had I a more dedicated and productive student. The world is better because Sar lived. All of us must be grateful for a friendship with a man such as Sar.

Garth Mangum

Now will you pardon me for adding a few of my own memories of Sar?

Though I had read his collective bargaining writings from the Legislative Reference Service while in graduate school, I first met Sar Levitan in his capacity as assistant director of the Presidential Railroad Commission in the summer of 1961. While teaching at the Brigham Young University, I had been brought on the Commission staff for that summer by John Dunlop. As a 35-year-old ex-coal miner-steel worker-construction worker with a newly-minted Harvard Ph.D., I was no impressive young scholar, but Sar chose to take me under his wing anyway. When Senator Joe Clark was seeking someone to staff a series of hearings which he wanted to call *The Nation's Manpower Revolution*, Sar recommended me and I came to Washington on a one- year leave that extended for seven rich years.

When after moving from the congressional assignment through two Johnson administration assignments, I yearned for return to a more academic setting, it was Sar who recommended me to the Ford Foundation such that he and I set up together at George Washington University the Center for Manpower Policy Studies, initially, he to evaluate the impact of the Economic Opportunity Act and me the Manpower Development and Training Act. When after three years together I opted to raise my kids in the Utah mountains and deserts, instead of justifiably rejecting me as the ungrateful pup I was, he continued to provide me with a Washington base and opportunities to work with him on various projects from that time to this.

That story could be repeated in differing detail by nearly everyone in this room.

Sar's philosophy and convictions can be no better rendered than by his own response to the presentation of the lifetime service award by Secretary of Labor Robert Reich that we have already heard.

Because he kept his private life so private, I suspect few of you are fully aware of his devotion and commitment to his wife, Brita. Six days a week he slaved at scribbling more footnotes, as he always put it. But nights and Sundays belonged wholeheartedly to “Snub” as he called her for reasons unknown to me. His snide rejection of “field work” was in part related to his reluctance to be away from her. When blindness reduced her mobility, he limited his workdays and work hours to assume homemaking responsibilities and cheer her darkening hours.

But one bit of field work my wife and I will never forget—the triumph of this refugee from Lithuanian pogroms as he stood with us at Berchtesgarden once in the 1970s and remembered the previous 40 years.

I happen to be convinced that at least a preponderance of evidence testifies to the continuance of life beyond the grave. I never could get Sar to express an opinion, though I pointed out that the odds were on that side. We believers will never know if we turn out to be wrong, whereas an unbeliever will never know if he turns out to be right. But one of my favorites from literature is Stephen Vincent Benet’s story of Old Doc Mellhorn.

This old country doctor had died, passed through some pearly gates and sat down to confab with Hippocrates and other medical greats, but soon found it boring. He wandered around and stumbled upon a faint trail leading downhill and came to another realm. There he had a great time running a burn clinic and even setting a fractured tail. But soon, because of his ministrations, Hell wasn’t hellish any more and the proprietor kicked him out. This time, however, he found himself in an intermediate setting where there were just enough colds and stomach aches to keep an old doctor busy without seriously inconveniencing his patients.

I could easily imagine Sar watching today’s proceeding with facetious and self-deprecating asides. But I think it more likely that he would be too busy kibitzing the remaking of social policy in some not quite perfect afterlife.

But whatever he is doing will reflect a life of generosity to innumerable friends, devotion to a wife and commitment to a life’s work of making the world a little bit better for the poor and downtrodden among his fellow human beings.

Bon voyage, Sar Levitan, a name he once told me meant “Prince of Levi”—and I sincerely believe it. Thank you all for being here to join in his memory. Let us all remember that the best way to remember Sar is to go about doing good.

With that, farewell until we meet again in good causes.