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## Family Remarks

Justin Pritchard

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## Family Remarks<sup>1</sup>

JUSTIN PRITCHARD

Recognition by esteemed colleagues is one hallmark of a lasting legacy. We are profoundly appreciative for the professors, administrators and students who have conceived and executed this issue of the *Buffalo Law Review*. Our Mom would be too. In her spirit, may it provoke many wonderful ideas.

—Erica Pritchard and Justin Pritchard, children of Prof. Isabel Marcus

On behalf of Erica, my sister, and our families, I want to thank you. I want to thank Dean Abramovsky, and Lisa Mueller, for the excellent program. I'd like to thank the speakers for the beautiful memories that you've shared. Indeed, I have learned things that I didn't know about our Mom. I'd also like to thank the several caretakers who are here, who helped our Mom through much of her tough end of her life. And I'd like to welcome and embrace the people who are viewing this from around the world, a reflection of the legacy that she gave.

It's hard to know our Mom and, within a fairly short period of time, not hear the rabbi story. It goes something

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1. The following is based upon memorial remarks delivered by Justin Pritchard in Capen Hall on May 11, 2022.

like this.

Isabel Marcus was a precocious girl in the Bronx going to a conservative temple, and the rabbi called her into his office. He was an imposing man, and impressive. She looked up to him. In the office, he addressed her—I'll do my best impression of her impression of him—"My dear, what would you like to do with your life?" Young Isabel replied, "I would like to be a rabbi." He paused and thought for a while about that. He had seen the sharp mind that she brought. "This will not be possible," he eventually said, "but you could be a wonderful wife of a rabbi." She ran out in tears.

In many ways, that rejection became a challenge that shaped a life well lived. And she did, so we must also thank that rabbi—for setting her on that course. Her congregation in many ways was the academy, at UB and worldwide as we've heard. She inspired people, launching many careers and thousands of passionate discussions. We particularly appreciate the remarks today of those who carry that mantle going forward.

Toward the end of her tenure, it might have been interlibrary loan that kept her teaching. As if by magic, any book that she wanted could end up on her bedside night table at the Eagle's Nest, as we call her wonderful apartment filled with art and objects from her travels. I'd look at the titles and think—really? Someone wrote *a whole book* on *that*? Our Mom would have read it and absorbed it—and would soon be expounding upon it in conversation or writing.

Her sanctum in many ways was her office. It was full of course of books and newspaper or journal clippings, New Yorker cartoons and various posters. At the front of her desk, where a student would sit, was a squadron of wind-up toys. These offered a triaging operation when it came to students. Those who would be willing to take one and wind it up, those were the curious ones—the ones for whom she wanted to open her arms even wider.

These toys show both her whimsy—a word she used and

an important part of her—and her warmth, which is another word we’ve heard today. She did have that playful side, and it could be wonderfully absurd. Her grandchildren, Erica’s children Seth and Astra and mine Iris and Felix, were known as “The Woofs.” She had many funny voices for them, and shared many tender moments.

She did love UB. But she also would stack her classes at the beginning of the semester to satisfy her teaching requirements—and then satisfy her wanderlust. There were times when I don’t even think her beloved secretary Linda Kelly knew exactly where she might be. In conversations with friends, I’d catch myself saying, “Oh yeah my Mom—I, I actually don’t know where she is. Somewhere in Eastern Europe.” What would that look like? Graduate student housing and trips in a van stuffed with students but bereft of heat. She found a lot of meaning on those trips. Not just in sharing and acquiring knowledge, but also through important connections to her heritage.

Traveler, seeker, feminist, jazz composer in the kitchen, diplomat, kibitzer, source of warmth, holder of salons, napper, camel, devotee of purple and cheese and chocolate, optimist despite the world and its challenges. She would wake up every morning in a positive mood, no matter what had happened the day before.

As a Mom, she wanted one thing above all else. “If I can show you the world so that you are not afraid of it, and can celebrate its differences, I will have done my job,” she would tell us.

On a morning walk hours before she passed away, she listened as I whispered that she had imbued in her own children that sense of inquiry and discovery, which we in turn passed to our children. “That’s lovely,” she said with a smile.