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Steven Block

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THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA
BEFORE THE
HONORABLE ROBERT F. PECKHAM,
CHIEF JUDGE

IN MEMORIAM
STEVEN BLOCK
*MONDAY, OCTOBER 22, 1984**

Chief Judge Peckham: I received a profoundly sad message just before taking the bench. Steven Block, my friend and former law clerk, passed away yesterday. He was a professor at the University of Minnesota Law School. He was distinguishing himself as a scholar and a teacher in the profession. Thirty-three years is too short a time to have been with us.

It was no surprise that his stature was already apparent and acknowledged by those in the teaching profession. He was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California at Berkeley in 1973. He was vice-president of the student body, an important and articulate figure on the Berkeley campus during a period of considerable turmoil and ferment.

He then went to Stanford Law School, where he was an outstanding student and graduated Order of the Coif at the apex of his class.

Then he came with me for a delightful, stimulating and mutually beneficial year (1976-77). He was a magnificent law clerk. He was analytical, brilliant, creative, and had great depth. He was absolutely charming with a great sense of humor. We all grew very fond of him. He was, I can say unhesitatingly, one of the favorites of my staff and of me.

He then went into the law practice here in San Francisco as an associate at the law firm of Heller, Ehrman, White & McAuliffe. All the reports that came to me from partners and associates were very laudatory and very enthusiastic. None of this, of course, came as a surprise to me.

He enjoyed the law firm, his associates, and the partners

* Chief Judge Peckham delivered this eulogy from the bench.

with whom he worked and also found time to teach at Boalt Hall as an adjunct and, there again, his performance produced raves from faculty friends. That was further confirmed by the results of the teacher evaluations made by his students at the end of his course. They were overwhelmingly affirmative and enthusiastic. Many wrote in comments spontaneously about how much they enjoyed his teaching and how much they gained from being a student in his class. He then sought a teaching assignment and obtained an excellent one at the University of Minnesota Law School.

While he was at the Heller law firm he did a great deal of extracurricular work of a pro bono nature. He was one of the most effective of the volunteer lawyers for the American Civil Liberties Union and was engaged in some very difficult litigation on its behalf.

We are truly without words to express our loss. It is not only the personal deprivation—the knowledge that we will not see Steve anymore and be stimulated by his comments about developments within the profession and within society and have our burdens lightened by his wit and his expressions of joy about his own activities and explorations—it is the realization that he will not continue to make the great contributions that we all knew he was beginning to make. It is all those students who will not benefit from being exposed to his teaching. It is the members of the profession who will not be reading the erudite, creative articles that he would have written. It is those clients whose causes would have benefitted from his able, vigorous advocacy.

We can be grateful we were the lucky ones for we knew Steve, albeit too briefly, and were forever enriched by the association.

Our heart goes out to his mother and his father and to his brother. They were with him in Minnesota during the last days. And to his colleagues, past and present, and to his many friends, we extend our sympathy as well.

It is accordingly ordered that the United States District Court for the Northern District of California be adjourned at the close of business in memory of Steven Block, a distinguished member of the bar of this court.