

Eulogy at the Funeral of Alfred Baruth

By Daniel Rose

For over half a century, Alfred Baruth exerted a powerful influence over the intellect and the character of his students and colleagues at the Horace Mann School. We have come together to commemorate the man himself and the continuing impact his life had on the lives of others. A teacher in the broadest and most loving sense of the term, Al had a clear conception of his role as a

molder of men, and he agreed with Thomas Carlyle that, "... the great law of culture is to let each become all that he is created capable of becoming—to expand, if possible, to his full growth." Al saw in his youngsters fully matured adults who, at the moment, just happened to be 15 or 16; he tried to convey to them a zest for living and a love of learning and of experience for their own sakes. Above all, he tried to stimulate the intellectual curiosity that he hoped his students would carry throughout their lives.

An actor, athlete, reporter, camp director, teacher, and

devoted family man who led a full and varied life, he understood clearly that "the good, the true, and the beautiful" were to be found outside the classroom as well as inside it, and he judged his success as a teacher by the extent to which he was able to instill that message. Al spoke often of the distinction between the terms "schooling" and "education," and felt that in the fullest sense education should be a lifelong process; he knew that it had flowered when the student took responsibility for his own learning and personal growth, and started setting and achieving his

own goals and evaluating his own accomplishments. Horace Mann's Independent Studies Program was the logical culmination of Al's personal educational philosophy on the one hand and of his immensely rich and varied intellectual background on the other. He was a great teacher, in part because he himself was constantly learning. The thought that the ambition of a Macbeth, the despair of a Lear, or the anguish of a Hamlet should be of interest only to schoolboys alternately amused and irritated him.

As a man, Al was strong-minded and disciplined, and he deplored self-indulgence and lack of willpower in others. He was fully convinced that most human beings live and work far below capacity, and he believed that performance at or near one's best was a habit or skill that could be acquired by practice and with determination. As did the classical Greeks, he felt that happiness was a by-product of purposeful exertion and meaningful achievement, and he encouraged his students to stretch themselves in everything they did.

In the classroom, Al's hallmarks as a teacher were the profound respect he had for both the intellectual capacities of his students and for the importance of the material to which he was exposing them. To him the classics were not intellectual relics one pondered for exercise; he thought of them as the living works of vibrant men whose expressions on the printed page forever remained as fresh as when first written. The vision of an aged Ulysses yearning for one last voyage, or of a petty and vindictive little monk in a Spanish cloister, or of a joyous bridal procession

painted on an ancient Greek bowl will live in the minds of thousands of his students because he made those visions come to life.

He loved the spoken word, too, and boomed out poetry or dramatic dialogue with such obvious relish and conviction that the most apathetic student was moved. "And men in England now abed will hold their manhood cheap, that they were not with us on St. Crispin's Day!"—and the class could see the sunlight sparkle on Harry's blade.

Al had a passion for clear thinking and for clear expression; he hated clichés in writing as much as in thought, and he encouraged his students to write and to speak simply and directly, with vivid, fresh images that made communication come alive. Since many of his students have gone on to write or speak before broad audiences, a wide public owes him a debt of which they are unaware.

A man of strong feeling, Al was a good friend across the

years to many of his former students; and he was proud to serve on a faculty roster that carried such distinguished names as Nagle, Blake, and Williams.

A devoted father and grandfather, he was an adoring husband to his beloved Charlotte, who for their fifty-eight years together shared his every activity and virtually every thought.

Alfred Baruth was an extraordinary man who regarded teaching as a sacred calling; he loved his students and he loved Horace Mann, and to both he gave full measure. Those of us

fortunate enough to have been touched by the glow of that life
carry his stamp; and to the extent that we live up to his ideals, he
lives on in us.

Daniel Rose talks can be found on: www.danielrose.org