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In Memoriam: W. Penn Lerblance

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In Memoriam Lynch: In Memoriam: W. Penn Lerblance

W. PENN LERBLANCE
(1942-1993)

*William C. Lynch**

In the life of every institution there are usually a few individuals who help to shape the character of the institution in an exceptional way and leave an indelible mark upon its history. In the history of California Western School of Law, Professor Penn Lerblance was one of those individuals. He was at the center of the life of the law school from the time of his arrival from Oklahoma in August, 1978 until his retirement because of AIDS in December, 1992. He died on September 18, 1993.

A review of his educational, professional, and career achievements does not come close to capturing the personality and the character of the man. While his distinguished publication record, his master of laws degree from Columbia, his teaching prowess, and his outstanding administrative abilities all speak to a singularly talented person, none of this truly reveals what Penn was to California Western. He was in a very real sense almost the soul of the school.

Prior to his arrival, the school had been through a difficult transitional period in which the school, faculty and staff had undergone a major reorganization. The effects of the reorganization were still being felt when he arrived. He instinctively recognized that California Western at that time, perhaps more than anything, needed a structure, a discipline and a sense of its own worth as a professional institution. A year after his arrival, he was appointed Vice Dean for Academic Affairs; if ever there was a case of the right man for the right job at the right time, his appointment fit that definition.

Penn provided the institutional framework on which the school operates successfully today, providing students and faculty alike with a sense of professionalism and efficiency. At the same time he was instituting his administrative reforms, he established his reputation as one of the premier teachers at the school. Perhaps the most accurate means of assessing his skill as a teacher is to repeat the comments of a student who was asked by a visiting professor who was the best teacher at California Western. The student replied, "Professor Lerblance, because he was not only the greatest teacher I've ever encountered; he not only taught me how to think about the law; he not only changed my way of thinking about the rational process; he changed my way of thinking about life." No professor could ask for a finer endorsement of his skill at our calling. And it is an endorsement that has

* Professor, California Western School of Law.

been echoed by his colleagues on the faculty and by those on the staff of California Western who were fortunate enough to have served with him.

A wife of one of the faculty members, after having known Penn for a number of years, said that she thought that what made him stand out from the rest of the faculty was not his admittedly superior teaching skill or his intellect or his knowledge of the law, but that he was a principled, high-minded exemplar of what we all strive to be. In short, she said, more than the rest of us, Penn Lerblance was the quintessential gentleman. It is this gentleman that we at California Western miss sorely.

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*Katharine Rosenberry**

Many of us knew Professor Lerblance as a wonderful friend, a compassionate human being and the consummate professional. It was not until after his death, however, that we discovered the scope of his activities.

As an undergraduate at Oklahoma City University he was speaker of the University Student Senate, president of Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity, state president of the Methodist Student Movement and a member of the Blue Key Honor Society. During this period he was also an instructor in U.S. History and Government. For his activities he received both a Broadhurst and Scottish Rite Fellowship.

In 1966 he received a J.D. from the University of Oklahoma College of Law. He continued with his education and received an LL.M. from Columbia University where he was a Kruelewitz Fellow.

Upon graduation from law school he was Assistant Attorney General for the State of Oklahoma and then became a Referee for the Court of Criminal Appeals for the state. As referee he wrote over fifty published decisions for the court in addition to the *Oklahoma Post-Conviction Procedure Act*.

In 1978 he came to California Western School of Law where he served as both professor and associate dean. While he was a professor he wrote twelve law review articles dealing predominately with criminal law and health related legal issues. In addition, he wrote the San Diego County AIDS/HIV Anti-Discrimination Ordinance.

Professor Lerblance was also active in the San Diego community. He served as chair of the county's Regional Task Force on AIDS, on the Metropolitan Advisory Group on Federal Grants, on the United Way Legislative Advisory Committee, on the Volunteers in Parole and AIDS Law and Policy committees of the San Diego County Bar Association and as a hearing officer for the San Diego city schools. He was also a member of the

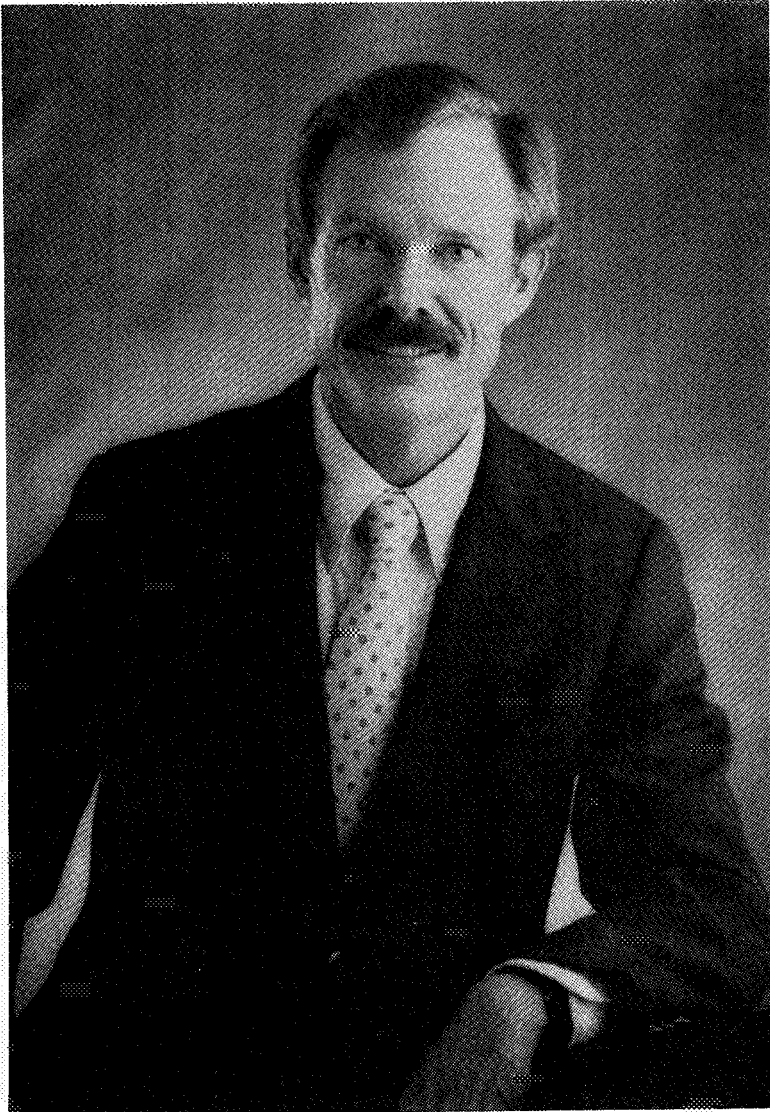
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American Bar Association's sections on Health Law, Individual Rights and Responsibilities, Legal Education, and Criminal Law, the American Judicature Society, the American Society of Law and Medicine, the National Health Lawyers Association, the American Association of Law Schools' Health Law Teachers Section and the Society of American Law Teachers.

Because of his expertise and his ability to captivate an audience, many organizations within the community wanted Professor Lerblance to be a speaker at their programs. He spoke to such diverse organizations as the San Diego Health Information Association, the San Diego County government, the Conference for High School Teachers, San Diego State University, the American Society of Public Administrators, the National Institute of Justice, the San Diego County Medical Society, the Elementary School Principals Conference, the American Cancer Society, the County Bar Association and numerous other organizations.

Penn Lerblance's death was not a only personal loss to many of us in the law school community, but also a loss to the San Diego community. We miss him very much.



W. Penn Lerblance