

Albert J. Solnit[†]

As a long-time friend of Joe and his family—at times an adopted member of the family—I take this opportunity, while mourning, to celebrate Joe’s life, his generosity of love for his family and his friends, and in a special way for his students. We can celebrate his vigorous, insistent, at times, demanding, integrity in searching for intellectual and social values that are associated with his passionate commitment to his family, to all children, to the law, and to the dissemination of insight into and knowledge about the human condition. From cryptography to the study of economics, trade unionism, the law, and psychoanalysis, Joe was an imaginative, continuing explorer of knowledge and values that could protect and nurture what is healthiest, most fragile, most complex, most subtle, and most humane about individuals and their communities.

On a more personal note, I reflect on my “adventures” with Joe and his Family at Yale’s Law School and Child Study Center—and in Lincolnville, Maine, Alaska, London, Walberswick, Baltimore (near Skibberean), County Cork, and Jerusalem—on the Road to the Least Detrimental Alternative!

Joe was wonderfully playful and clinically sensitive. On several occasions in evaluating custody-visitation conflicts, Joe and I interviewed children in play sessions. The children were between 4 and 10 years of age. Joe was an excellent player. On one occasion a 10-year-old boy, Tommy, asked Joe if he was a doctor. Joe explained he was a lawyer and a psychoanalyst. A few days later Tommy called Joe at his office and asked if Joe would be his lawyer and tell his parents to quit fighting. Joe arranged to meet with Tommy and explained that he was consulting about Tommy with his parents. Tommy went on to become a mental health professional who kept in touch with us for the next 20 years. Joe enjoyed, respected and admired children in ways that his children and grandchildren know so well.

In this vein, I recall a working visit by Joe, Ann Goldstein, and myself to Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham and their cottage in Baltimore, Ireland. As we approached the cottage, there was a gate with a handprinted sign—“Cows may not enter. Yale Professors may.”

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In 1972 as a psychoanalyst and legal scholar, Joe summed up some of his legacy when he wrote,

... the past is future. There is in law, as psychoanalysis teaches that there is in man, a rich residue which each generation preserves from the past, modifies for now, and in turn leaves for the future. Law is, after all, a continuous process for meeting society's need for stability by providing authority and precedent and at the same time meeting its need for flexibility and change by providing for each authority a counter-authority and for each precedent a counter-precedent. The living law thus seeks to secure an environment conducive to a society's healthy growth and development.¹

As you can see, I am still struggling to cope with that part of myself that always talked to and learned from Joe. I am grateful to Sonja and the Yale Law School family for these precious moments of review and remembrance, and for my continuing relationship with the most important part of his legacy, his devoted wife and four children and their spouses and eight grandchildren. His family, starting with:

Joshua: A devoted son and father; a creative playwright and brilliant rebel!

Ann: A warmly gifted spouse, mother, and lawyer with a lively sense of humor and a deep sense of the meaning and importance of community values.

Jerry: A long-distance runner, a generous Peace Corps veteran, and a physician, spouse, and father, who is a gifted giver to children and their families.

Danny: A pensive, loving son, spouse, and father who is a reflective, scholarly teacher, and book lover, deeply rooted in the history of American naturalists.

And especially my co-author, Sonja: A fiercely loving spouse, mother, and grandmother, who in addition to knowing how to parody Viennese psychoanalysts in a charming and witty way, is always "Of Counsel" in a most insightful and fair-minded way. She is truly a woman of valor.

Through his life's example and through his teaching and scholarship, Joe lives on through his family, his friends and colleagues, his students, and all those whose lives he has touched and who carry on inspired by his steady, bold exploration of the human experience.

1. Joseph Goldstein, *Finding the Least Detrimental Alternative: The Problem of the Law of Child Placement*, in 27 *PSYCHOANALYTIC STUDY OF THE CHILD* 626 (1972).