



Martin B. Friedman, Professor Emeritus of the Department of English, Passed Away April 1, 2019



Martin B. Friedman, Professor Emeritus of the Department of English, passed away April 1, 2019. He began his career at CSU, Hayward (East Bay) in 1969 and retired in 1997.

The family has provided the following information.

Martin Boris Friedman (1934-2019)

Martin Boris Friedman was born in Brooklyn on June 12, 1934, and died at home in Berkeley April 1, 2019, three months after diagnosis of glioblastoma multiforme, a fast-growing brain tumor. Professor Emeritus of English at California State University, East Bay, formerly CSU Hayward, he received his B.A. from Dartmouth College in 1955, his Diplôme d'études from the Sorbonne in 1956, and his Ph.D. from Yale University in 1962, writing his dissertation on the English essayist William Hazlitt. A specialist in French and English Romanticism, he went on to teach literature and English at Columbia University, Fairleigh-Dickinson University, the Sorbonne, Trinity College, and Tufts University before joining the CSU faculty.

Martin was born to Frances Friedman née Milch, from a New Jersey farming family of Austrian origins, and Samuel R. Friedman, an immigrant from Vilnius whose first language was Yiddish and who built a small business providing textiles to shirtmakers. They raised their children in Woodmere, Long Island. Martin's younger brother Lawrence Friedman became a chemist. Both Martin's father and brother suffered from depression and died of suicide in middle age. Martin, who was devoted to his mother and sought to maintain her morale from an early age, later described feeling a combination of regret that he could not help his father and brother, and gratitude that he was fortunate to live a long and happy life.

From this background emerged an intellectual who could quote Shakespeare, Rousseau, or Samuel Johnson for any occasion, but whose erudition only affirmed his instinct to treat everyone he encountered with respect and the same dignity with which he carried himself. His knowledge derived from his love of reading, which continued well beyond the requirements of his formal education. "Once I started studying, I wanted to know everything there was to know," he remembered. "And the books had no competition." During a year at the Sorbonne in 1956, he resolved not to read any books in English, so when he wanted a break from French classics he began Bildungsromane in German. He did some of his reading in the Louvre museum on Sundays, when the family who rented him a room would go for a drive in the country and turn off their apartment's heat. He valued the canonical white male authors through the centuries, but was also excited by newer work from newer voices. "I read James Baldwin as soon as his books came out, because the reviews were so extraordinary," he later recalled. "Just the paragraphs they excerpted in the reviews set the newspapers on fire."

Martin's first experience of teaching came in 1956, when Yale offered English lessons to Hungarian refugees. "There were Russian tanks in Budapest," he recalled. "So they were highly motivated to learn, to make a new life." There followed adjunct teaching opportunities at the School of General Studies at Columbia and at Fairleigh-Dickinson University in Madison, New Jersey. He was hired at Columbia in the morning for a class that began that afternoon. When he asked the department chair how he might best prepare himself, the chair suggested that he go across the street to a bar and have a couple of drinks, so he did.

While teaching at Columbia, Martin met Adele Charlene Bernstein of the Bronx in a summer Italian class. When Adele came down with polio, Martin brought her books on visits to the hospital. An accomplished pianist, she attended the Juilliard School of Music and graduated with honors from Barnard College before earning her Ph.D. in French at Yale as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow. They married on August 21, 1960. Their shared Francophilia led the couple to spend a number of extended stays in France. In 1962-63, Adele held a Fulbright Fellowship at the Centre des Études de la Renaissance in Tours, while Martin was a visiting lecturer at the Sorbonne in Paris, teaching in a building that during the Revolution had housed the Jacobin society. "I liked to think that Danton had thundered from my platform," he recalled. The couple's first child, Edith Mathilde Friedman, was born in Paris in 1963. Shortly thereafter, the three moved to Somerville, Massachusetts, where Martin began six years of teaching at Tufts University. Two more children joined the family: Elisabeth Jeanne Friedman, today Elisabeth Jay, in 1966, and Max Paul Friedman in 1967.

In 1969, the Friedmans moved to California, where Martin began teaching at CSU Hayward and Adele took a position at CSU Sonoma. They settled in Berkeley, where they befriended many other academics and bibliophiles. Martin chose a life balanced between work and family, equally devoted to sharing the joys of literature and the techniques of good writing with his students and to spending his free time with his family. An affectionate and nurturing parent who braided his daughters' hair in the

morning and read aloud to the family most nights at the dinner table, Martin arranged a teaching schedule that permitted him to be at home several days of the week. The family spent a year in Aix-en-Provence in 1973-74, where Martin directed a program for seventy CSU students, and Adele conducted research into Provençal folklore.

Martin became a single parent after he and Adele divorced in 1979 and she moved away, eventually taking a position at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf in Rochester, New York. Adele died of breast cancer in 1991.

In the first decade of his career, Martin published some scholarly work, especially as a translator. His translation of Paul Ginestier's *The Poet and the Machine* was published by the University of North Carolina Press (1961). His edition of Alfred de Vigny's *Chatterton: drame en trois actes* was published by Didier in the series *Classiques de la civilisation française* (1967). His edition of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, annotated and introduced for French students of English, was published as *Le meilleur des mondes* by Bordas in the series *Classiques étrangers* (1970). His articles and translations also appeared in the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Comparative Drama*, *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, *The Review of English Studies*, and *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Martin's love of books was legendary. His favorite hobby was browsing used bookstores for first editions of American and British literature, or "book-tumbling" for treasures, as he called it. He amassed a collection of several thousand volumes. When a student would gaze across the overflowing shelves lining his office and ask innocently "Have you read *all* of those books?" Martin would invariably reply, with his impish grin, "Some of them twice!" He would bring a book along on any kind of errand and read a page or two while waiting for appointments, or in line at the bank, or for his children to come out of the dressing room at the department store. Late in life he recalled that his aunt Rose had a pact with her granddaughter Morgan that whenever they saw the moon, they would think of each other. "I hope you'll go on thinking of me when reading," he told his children. "That should keep me in your thoughts, the only sort of survival after death I really believe in."

A secular Jew who felt a strong connection with Jewish culture and his family's origins, Martin held both books and human rights to be sacred. He donated to dozens of organizations devoted to social justice and environmental stewardship, and wrote letters for Amnesty International for the liberation of political prisoners. While at Tufts University, he joined a group of "Faculty for the Resistance" who took out newspaper advertisements petitioning against the Vietnam War. Friends noted that Martin's family might not attend synagogue, but they were certainly "people of the book," who shared the kind of reverence that leads religious Jews to kiss the Torah if it should slip to the ground, before brushing it off and returning it to the shelf. On a visit to Berlin's Bebelplatz, Martin's son pointed out the place where Nazi students from Humboldt University in 1933 had burned the works of Jewish and left-wing authors in a bonfire. His father displayed a rare flash of anger. "They were not 'students,'" Martin said forcefully. "They had no right to call themselves 'students.' Students do not burn books."

Retired after 38 years of teaching, he enjoyed life in Berkeley with his second wife, Elena Servi Burgess, the San Francisco Opera's Italian diction coach. Their yearly trips to Italy, regular dinners and outings with a wide circle of friends, and frequent contact with their eight grandchildren made for two decades of delightful retirement. Elena died of AL cardiac amyloidosis in 2014.

On receiving his terminal diagnosis, Martin opted for hospice care at home, in order to enjoy his remaining days doing what was most important to him: visiting with family and friends, enjoying meals cooked by his three children, taking walks in the neighborhood, and continuing to participate in two poetry groups and a book club he had belonged to for decades. He spent his last weeks reading the work of W.H. Auden, Joan Didion, Sylvia Plath, and Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. "When a man is tired of books, he's tired of life," he once remarked, and did not tire of either even as he peacefully accepted that his time was ending. As he told everyone who asked, he was entirely free of pain and of regrets, looking backward with satisfaction and forward without fear.

He is survived by his children's and step-children's families: Edith Friedman, Marcel Hawiger, Julian Friedman, and Auden Friedman; Elisabeth, Kathryn, Annabel, and Arlo Jay; Max Paul Friedman and Katharina Vester; Tony Burgess, Mary Beth Curley, Jackson Burgess, and Marlene Burgess; and Andrew Burgess, Lorella Pini, Lorenzo Burgess, and Camilla Burgess.

Donations in Martin's memory may be made to the "Auerbach Fund" at the Center for Youth Development through Law (2120 University Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704; <https://www.paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/1520480>; or to any charity.

A memorial service will be held at 2pm on August 17, 2019, at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, 1 Lawson Road, Kensington, CA.