Bice Clemow 1910–2000
Bice Clemow, a prominent Connecticut journalist who played a key role in the founding of the University of Hartford, died April 26 at the age of 89.

"The University was his idea and, more than anyone else, he made it happen," wrote Jon O. Newman, U.S. circuit judge and University life regent, in a letter to the Hartford Courant.

"In the mid-1950s, recognizing that every important city must have a major university, he conceived the idea of combining the then-existing Hillyer College, Hartford School of Music and the Hartford Art School into a university.

"He pursued the idea with key community leaders, many of whom he persuaded to shift a substantial part of their charitable giving from their own collegiate alma maters to this new venture," Newman wrote.

"The University of Hartford—Hartford's university—exists today because of Bice Clemow's vision, his faith in education and his dedication to his community."

A lifelong journalist, Clemow was with Editor & Publisher, the Associated Press, and Time magazine early in his career. For 40 years thereafter, he was editor and publisher of the West Hartford News.

A driving force behind Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act, his newspaper columns often took aim at politicians and government bureaucrats who conducted business in secret. The Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information gives an annual award, the Bice Clemow Award, in honor of his effort.

Following his pivotal role in the University's founding, Clemow was for many years an active member of the board of regents. Professor Emeritus Peter K. Breit, also a longtime member of the board, said Clemow "respected faculty and showed it by giving us endless support".

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He leaves two sons, Bryan of West Hartford and Derrick of Sparta, Tenn. He was predeceased by his wife of more than 60 years, Esther Logan Clemow, and a third son, Logan.

In the following excerpt from his unpublished memoirs, Bice Clemow recalls how the "Miracle on Bloomfield Avenue" came to be. ■

IN THE BEGINNING...

by Bice Clemow

If you are baffled by immaculate conceptions, you may have problems with this mini-Genesis of a maxi-University.

In the fall of 1955 the pollen of merger was heavy in the air of Hartford higher education. In five scattered city locations, five clusters of underpaid faculty were huddled against the reality of providing art, music, and business education for the region, without public money. Yet in the generation since, the University of Hartford has awarded 5,000 associates' and 23,000 bachelors' degrees, not to mention 12,000 graduate diplomas. [Editor's note: Keep in mind that this was written in 1991.]

In 1955, the Hartford Art School (est. 1890), Hillyer College (est. 1879), and Hartford College for Women (est. 1934) had hard-core cadres of volunteer devotees who gave time, money, and worry in immeasurable quantities. It was initially from these scores of men and women that the notion of the University drew its inspiration and early perspiration. Later, the geniuses of fund-raising invented all manner of “giving categories” so that in many obituaries, past and future, the principal is identified as “founder” of the University of Hartford.*

Bless them all, but what I recall here are the efforts of an inner knot of unprofessional midwives who gave the University its prenatal care. Early in the pregnancy, I wrote to the University of Virginia asking how they had put together a disparate batch of 13 community institutions. To the recipe they shared with Southern grace, the informant added this friendly caveat: “Always remember there is nothing natural about cooperation.”

Many times that wisdom dissolved my discouragement, for if cooperation is unnatural among the illiterate laity, among professors it is a whole, undiscovered country. Yet since the University was founded, its melded faculties have been paid over $500,000,000 [as of 1991].

Some of the insularity of five original faculties rubbed off on the various boards of directors of the local colleges, but the necessity born of poverty rendered us all surprisingly selfless. As a result, there is honesty among numberless people, still extant, who occasionally whisper, “I started the University of Hartford.” It is about many of them that my memory is reasonably reliable—each of them started some facet of the University. It was their collective immaculate conception. My version is necessarily that of a blindfolded man describing, from a patchwork of recollection, the modern, 4,300-undergraduate mammoth on Bloomfield Avenue.

On Jan. 26, 1956, the chairmen of the five local colleges were invited to lunch in room 50 of the Hartford Club. There, my always-generous friend, Paul Butterworth, chairman of the Hartford College board, picked up the check. His were the first dollars, a gift which has attracted a total of nearly $80,000,000. The self-conscious consensus around the linen was that if the future postsecondary population was to be served properly, some degree of working together was imperative. It would take not only soft agreement but hard cash.

In those seminal days the concept of a university did not attract many “captains of industry.” Al Fuller, the matchless maker of brushes, was an early exception. His creative wife, Primrose, had kindled his commitment to Moshe Paranov and

*Of the 18 members of the first board of regents [Clemow wrote in 1991] seven are still around to be held accountable: Elizabeth Capen, Bice Clemow, Atwood Collins, Grace Ellsworth, Raymond Gibson, Dorothy Schiro, Douglas Wright. [Editor’s note: In 2000, three remain to be held accountable: Atwood Collins, Grace Ellsworth and Douglas Wright.]
the Hartt College of Music. Al confided to me that he had to keep a million dollars segregated at interest to meet the annual Hartt deficit. He would, he volunteered, give the University the million if we could give him assurance that the community would support a university in which Hartt could shine as a sheltered gem. When the Hartford School of Music and the Hartford College for Women cooled on the amalgam, Al Fuller wrote to me in April a cautionary letter saying, “I still feel that any steps taken at the present time would be useless.” It would take millions, he said, and he worried about the complexities of coordination.

But when United Aircraft’s research director, John Lee, chairman of the Hillyer board, persuaded his colleagues to go it alone, if need be, within hours Al Fuller brought Hartt into the partnership. Al never faltered. His excitement and his generosity flowed, to the final tune of nearly $5,000,000. Fred Houghton soon led his Art School board into the joint venture.

Were they here today, those three businessmen could look back at the early uncertainties of community financial support with the satisfaction of soundness. To date, the University, through salaries to staff and payments for purchases, has pumped more than $1,500,000,000 into the economy of the Hartford region.

In 1956, burgeoning Hillyer had the greatest internal pressure to expand and had already bought Stanley Johnson’s Bloomfield Avenue cornfields with a hefty contribution from Beatrice Fox Auerbach, the retail empress. The Art School had a reassuring endowment, and Hartt had Alfred C. Fuller’s annual $50,000 sweetener. The spirit of cooperation was served with the dessert.

There was little, but unspoken, doubt what the infant would be called. Most of us didn’t know a university from a college, but it was just as inexpensive to think big. There was already a rumor circulating that the Hartford Catholic archdiocese was thinking of expanding its seminary on Bloomfield Avenue into the “University of Hartford,” and our competitive instincts were stirred. When we sat down again on Feb. 6 to share our virtues and ignore various institutional limitations, we were so tender about the complexities of merger, we spoke warily about forming a Council of Community Colleges. At one of our meetings, held in retailer Ned Allen’s home, his no-nonsense wife, Mildred, who was then secretary of the state, listened to our doublespeak and finally said, “What you men seem to be talking about is a University of Hartford. Why don’t you just face up to it?” The dissembling ended. We marched to the music of “University.” Somebody joked that if you say it fast, with a broad Boston a, Hartford sounds a good deal like “Haava’d.”

Having been the un-elected secretary of the committee-on-formation, I was to draft our “mission statement,” without which an institution will not be accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. Some 28 years later, finishing up four years on the Commission myself, I assembled a handy batch of useful artifacts for my replacement. Before the gathered and uniformly grim New England college administrators, I presented my successor a mythical wheelbarrow for carrying all the prolix documents submitted by each college at accreditation time, and a pair of knee-high rubber boots in case the freshman commissioner carelessly stepped in a mission statement. But in 1956, I had such reverence for the Association’s powers that when its members questioned the first adjective, “non-dormitory,” I rushed to explain that we were trying first to serve the Hartford area. The stern rejection of that limitation was that we had a myopic view of how a university served its community. They reminded us that by bringing some students from afar, and providing them room and board, we would leave the campus and the Hartford environs with differing cultures. There was also a good chance, the Commission reminded us, that some of these immigrants from other states and nations would settle down here and thus enrich the community. Beds became part of our planning then, now [1991] we have 3,406 (singles, I presume) of them. As the place grew and parents wanted their children in the self-contained environment of dorms, the issue of how many beds became a persistent, often painful, issue. Only two of three of the regents dragged their feet—I among them. Unsuccessfully. We became enrollment-driven, and tuition-fueled.

In 1956–57, for the first few months, the quest for presidential leadership preoccupied the board. We went to the Yale president, Whitney Griswold, for advice. He wisely wondered if a new and unproven university could attract a scholarly leader. His counsel was to lean toward a businessman who could mobilize the community in adequate support of a program and plant at a college just feeling its way. Vincent B. Coffin fit the bill immaculately. He had been chairman of the board of his alma mater, Wesleyan, and had at Connecticut Mutual specialized in sales and management training. Vince felt that he was as high in the company hierarchy as he probably could go. His people skills had been richly recognized, but there was one hitch about the University prospect. His pension at the insurance company was his reservoir of security. So we matched that benefit.

Vince’s task, despite the aroma of self-interested goodwill among the forming trio, called for all his extraordinary tact and strength. When I had gone to see Alan Wilson while he was running
Hillyer College on Hudson Street in January of 1956, Alan listened, with a wonderfully open mind, to the call for merging. Out of his pocket he pulled a number 10 envelope, saying, “If all it takes to create a University of Hartford is my resignation, here it is.” My response was, his resignation was the last thing that would help. Hillyer had demonstrated Alan’s genius for organization and budget balancing. While we were looking for a president at $30- or $35,000, Alan good-naturedly reminded us that he had worked a near-miracle at Hillyer on a shoestring salary. He thought he now deserved at least $25,000, hinting that suggested him for the University chancellorship. My advice was that the best way for him to get $25,000 was to help find a boss who needed $30,000 or more. He was gracious when it worked out that way. Vince Coffin used to say to the regents, “You never told me I had to raise the money to pay my own salary.” The first year, his total budget was just under $2 million. For 1991–92, it will be $100 million.

Vince Coffin’s people skills made the troika work, each leg pretty much in its accustomed ways. For all their intellectuality, universities in this country rarely encourage original thinking about their structure. When the shape of the University was still fluid, I made a radical—and thus unacceptable—proposal: a university without the time-frozen division into departmental bureaucracies. Students, at 18, are apt to be a little at sea about where learning is leading them. Historic disciplines cast in concrete the paths for study, trapping individual students in professional patterns. It would, I argued, serve the young better if we offered the flexibility of truly inter-disciplinary study. Convention, of course, won, preserving the turf of music, art, business, engineering. And so the hull was launched; the fittings would take years and years.

Those among us who were entranced with finance, and understood bankers, set about consolidating assets and combining the budgets of three institutions long accustomed to their own management ways. The drama of new beginning got us by sticky wickets. Compromises that defied the euphoria were deferred, some for years and a few for decades. To those who had been operating in cramped quarters on crowded streets, the open 300 acres was an exhilarating challenge. Imagine! A whole new campus, from scratch! A chance to build our dream houses. Art School board member Charles “Chas” Salisbury, who, with his partner Max Moore, was to design the first cluster of new buildings, flew to Mexico City, a flamboyant statement of modern art. He came back to tell us that if he had all the money in the world, the Mexican flair could not be replicated. The feelings he had imbibed survived only in the copings of the music school and the Mayan majesty of the sculpture.

Not all the decisions were so momentous. Two, I recall, were more fun to make. Patently, you can’t have a great university without a motto. We met to compose one, a dubious group decision. The style of academe being arcane, Rabbi Abraham Feldman, with this religious fervor for rites, robes, and rituals, spoke for having a motto in stately Latin. Another school of thought, like Dorothy Schiro’s argument that since we were creating a populist place, our motto should be in our mother tongue, English. Abe Feldman avowed as to how Yale had done pretty well with Lux et Veritas. Harvard, someone countered, needed only Veritas.

Tradition, as it always does in education, prevailed, and we ended up with Ad Humanitatem, though nobody was quite sure if we meant “of,” “by,” or “for” the people.

That resolved, an emblem became essential. The semantic struggle still fresh, we opted for an end run around the hazards of artistic taste. We turned to Allen Tompkins, dean of the Art School, to sketch the unisex stick figures which are emblazoned on the prickly shield of the University.

But one thing more. The by-the-book rabbi’s penchant for panoply surfaced soon again. Any self-respecting university, he maintained, should be managed by a board with impeccable credentials. So he got all the fledgling regents to vote ourselves collegiate doctorates, en masse.

These bogus degrees came complete with parchment reinforcement. Beneath the Old English lettering, “Doctor of the University of Hartford,” was in small print the legend, “In Privatum.” So I asked the punctilious rabbi what that meant. “You are a doctor,” he assured me, “as long as you don’t tell anybody.”

But no doubt about it—the room full of doctors (In Privatum) had a solid ship under them. The course would be for other crews to set.

Alexander Zerban

Engineering Dean Emeritus Alexander H. Zerban, Capt. USNR retired, died March 9 in Kentwood, Mich., at the age of 95. The University’s first engineering dean in 1958, he remained in the job until 1970. With his legendary memory for names and faces, he continued to correspond with UofH engineers long after their graduation.

For three years prior to his UofH post, Zerban was chief senior project engineer with the Hamilton Standard Division of United Aircraft Corporation, where he led the design and installation of today’s jet-aircraft air-conditioning systems. He had previously been a professor of mechanical engineering at Pennsylvania State University.

Zerban was the author of college textbooks that include Engineering Thermodynamics with Jesse Doolittle and Steam Power Plants with Edwin Nye. He held a B.S. from Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute, an M.S. from Pennsylvania State University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

Serving as chief engineer on the carrier USS Cowpens during World War II, Zerban was chief of naval material for the
Midwestern United States during the Korean War.

A resident of Sentinel Pointe Retirement Community in Grand Rapids, Mich., Zerban was active on the Sentinel Pointe Church Council and the Grand Rapids Knights of the Round Table.

Predeceased by his wife of 62 years, the former Elizabeth G. “Billie” Lane, he is survived by his daughter, Dorothy Hewitt, of Willoughby, Ohio; his son, Alexander W. (“Andy”); and his daughter, the Reverend Nancy Zerban of Kentwood, Mich. He also leaves three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

In keeping with his wishes, memorial gifts may be sent to the College of Engineering, University of Hartford. ■

Edward M. Bershtein

Edward M. Bershtein, former associate professor of political science and the first chairman of the College of Arts and Sciences’ department of political science (now politics and government), died on April 17.

Bershtein joined the UofH faculty in 1963 to head the newly created department, relishing the chairmanship in 1968 to devote himself full time to teaching and scholarly work.

In 1967, he took a well-publicized survey trip to Chile, with abbreviated visits to Argentina, Brazil, and Venezuela, to study land reform. He taught courses in political and legal philosophy and constitutional law and was a strongly committed civil libertarian. An attorney, he would come to the aid of students in freedom-of-speech battles, even if he did not agree with what they were saying.

“He was a man of passionate civil courage,” said Peter K. Breit, professor emeritus.

Harald Sandstrom, associate professor of politics and government, recalled Professor Bershtein as one of his most thought-provoking colleagues. “He was a tough guy who held students to high standards, but he rewarded excellent work,” Sandstrom said.

“He was the closest approximation I have known to a Renaissance man,” Sandstrom added, noting that in addition to a lawyer and PhD in political science, Berstein was an accomplished flamenco guitarist and played a decent game of chess.

He was a member of President Kennedy’s Commission on the Status of Women’s Rights and served as an attorney in the legislative section of the Solicitor’s Office at the U.S. Department of Labor. He was editor of the political science and law section of the American People’s Encyclopedia from 1955 to 1956.

Bershtein held four degrees from the University of Chicago: AB in economics, AM in social sciences, PhD in political science, and a Doctor of Law.

He is survived by his son, David, and daughter-in-law, Lori; his daughter, Lisa; brother, Robert H. Bennett; and granddaughter, Alice Bershtein. Gifts in his memory may be sent to the University of Chicago, 5801 South Ellis Avenue, Administrative Seven, Chicago, IL 60637. ■

David Ivry

Professor Emeritus David A. Ivry of Storrs, Conn., former professor of insurance and first director of the Center for Insurance Studies at the Barney School of Business, died on April 30.

The center (now the R.C. Knox Center for Insurance Studies) was established in 1975 to oversee a major expansion in course offerings, workshops, and seminars in the field of insurance management. Ivry, who was acting director of academic planning at the University of Connecticut at the time, was brought in to direct it. In 1982 he founded the Summer Insurance Internship Program to help give minority college students access to mid-management jobs in the insurance industry.

Ivry served on the board of directors of the Covenant Mutual Insurance Company, the Covenant Insurance Company, and the Covenant Life Insurance Company. He developed the advanced agency management seminar program at the University of Miami and served as director of education for the National Association of Mutual Insurance Agents. He was one of five national educational consultants to the American College of Life Underwriters and a director of the American Risk and Insurance Association.

Joining the University of Connecticut faculty in 1947, Ivry served as a director of the Connecticut Precollegiate Enrollment Program and Councillor to the Provost, in addition to being a professor of insurance. He held a B.S. in economics from John Hopkins University and an M.B.A. from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara; his son, Robert Ivry, and daughter-in-law, Patricia, of Katonah, N.Y.; his daughter, Judith Ivry, and son-in-law, Phillip Block, of New York City; his son, William Ivry, and daughter-in-law, Joan Gallin, of Santa Fe, N.Mex; his son, Richard Ivry, and daughter-in-law, Ann Lacey, of El Cerrito, Calif.; seven grandchildren; and his sister, Lillian Libertooff, of New York City. Gifts may be sent to the David Ivry Memorial Fund, c/o Sam Schrager, Box 534, Storrs, CT 06268. ■

Michael M. Klaber

Professor Emeritus Michael M. Klaber of Simsbury, Conn., died May 29 at his home. Klaber joined the University of Hartford faculty in 1968 and became a full professor of psychology in 1970. He was head of the school psychology program from 1968 to 1993 and taught graduate courses in the psychological examiner program and in group dynamics. He was a Visiting Fellow in the Institution for Social and Policy Studies at Yale University from 1976 to 1977 and in 1982.

Klaber’s research focused on the areas of aging, physical and psychosomatic disorders, and mental retardation. He became director of the UofH-based Mental Retardation Project in 1965, also becoming an adjunct associate professor at that time. The project, supported by federal funds and the state Office of Mental Retardation, examined child-care practices and methods in residential institutions for the retarded. Klaber’s work with this project earned him a citation by the President’s Committee on Mental Retardation.

In 1968, Klaber directed a national conference on mental retardation at the

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