



City of Cambridge

47.

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 24, 1999

COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN
 MAYOR DUEHAY
 COUNCILLOR BORN
 COUNCILLOR DAVIS
 VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO
 COUNCILLOR REEVES
 COUNCILLOR RUSSELL
 COUNCILLOR TOOMEY
 COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: This City Council was deeply saddened at learning of the death of William Alfred on May 19, 1999 at the age of seventy-six; and

WHEREAS: William was a playwright, poet and scholar, a generous, genial gentleman with deep feeling for the humor and complexity of human interactions; and

WHEREAS: William grew up in Brooklyn, the son of a brick layer and a telephone operator; and after graduating from Brooklyn College in 1948, he received his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard University, where he later held the Abbot Lawrence Lowell humanities professorship; and

WHEREAS: William served in the U.S. Army tank corps in World War II; and

WHEREAS: William was the author of "Hogan's Goat" and other plays including "The Curse of An Aching Heart" written with his good friend actress Faye Dunaway who performed the play on the Broadway stage; and

WHEREAS: William's published works included "The Annunciation Rosary," "Agamemnon," "Cry for Us All," "Nothing Doing," and many poems and scholarly articles; and

WHEREAS: William's passing will leave a void in the lives of all his surviving family, his half-brother Vincent Allfrey, his niece Allison Allfrey and his nephew Richard Allfrey; and

WHEREAS: William will be sorely missed by all he touched and loved; now therefore be it

RESOLVED: That this City Council go on record extending its deepest sympathy to the family of William Alfred at this time of such personal loss; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the City Clerk be and hereby is requested to forward a suitably engrossed copy of this resolution to the Alfred family on behalf of the entire City Council.

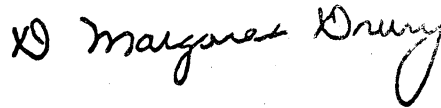
In City Council May 24, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of eight members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "D. Margaret Drury". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the printed name.

D. Margaret Drury
City Clerk

5/21 8:30

MJS

Mayor Drury

+ entire mkt

47

WHEREAS: This City Council was deeply saddened at learning of the death of

William Alfred on May 19, 1999 at the
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WU 8

William Alfred, 1922-99



GLOBE FILE PHOTO / MARK WILSON

Alfred with Faye Dunaway, friend and collaborator, at his Cambridge home in 1996.

Playwright, teacher, inspiration

By Joseph P. Kahn and Michael Blown
GLOBE STAFF

William Alfred, a playwright, poet, and scholar whose literate observations about Irish-American life graced the Broadway stage, and whose pedagogic devotion graced the lives of thousands of Harvard College students, died at his home in Cambridge Wednesday. He was 76.

The author of "Hogan's Goat" and other plays, Mr. Alfred joined the Harvard faculty in 1954 as a medievalist. He quickly became one of the college's most popular and versatile teachers, branching out from "Beowulf" to teach drama, poetry, and screenwriting.

ALFRED, Page D10

William Alfred: writer, beloved mentor

■ ALFRED

Continued from Page D1

A 1969 book about Harvard named Mr. Alfred as the college's most sought-after professor, in part for once having given a midterm exam on "Bonnie and Clyde." Even in retirement (he left Harvard in 1991) and in failing health, Mr. Alfred continued to tutor one Harvard student a year — and to open his doors to countless other intellectual proteges who came to regard his Athens Street house as a kind of one-stop continuing education center.

Mr. Alfred once said that his great love was the Roman Catholic Church; he attended Mass nearly every day. But his other great love was actress Faye Dunaway, who starred in the 1965 off-Broadway production of "Hogan's Goat," Mr. Alfred's play about Irish-American politicians, when she was still a Boston University student. And Dunaway adored Mr. Alfred.

"I just latched on to him and wouldn't let go," she said in a 1996 Boston Globe interview. "This man changes your life with how he looks at human behavior and play writing. He's taught me how to work. How to investigate material. How to live."

Said Mr. Alfred of their first meeting, "It was as if the goddess Aphrodite had appeared in the rehearsal hall." Not only did the then-unknown actress get the part, but she became one of Mr. Alfred's most cherished friends. In 1982, having established herself as a Hollywood star, Dunaway returned to the Broadway stage in "The Curse of an Aching Heart," a play written by Mr. Alfred in collaboration with Dunaway.

American Repertory Theatre director Robert Brustein reviewed "Hogan's Goat" for The New Republic and recalled yesterday "the geniality of the writing and the person behind it. It was unusually literate yet not an academic play, a tough-minded one with a deep feeling for human encounters," he said.

When Brustein came to Harvard in 1979, "Bill extended the hand of friendship, and it was appreciated because theater didn't mean much to Harvard then," Brustein added. "He probably befriended more Harvard undergraduates than any teacher in the school's history." Last year, the ART bestowed on Mr. Alfred its equivalent of a lifetime-achievement award.

Mr. Alfred grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y., where his father laid bricks and his mother worked as a telephone operator.

Graduating from Brooklyn College in 1948, he got his master's and doctoral degrees from Harvard, where he later held the Abbott Lawrence Lowell humanities professorship. He also served in the US Army tank corps in World War II. At Harvard, he cultivated close friendships with Robert Lowell, Archibald MacLeish, and Seamus Heaney, among others, and had a profound influence on the likes of Tommy Lee Jones, Stockard Channing, and John Lithgow.

Mr. Alfred's published works included "The Annunciation Rosary," "Agamemnon," "Cry for Us All," "Nothing Doing," and many poems and scholarly articles. When he died he was working on his memoirs, a project friends indicate they will try to bring to completion. Among his awards were the New York Drama Desk Award.

In 1989, Mr. Alfred helped organize a benefit for the Poet's Theater of Cambridge. At the time, he said his goal was to "drive home the importance of words," a goal he championed far from the limelight of Hollywood celebrity. Harvard College senior Sam Speedie was Mr. Alfred's designated tutee this year. In 1970, Mr. Alfred taught Speedie's father.

"He was the last true gentleman of Western society," Speedie said yesterday. "He focused on a writer's strengths, which was unusual for a writer of his accomplishments."

Accomplishments aside, Mr. Alfred was equally revered for his gentle mien and generosity of spirit. He often strolled around Putnam Square in Cambridge like a vision from another era. His pale complexion, set off by a gray or blue suit, and the omnipresent hat — fedora in winter, boater in summer — gave Mr. Alfred the appearance of a character out of one of the turn-of-the-century novels he so adored. His daily walks were punctuated by a tip of the hat and a smile for anyone inquiring about his own health or about the latest ART production.

While Mr. Alfred's dress was formal, his personality was not. He was, among other things, a true friend to the homeless. Each day, the dispossessed would show up at Mr. Alfred's house, where he would ask how their evening had gone and whether they'd like some tea. Then he'd reach into a jar he kept by the door and hand over a dollar or two.

Mr. Alfred is survived by a half brother, Vincent Allfrey; a niece, Allison Allfrey; and a nephew, Richard Allfrey. Funeral arrangements are incomplete but are expected to include a Mass at St. Paul's Church in Cambridge next week.

An on-line Louvre of the art of Web

By Patti Hartigan
GLOBE STAFF

Where do you go when you're suffering brain cramps? You could stare at a wall, but you feel like you need something a little bit more, well, artistic. The Museum of Web Art is the perfect antidote, an on-line gallery that is the visual equivalent of ambient music. Its displays are easy on the eye yet entertaining. There's even an exhibition of wallpaper. Not the stuff you hang in parlors, but the stuff that decorates your monitor.

The brainchild of a California graphic artist named Amy Stone, the museum (<http://www.mowa.org>) is a showcase for Web design elements, used mainly in commercial art. The wallpaper gallery features stripes and slithery snakes. Another gallery features different designs for click-on buttons; another features page counters.

Strange stuff for a museum, that. But Stone, and her partner Mark Kaproff, set out to create a site that is both utilitarian and artistic. "I got on line about two years ago, and as a designer, I was looking to find good examples of Web elements," Stone

says. "I had to surf constantly."

She started to collect examples and launched the museum in January. Originally, the "collection" featured graphic design works, but now some of the exhibitions straddle the line between fine and commercial art. In "Millennium Diary," for instance, one artist designs a new page for each day of the year leading up to 2000; poetry and multimedia images mark the passage of time.

The site is designed to emulate a physical museum, with arrows pointing to a visitors' center, various galleries, and the main entrance. It's quirky, yet fascinating. Web art is an emerging form, and nobody has really defined it beyond saying that it can exist only in cyberspace. But like Stone, other designers are looking for resources; the site showcases work by more than 50 artists and receives about a million hits a month.

"We think we have a friendly collection of things that can be useful, whether that be the design or the technology that drives it," Stone says. "Whenever there's a new technology, you're going to have more things that are mediocre than excellent. That's why you have to have institutions that call attention to what is excellent."

An eye for an eye? Is it a publicity stunt or a political statement? Last week, documentary filmmaker Michael Moore ("Roger and Me") set up a Web cam outside literary agent Lucianne Goldberg's New York apartment. Goldberg set off the scandal we're all trying to forget by urging Linda Tripp to tape a certain former White House intern. "Lucianne, it seems, does not respect the privacy rights of others," Moore writes on the site, www.iseelucy.com. "She believes in keeping an eye on persons who are a threat to the country. So do we."

There are no state secrets revealed: All you learn is that Goldberg keeps the place cool in the summer and that she's staging a low-tech retaliation by lawking the National Enquirer in her windows. "It's an unfunny stunt," says Goldberg, who claims she is selling ad space in her windows for \$2,000 a week.

Moore has said that he set up the camera to make a statement about the invasion of privacy — and to promote his television show "The Awful Truth," which debuted last month on Bravo. Moore's leftist "guerrilla video" style was effective when he was taking on General Motors, but here the line blurs between plain old pub-

The skinny on Peretz, and 'The Skinny'

■ TGIF

Continued from Page D1

Williamstown-based home-page portal Tripod to Lycos — and could profit handsomely when two other Web

seems quite unprepossessing at first glance. Nonetheless, as a "dot.com," it is expected to go public in the near future at an unreasonably high valuation. Aside from Tripod, Peretz and Clark Estates have also invested in

byline to a comic diet book, "The Skinny," that she coauthored with her friend, humorist Patricia Marx. Orlean, best known for stylish non-fiction prose jobs like the recently released, "The Orchid Thief," used

MAS

D-1

Bill Albert

31 Athens St

1999 MAY 21 A 8:37

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

INSERT

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Consent Order #47

Councillor Sullivan, Mayor Duehay and
entire membership re: resolution on the
death of William Alfred.

In City Council May 24, 1999

ORDER ADOPTED