

## Allan Richard Pred, 1936–2007: Reflections on a Life

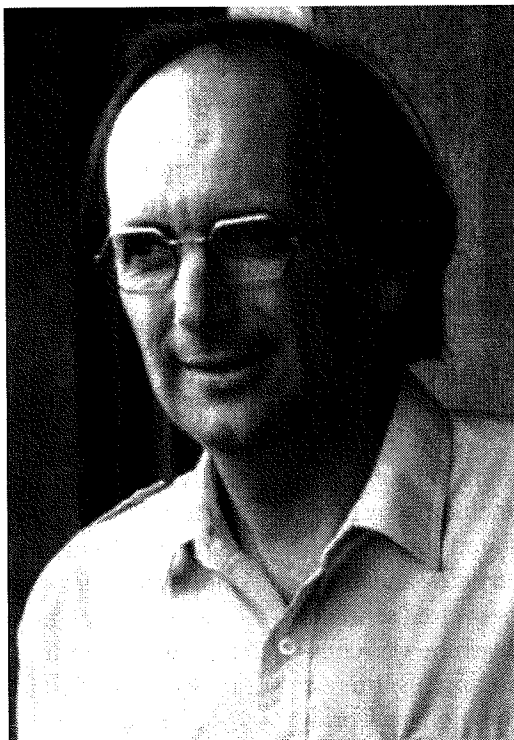
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Allan Richard Pred, one of the world's leading geographers and social scientists, died of acute lung cancer on 5 January 2007, at Alta Bates Hospital in Berkeley, California. He had retired in May 2006 following forty-four years of service to the University of California, Berkeley. After he was diagnosed with lung cancer last summer at his summer home in Sweden, his condition deteriorated rapidly on his return to Berkeley for medical treatment. He was seventy years old.

To his colleagues and students, Allan Pred was a formidable intellectual, a brilliant thinker, a great humanist, a loyal and trusted friend, and a generous and engaged mentor. He was the central figure in the making of a distinctive Berkeley approach to geography over the last generation and he left an indelible stamp on the Geography Department, marked by his devotion to wide-open inquiry, critical thought, and a passion for truth and human freedom. "He made a big difference to the social life in the social sciences/humanities" said a colleague in the Anthropology Department, "his humanist qualities created a sense of meaningful intellectual exchange and moral optimism that may be fading on campus." His immense charm and deep humanity will be sorely missed.

The arc of Allan Pred's academic life is nothing short of remarkable. Born and raised in the Bronx, he entered Antioch College at sixteen. During the 1950s, Antioch was a nebula that fashioned a number of intellectual, political, and cultural stars, and Allan Pred was most



definitely part of that galaxy. At the outset, his close friend and classmate Robert Krinsky recalls that for the better part of two years Allan was a B student—largely preoccupied with his record on the basketball court—and he struggled with his inclination toward procrastination (as hard as it might now be to fully understand this anxiety). At Antioch he was required to write an introspective College Aims papers during his freshman year, and senior papers at the end of his senior year. In his freshman paper Allan began by quoting a philosophy professor who had just retired from Antioch, M. N. Chatterjee: "If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there." Allan said that he wanted a varied curriculum and

various jobs under Antioch's work-study plan to find where he was going. He had already taken a few chemistry courses and decided that the hard sciences were not for him, although in his application to college he thought they might be.

It is not clear what precipitated his intellectual and academic growth after two faltering years, but bloom he did. He never received less than an A in any course from his third year at Antioch through his MA at Penn State, or through his PhD at Chicago. In his final paper at Antioch he mentions his work-study job as a copyboy at the *Toledo Blade*; the responsibility that gave him for managing his money so that he could contribute to his tuition; his taking advantage of whatever cultural activities there were in Toledo, and his realization that he had a desire for much more; his job at the *Current*

*Digest* of the Soviet Press at Columbia and his becoming aware of the politics around that.

Allan graduated from Antioch in 1957 and then decamped to Pennsylvania State University to study geography. When asked in an interview why he chose geography, he replied that it offered an unmatched flexibility and cross-disciplinary landscape on which to operate. University Park was a way station en route to his ultimate destination, the University of Chicago. For a student interested in cities and urban geography in the mid-twentieth century, the University of Chicago was the Holy Grail: Home to a long line of urban theorists, by 1960 Chicago was the crucible within which a new quantitative and analytical geography was being forged. Completing his PhD in 1962, in a little over four years, Pred arrived at Berkeley at the tender age of 25. His ascent through the ranks of the professoriate was astonishing. Within five years he had obtained tenure. By 1971, aged thirty-four, he had been appointed full professor.

For the better part of four decades, Allan Pred has been at the forefront of human geography. His scholarship has radically shaped contemporary understanding of city development, landscape, modernity, and race. His productivity is legendary, including twenty-two books and monographs—translated into seven languages—and more than seventy articles and book chapters. He was always among the most cited scholars in the profession. At the time of his death he was completing a new book manuscript, continuing his interest in race, identity, and the making of the modern world. At his May 2006 retirement party, one colleague calculated that Allan Pred had penned on average about 350 words each day of his working life.

Allan Pred was born in the Bronx in 1936. His father was a high school French language teacher, his mother a housewife and musician. His grandparents had been Jewish immigrants from Poland. A child of the late Depression, he rarely looked back to New York after his departure for Antioch College in 1953. His new horizons were out in the Midwest and later across the Atlantic to Europe and what became a life-long love affair with Sweden. He first visited the country while a graduate student at Chicago, drawn, in part, by the theoretical and scientific innovations of Swedish geographers such as Torsten Hägerstrand. When he met his wife of forty-four years, Hjördis, in San Francisco in 1962—Allan overhead Hjördis, who was then an airline flight attendant, and her brother talking in Swedish in a Basque restaurant in North Beach and simply introduced himself on the grounds he need to practice his

language skills—the die was cast. They lived between Berkeley and Sweden on a yearly basis, raising bilingual children. In the 1980s, they bought a summer home in Sörmland, Sweden, which was Allan's sanctuary and passion; he treasured the physical work of building and working the land as much as he cherished burrowing into the books and archives.

Perhaps inevitably for a child raised in New York and educated in Chicago, Pred started his career as a theorist of the American city. His international reputation was made in three brilliant books on nineteenth-century U.S. urbanism, each marked by a magnificent control of historical sources and a profound sensitivity to the dynamics of historical transformation. Each proved to be enormously influential across disciplines and theoretically groundbreaking. In *The Spatial Dynamics of U.S. Urban-Industrial Growth 1800–1914* (1966), he challenged the new economic historians to take seriously the role of urban agglomeration in industrial growth. In *Urban Growth and the Circulation of Information, 1970–1840* (1973), Pred linked national growth, mercantile expansion, and industrial innovation to the advance of communications networks across American cities. Finally, in *Urban Growth Theory and City Systems in the United States, 1840–1860* (1980), he charted the way capitalist dynamics ramify across entire city systems, more than between cities and rural hinterlands. This classic trio of monographs remains indispensable for any understanding of the urban and economic history of the United States.

Beginning in the 1980s, Pred's formidable intellect turned from the American to the Swedish city, and in the process his gaze turned from urban political economy to modernity as a way of life and mode of experience. Pred's perseverance and his eye for historical sources yielded unexpected fruits in his new Swedish project. He discovered an archival goldmine, a treasure trove of neglected church and state papers on nineteenth- and twentieth-century life. What followed was an exhilarating series of projects designed to unearth the making of place, everyday life, and popular identities in the transit to what he called "Swedish modern." He began with rural enclosures and peasant life in the nineteenth century, in *Place, Practice and Structure: Social and Spatial Transformation in Southern Sweden, 1775–1850* (1985) and moved quickly to the world of Stockholm's working classes at the *fin de siècle* in *Lost Words and Lost Worlds: Modernity and the Everyday Language in Late-Nineteenth Century Stockholm* (1990). Pred's vision grew even bolder, taking on that apotheosis of modernity, the World's Fair, as it took shape in

Stockholm in three different forms over three generations, in *Recognizing European Modernities: A Montage of the Present* (1995). Inevitably he turned to contemporary Swedish life and to what he took to be the deafening silence surrounding the question of race and racism. In two powerful and controversial books—his stunning excoriation of cultural racism, memorably entitled *Even in Sweden: Racisms, Racialized Spaces, and the Popular Geographical Imagination* (2000) and *The Past Is Not Dead: Facts, Fictions and Enduring Racial Stereotypes* (2004)—Pred courageously exposed a deep vein of pain and shame. His final book, *Violent Geographies* edited with Derek Gregory (Gregory and Pred 2007)—was a customarily feisty foray into the nightmare of the current moment of American empire. At his death, Allan was working on a book on Josephine Baker and her relationship to modernity, race, and Swedish history.

In migrating across the Atlantic and addressing modern Swedish identity, Pred's scholarship shifted radically in both conception and style. Deeply influenced by the work of Walter Benjamin and his theory of montage, Pred experimented with a distinctive prose style—at once poetic and stark—and a remarkable integration of image and text, of ethnography and commentary. For some this body of work resembled a postmodern turn, but Pred never neglected the hard-edged world of material life and capitalist economy even as he delved deeper into cultural and visual studies. What is incontestable is that this work was truly original and distinctive. Not surprisingly some took umbrage at his language—most memorably in a snide review in the *New York Times Book Review* (by Patricia Limerick)—but nobody doubted the erudition of his scholarship, the breadth of his analysis, or the willingness to take a chance on escaping the confines of conventional thought and banal didactics.

As his stature within the social sciences grew, the honors followed. He was awarded the Anders Retzius medal by the Swedish Society for Geography and Anthropology (sometimes called Geography's Nobel Prize) in 1991. He was honored by the Polish Academy of Sciences several years later, and twice by the Association of American Geographers, in 1978 and 2005. He was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy in 2005. For his contributions to Swedish social science, he was awarded the Willy Brandt Professorship in 2001 and an honorary doctorate from Uppsala in 1992. He held visiting appointments at the Écoles des Hautes Etudes and the University of Lund and, earlier in his career, served as a consultant to the Swedish and Australian governments. In recognition of his ex-

traordinary achievements and contributions to campus life at Berkeley, he was made Professor of the Graduate School in 2005.

A tireless campaigner for geography as a field of study, Allan Pred always promoted the importance of space and place in everyday life. Space was, in his view, a sort of foundation stone for all of the human sciences. Seeing, measuring, perceiving, and creating space was, Pred wrote, central to the birth of modernity. An internationalist and advocate throughout his career, it was entirely appropriate that the Association of American Geographers awarded special honors to him in 2005 for his "stalwart leadership within the discipline" and "his outstanding intellectual and personal ambassadorship . . . throughout the international academy." As he once said, not bad for a kid from the Bronx.

Allan came to Berkeley during the heyday of Sauerian geography. He and Jay Vance felt very much like an intellectual minority within the department, in their quite different ways promoting a new sort of urban and scientific geography that stood at an angle to the Berkeley School. He was never particularly close to Sauer and was never entirely convinced of the merits of the intellectual project or for that matter the sort of geography that it produced. He was a great admirer of Clarence Glacken, however. Allan was of course a key figure in the refiguring of Berkeley geography as many of the Sauer generation began to retire and new hires were made. His period as Chair was in this regard a key moment in the recent history of the department.

Pred was in every sense a fixture on the Berkeley campus. Arriving in the early days of the free speech movement, he was thrown headlong into the foment that consumed the decade. He never shied away from support for the students, for free thought, or for the rights of man—and woman. A great supporter of women students and colleagues, and a committed advocate of racial equality and affirmative action, he was, above all, a man of the people who never forgot his humble roots. An optimist in matters of human possibility, he nonetheless had few illusions about the workings of power and its corruptions. His favorite cartoon, pinned on the wall of his office through his years as department chair, pictured a baseball box score with the Realists scoring a run in every inning and the Utopians shutout until the end. The final score: Utopians 1, Realists 0.

Pred contributed to the Berkeley campus on many institutional fronts—the library, Graduate Council, Scandinavian Studies, tenure and promotion committees, affirmative action, and minority representation among them. He never shirked the thankless committee duties,

and his knowledge of university affairs was voluminous. Most important, he served as the chair of the Department of Geography between 1979 and 1988 during a critical period of transformation and growth. All departmental chairs develop their own personal styles. His was chairing by stealth: a remarkable combination of administrative genius, healthy distrust of those in power, a ferocious determination, and a memory like an elephant (many have thought that he would have been a world-class labor negotiator). His wise counsel and sage advice was sought by many around campus. As a colleague his hallmarks were loyalty and honesty, a profound political acumen, and a great generosity of spirit. He was a consummate academic citizen.

A dedicated teacher and mentor, Allan Pred's influence reached across the campus, especially into anthropology, literature, and sociology. His graduate seminars—always large, unruly, and overpopulated—drew ethnographers, historians, planners, and students of rhetoric and literature. He reveled in the work of graduate advising, and his door was seemingly always open. He became a sort of cult figure for some, the last thing he, of course, wanted to be. A speaker at his retirement colloquium put it well: Through his own work—his intellectual restlessness, his fearlessness in tackling the unstated and silenced, his ability to experiment and find a voice and a style of one's own—Allan had blazed a path for all of us.

When he was diagnosed with serious lung cancer, Allan was typically fair minded and philosophical. He had, he said, lived a blessed life, full to the hilt, doing what he liked best: teaching, learning, living in Berkeley and Sweden. He had no regrets, and came by that as honestly as any man could. It was a life that was fiery and feisty—and always political. His graduation address in 2006 was Allan Pred at full bore: raging against a war machine—a secret geography of terror and intimidation—that drew strength from weak citizenship; he eyed the new graduates and asked, “What do YOU know? The clock is ticking. The train is rolling on.”

In May 2006 a retirement seminar—known locally as the Predfest—was held on campus (those interested can see the presentations by Derek Gregory, Katharyne Mitchell, Neil Smith, Gunnar Olsson, Dick Peet, Cindi Katz, and others on the Web site at <http://geography.berkeley.edu/>). It was an extraordinary occasion marked by Allan's characteristic combination of good humor and intellectual rigor. He was deliriously happy; as one person put it, he was like an excited eleven-year-old boy cavorting around in a seventy-

year-old body. Nobody who shared in those festivities could possibly have imagined a memorial service on the Berkeley campus six months later. Allan was, of course, a regular at the annual meetings and even in December he fully anticipated that he would be up and running and fully immersed in the San Francisco meetings.

On 28 January, in the magnificent Great Hall of the Men's Faculty Club, a number of speakers reminisced about Allan's life and work. What was so striking was the multifaceted nature of Allan—his children recalled his magnificent storytelling abilities, his colleagues remarked on his loyalty and honesty, his students on his deep humanity, and others on his political commitments.

Allan Pred is survived by his wife Hjördis, a woodworker, of Berkeley; a daughter Michele, an artist living in Berkeley; and a son Joseph, an emergency operations officer and consultant. He also leaves a brother Ralph, a philosopher living in British Columbia, and a sister Suzanne Pred Bass, a psychotherapist and theater producer living in New York City, as well as two nieces, Emily and Rebecca Bass, and a nephew, Noah Pred.

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