Shimon Agranat at Eighty

Many people can look back over their lives and see years of useful service to the community, but only a few can know that they played a direct role in shaping the future of their country. Shimon Agranat (J.D. 1929), the former president of the Supreme Court of Israel, who celebrated his eightieth birthday last September, had the chance to play such a part.

The son of a Russian immigrant to the United States, Agranat grew up in the Midwest and received his law degree from the Law School in 1929. At that time his whole family moved to Palestine, and young Shimon went into practice as apprentice to an attorney with one of the largest and most varied practices in Palestine. He was excited by the variety of law that confronted him. Most of the system of justice was based on Turkish law, but there was an admixture of British and French law and the system was riddled with gaps where there were no laws at all to handle a rapidly changing society.

Agranat soon established himself as a "lawyer's lawyer." He was appointed a magistrate in Haifa in 1940. In 1948, with the establishment of the state of Israel, he was appointed president of the Haifa District court. At the end of that year Agranat was invited to join the newly formed Supreme Court. At first, the courts relied on English common law to fill in the gaps, but over time independent principles were developed and a great number of new legislative codes were adopted by the Knesset that the courts had to interpret. During his twenty-eight years on the Supreme Court, eleven of them as president, Agranat had a unique opportunity to share in the creation of Israeli law and shape it in its formative years. His opinions laid the foundations for the rule of law, introduced civil rights and liberties into a system that had none, and developed an enlightened body of criminal law. He also established his own style of judicial decision making: scholarly, historically conscious, humane, and sensitive to social realities.

Agranat headed the commission of inquiry into the Yom Kippur War, to establish how Israel had been caught by surprise on two fronts. Overnight the war had shaken the country to its foundations. The highly respected commission's final report helped the nation regain its self-respect.

Today, Shimon Agranat still writes occasional articles. He is a visiting professor at Bar-Ilan University and teaches there once a week.

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Kirk Liddell and his wife Pam Trow ('77) are expecting their fourth child this spring.

Ed Roche also traveled a long distance to the reunion. Yours truly's third book, How to Watch Baseball (Facts on File) is published this March.

Please send me reports of your comings and goings.

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Steven Wallach has left his position as Deputy Attorney General in charge of civil litigation for the state of New Jersey to become a partner at Szaferman, Lakind, Blumstein, Walter & Blader in Lawrenceville, New Jersey.

Thomas Fitzpatrick, a partner in the Seattle law firm of Karr, Tuttle, Koch, Campbell, Mawer, Morrow & Sax, has been reappointed co-chairman of the National Conference of Lawyers and Representatives of the Media. Mr. Fitzpatrick represents the American Bar Association in this capacity.