



Alan Zachary Skolnikoff, MD

(September 25, 1932 -- July 17, 2016)

Dr. Alan Z. Skolnikoff, exceptional human being and noted psychoanalyst, passed away peacefully in his sleep at his San Francisco home on July 17th. He had battled heart disease, cancer, and Parkinson's for some time.

To his family, friends, colleagues and patients, Alan was renowned as a gifted listener and adviser. He was also a passionate connoisseur of classical music, the arts, the great outdoors, gourmet food, and a well-mixed cocktail. Alan was friendly, funny, curious, interested, engaging, warm, brilliant, open-minded, strikingly handsome, and devilishly mischievous. His was a life well lived.

Alan was born and reared in the Bronx, his mother a fiery special education teacher, his father a loving, first-generation, Jewish-Russian periodontal technician. From early on Alan exhibited an insatiable curiosity and love for the arts, travel, and most of all, his fellow man.

Alan deeply valued his role as a father and cherished his time with his two sons, Ivan and Ilya. Growing up with Alan was a series of grand adventures. The boys knew they could always count on Alan's unconditional love and support. Both were inspired by Alan's example to pursue careers in the health service field: Ivan as a psychotherapist and Ilya as a chiropractic kinesiologist.

Alan's younger sister, Sondra ("Soni"), adored her brother. Their connection remained strong – always reaching out to each other to share the latest family and world news, to

share their love of the arts, and to seek each other's advice. Alan maintained a close relationship to his nieces and their families as well, always there to listen, attend milestone events, share a meal, or just be there when needed.

In the last two years of his life, Alan found love with O'Brien Young. They especially enjoyed pouring over the New Yorker and the New York Review of Books, attending arts events and lectures, and visiting with friends and family.

Alan's passion and knowledge of symphonic and chamber music and opera was remarkable. A talented French horn player, he attended New York City's prestigious High School of Music and Art and played French horn in chamber and orchestral ensembles at Columbia University (Class of 1953). His musical training led him to Columbia's varsity crew team's stroke seat because, as he said, "I had a good sense of rhythm."

Alan loved the outdoors and travel. He was a runner, hiker, mountaineer, bay and ocean swimmer, cyclist, and kayaker. He spent extensive time in Costa Rica, Burma, New Guinea, and Africa, frequently accompanying his ex-wife Suzanne on anthropological field research trips. He traveled extensively in Europe, the Balkans, Scandinavia, and South America. A gifted linguist, he was fluent in both French and German. But, his greatest joy and refuge was backpacking in the wilderness, and he was repeatedly drawn to the John Muir Trail, Desolation Wilderness, Yosemite and Inyo National Parks. For close friends and family who were lucky enough to accompany him, their adventures will never be forgotten.

Alan was also a "foodie." He didn't eat, he savored: oysters on the half-shell, steamed mussels and clams (freshly harvested from Stinson Beach), cured olives, romaine salads, roast leg of lamb, wild king salmon, fresh raspberries with Cointreau, zabaglione, dark chocolate.... Sharing a meal with Alan was an ecstatic experience.

Alan attended medical school at the University of Basel, Switzerland, and SUNY, Downstate Medical Center (MD, 1959). He served as a Captain in the US Army Medical Corps in Turkey and France (1960-63). He completed his psychiatric residency at the Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute, UCSF (1966). He was a diplomate of the American Board of Psychiatry and completed his psychoanalytic training at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis (SFCP).

In 1969, Alan and his then-wife, Suzanne Chevalier-Skolnikoff, purchased a home with a downstairs office on the steep hill above UCSF where he opened his private practice of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. He practiced in that office for over 50 years, helping to guide his patients to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their life choices.

Alan was a committed, highly respected training and supervising analyst and faculty member associated with UCSF's Department of Psychiatry (Associate Professor and

Clinical Researcher), California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC), and the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis (SFCP), for which he served as Chairman of the Program Committee (1977-1980) and Curriculum Committee (1982-1988), and as a training and supervising analyst (from 1980 until his death). Alan served as an Examiner for the American Board of Psychiatry (1989-1993, 1995-1996), and served on the Program Committee for the 37th International Psychoanalytic Association Congress in Buenos Aires (1991).

Alan was a respected researcher, scholar, editor and critic. He published or co-published over 20 scholarly papers and presented locally, nationally and internationally. He was a sought-after teacher, lecturer, and panel member, particularly known for his insightful work with borderline and narcissistic disorders. His most recent publications focused on the analyst's experience, the relationship between analyst and patient, transference and co-transference, self-psychology, and the efficacy of psychoanalysis. He was also on the editorial board of a variety of psychoanalytic journals, including the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, and published over 30 reviews on psychoanalytic books and articles.

As a training analyst, he was known as an exacting supervisor of his residents and advisees, always ready to deeply engage and to hold both the analyst in training and himself accountable. At the same time, he was recognized for his humanity, kindness, and open mind. Alan participated with a group of psychoanalyst colleagues in a monthly study group. Despite his increasing physical limitations, Alan looked forward to these monthly meetings and was particularly valued for his incisive clinical acumen, theoretical sophistication and a notable open-mindedness and attitude of inquiry. It was easy to discuss ideas with him – he was non-defensive and non-polemical, respectful and appreciative of others' ideas.

Alan will be sorely missed by his family, friends, colleagues, trainees and patients. He is survived by his beloved sons, Ivan A. Skolnikoff and Ilya M. Skolnikoff, his ex-wife, Suzanne Chevalier-Skolnikoff, his sister, Sondra S. Bell, his nieces, Lisa Bell-Williard, Susan Bell-Warner, Julia Bell-Liebi, and his precious partner, O'Brien Young, as well as many dear friends and colleagues.

A life-long supporter of education and research, Alan donated his body to UCSF Medical School through UCSF's Willed Body Program. There will be a Celebration of Alan's Life held at on September 25th at 4 pm at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis, 444 Natoma Street, San Francisco.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Alan's memory to the San Francisco Symphony (sfsymphony.org), the National Parks Foundation (nationalparks.org), the Sierra Club Foundation (sierraclubfoundation.org), or to the charity of your choice.