

Alan Rugman

A Memorial by Robert Grosse

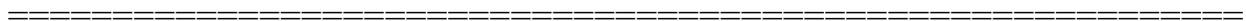
Let me start by sharing a note from our colleague, José de la Torre.

José: I am truly shocked, as most of you are, by the terribly sad news of Alan's passing. How can someone who was so active and engaged as Alan was during our Vancouver meeting barely two weeks ago, be gone from us so quickly and suddenly?

As many of you have written, Alan was among the giants of our field. Not only because of his intellectual contributions, but because he was always willing to go anywhere and anytime to foster the mission of international business scholarship and education.

Alan's energy, his prolific scholarship, his stubborn insistence on certain dogmas of his creation, and his devotion to our field and to our beloved AIB have served us splendidly over the years. We are deeply in his debt as professionals, but also as human beings for the richness of his contributions and his friendship.

I will miss his lightning fast intellect, his sharp sense of humor and our friendly bantering. I can still hardly believe that the man who performed so admirably as Dean of the AIB Fellows up to a few days ago, is no longer with us. But our memory of his many contributions and his bigger-than-life persona will endure, as will his impact on several generations of IB scholars throughout the world.



Now from me: I met Alan in 1978 in a conference in Berlin organized by Anant Negandhi. We were young IB writers, all trying to show our work to each other as we built on the groundwork laid by John Fayerweather, Dick Robinson, Jack Behrman, and Vern Terpstra, among others. The participants in the Berlin conference included Alan Rugman, John Dunning, Yves Doz, Mark Casson, Peter Buckley, CK Prahalad, and me, plus four or five others. It was an amazing opportunity to think about IB and to argue out our points of view, from internalization to the eclectic theory to my oligopolistic advantages (competitive advantages) to CK's views on organization of MNEs.

Duane Kujawa and I recruited Alan to teach at Florida International University in 1979, and he visited us in Miami for a two or three-day period that winter. Unfortunately for us, it did not work out there at FIU to have Alan join us. That may have been when Alan realized the benefits of being associated with a warm-weather university – and he subsequently spent several month-long stays at the University of Hawaii.

Two years later Chris and I agreed to spend the summer at Dalhousie University in Halifax, where Alan was teaching at the time. We had a wonderful couple of months with Alan and Helen, and Alan and I sparred about internalization vs. the eclectic view vs. competitive advantages as IB theories. I learned to play cricket there with Alan, and he and I also had some nice runs along the Halifax waterfront.

Alan later moved to the University of Toronto, and invited us up to give a talk at some point in the mid-1990s, after I had moved out to Thunderbird. Chris and I had a very nice weekend in Mississauga with Alan and Helen and Andrew and their dog, Muffin.

All along the way, Alan and I would meet at AIB meetings and go out for a morning run once or twice each year, enjoying the fresh air and talking about IB, sports, and other things as we jogged. And Alan, Helen, my wife Chris, and I would typically go to dinner together at some point during the meetings. It was great fun building our careers in academe without any feeling of competition or as if it were a zero-sum game – it was all collaborative and challenging and exciting.

In the 2000s we were less connected, except at AIB meetings, as I became more involved in leading business schools and running Leadership Development at Standard Bank in Africa, and Alan moved to Oxford and then Indiana, and finally Reading/Henley. We kept in touch, and always visited at AIB meetings, but we were less frequently involved in academic activities together – which I certainly regret. He recruited me at Henley, but that did not work out, much like our earlier attempt to work together in Florida.

Let me say a couple more things academically about Alan, which may be less familiar to most of you. Alan started out in the Ph.D. program at Simon Fraser working in economics with Herb Grubel. He wrote his thesis on international financial diversification of investment, and then quickly moved into studying multinational companies after that. (Ironically, that was exactly the kind of path I followed, moving from an international trade emphasis in economics graduate school to a focus on real companies and decisionmaking in both my thesis and my initial teaching/research.) In

Alan's case he did quite a bit of work on government regulation of multinationals, looking at policy for the Canadian government at the time of FIRA when there was a good bit of anti-MNE rhetoric. He identified a positive path for the government to build relations with MNEs and to generate benefits both to Canada and to the companies.

Later Alan got a bit more eclectic, as he analyzed MNEs looking at firm-specific and country-specific advantages, never ignoring the idea that internalization is the glue that holds multinationals together. He took on pragmatic issues, as evidenced by his final conceptual approach, looking at companies as fundamentally regional in their focus rather than global. You know that story at least as well as I do.

What I will always remember about Alan's Rugmanesque style is his clarity of purpose, his ability to focus on details, and his efforts to see things through to their logical conclusion. And nothing demonstrates this better than his performance at the AIB meeting a couple of weeks ago. From his opening remarks at the Fellows plenary session on Day 1 through his leadership of the Fellows business meeting and his presentations in another session or two, Alan spoke clearly and convincingly, reasoned logically, and provided thoughts for all of us to benefit from. Thank you, Alan.