

# THE BARRY GROSS MEMORIAL AWARD

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From time to time, the National Association of Scholars bestows the Barry Gross Memorial Award on an individual whose outstanding service to the cause of academic reform—through the medium of the organization or responsible citizenship—we wish to recognize. On Saturday, 1 June 2002, in Washington, DC, during our tenth national conference, the NAS so honored Jeremiah Reedy and Norman Fruman. *Academic Questions* is pleased to print NAS President Stephen H. Balch's remarks in presenting the awards and professors Reedy and Fruman's acceptance speeches.

## Presentation: NAS's Greatest Generation

*Stephen H. Balch*

Today marks the fifteenth anniversary of the National Association of Scholars. It was fifteen years ago, to this very day, that our office formally opened for business in Princeton, New Jersey.

Running an office was certainly a new experience for me, and it quickly became apparent that it required a battery of practical skills that my scholarly life had not helped develop. As I attempted to enlist other academics in the activism I was practicing, it dawned on me that they too rarely possessed these worldly talents. Many had eloquence, knowledge, warmth for the cause, and other inspiring qualities. But being able to get a concrete task successfully completed in the necessary time was often quite beyond them.

The Barry Gross Memorial Award was created to honor precisely this type of professorial rarity—the man of action—though I rush to add that both of this year's nominees have many outstanding intellectual qualities as well. Barry Gross was a person of protean abilities, who whether delivering our message on the academic hustings or overseeing the execution of concrete in-house projects, could always be counted on to excel. He was one of the NAS's truly indispensable men. The two men on whom we bestow his award have also proven their indispensability.

While neither Jerry Reedy nor Norman Fruman ever had a desk in our Princeton office, both did the NAS immense service by launching its affiliate system, which now includes forty-six independent groups. The particular affiliate they launched—the Minnesota Association of Scholars—was not only our first, but, largely due to the energy they imparted to it, has remained one of our most active, in the news and politically relevant throughout its thirteen-year history.

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Jerry Reedy was the MAS's father, making it flesh through incorporation and then becoming its founding president. The simple act of incorporation, and his subsequent successful application for an IRS tax exemption—each done without the advice of counsel—were themselves intrepid deeds. Many a distinguished scholar of my acquaintance has blanched at the prospect of committing his signature to state papers of any kind.

As the Minnesota Association's first president, Jerry played a pivotal role in recruiting that band of brave scholars who have remained its heart and soul. I doubt whether in Jerry's absence we would have had an affiliate network at all.

In his other life, Jerry is a professor of classics at Macalester College, with numerous books and articles to his credit, and in further illustration of his talents, was for eighteen years the director of Macalester's Humanities Program. In similar witness, he is the founder of his own charter school, serving a significant share of the Twin Cities' Hmong student population. Jerry is also a longtime member of the NAS's board of directors, and has recently returned to the Minnesota Association as its executive director. Under his renewed leadership, I'm sure it will continue to go from success to success.

Norman Fruman was Jerry's immediate successor as Minnesota president. Having been born under Jerry, the MAS grew into a substantial statewide force under Norman. Norman was indefatigable in getting the MAS into the news, writing columns, appearing on local radio and television, even debating the president of the University of Minnesota—who didn't really deserve the free publicity Norman provided him—to press home the case for academic reform. Norman showed his successors, and all our other state affiliate presidents, how to lead fearlessly.

Norman has been fearless in everything he's done, and always on the side of truth and honor. A literary scholar of international reputation, he made his name with the publication of *Coleridge: the Damaged Archangel*, the book that first revealed Coleridge's extensive plagiarism. Its critical success brought him from the California State University system to the University of Minnesota.

In earlier service for the forces of good, he led an infantry platoon at the Battle of the Bulge, earning a Bronze Star for combat action. Norman is also one of the principal founders of the Association of Literary Scholars and Critics and a member of the NAS board.

He, as Jerry, is without question a member of the NAS's "greatest generation."