Concern about social issues triggered Pildes’s interest in public law — and, in fact, led him away from a promising career in science. “I’d always been torn between a career in science and a career in the humanities,” he says. As an undergraduate at Princeton, he majored in chemistry and won a couple of major chemistry prizes. After graduation, he worked briefly as a research chemist for a firm in Illinois. “But I decided,” he says, “that a career in the lab would be too isolating from the kind of ongoing social concerns I had. I came to the law seeking social commitment and change.”

At Harvard Law, Pildes was an editor of the Harvard Law Review. He went on to clerk for Judge Abner Mikva of the Court of Appeals, and for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall. The latter experience, in particular, enhanced his excitement about the law. “Justice Marshall is one of the great figures of American political life in this century, and experiencing American history through his eyes, as well as developing the perspective on the entire court structure afforded by a year at the Supreme Court, increased my engagement with public law.”

Pildes rounded off his pre-Michigan career by working for the Boston law firm of Foley, Hoag & Eliot, where he concentrated in appellate litigation, including some pro bono litigation. “I knew I wanted to go into teaching,” he says, “but I believed some practical experience would provide a better perspective and improve my capacity to train students.”

Pildes describes himself as “ecstatic” about the opportunity to teach. “Law school for me was an exhilarating intellectual experience, and I hope I can communicate to students some sense of the power and importance of ideas in the law as well as some excitement about law’s capacities.”

Robben W. Fleming returns as interim president

Robben W. Fleming, president emeritus of The University of Michigan and professor emeritus of the Law School, began his term as interim president of the U-M on January 4. The interim appointment was made by the regents last September. Fleming’s term is expected to last approximately six to eight months, while the search for a new president proceeds. Former President Harold T. Shapiro assumed the presidency of his alma mater, Princeton University, in January.

A specialist in labor law and industrial relations, Fleming was president and professor of law at Michigan from 1968 to 1979. He left the U-M to head the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, where he served until 1981. He returned to the Law School in 1981 and was named professor emeritus in 1985.

Remarking on the appointment, Law School Professor Thomas E. Kauper, who heads the faculty search committee, said, “The university is most fortunate that Robben Fleming has agreed to serve as interim president. His wide-ranging knowledge of the university, his sound judgement and administrative skill will keep the institution moving ahead while the search for Harold Shapiro’s successor goes on.”

Fleming served as president during one of the most turbulent periods in the history of higher education. During his tenure, he earned a reputation as a skillful negotiator who was able to maintain calm while safeguarding the climate of intellectual freedom on campus.

Over the coming months, Fleming expects that the bulk of his work will involve the routine business of day-to-day decision-making. One of his primary concerns will be in the area of minority issues, where he is committed to carrying through the initiatives set forth by former President Shapiro last spring. These include the university’s efforts to increase minority enrollment and retention, to recruit minority faculty and staff, and to develop programs dealing with various aspects of racism, multiculturalism, and diversity.

Fleming graduated from Beloit College in 1938 and from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1941. He was director of the Industrial Relations Center at the University of Wisconsin from 1947 to 1952 and served as executive
Bad Acts and Guilty Minds

New book by Leo Katz wins critical acclaim

Henri plans a trek through the desert. Alphonse, intending to kill Henri, puts poison into his canteen. Gaston also intends to kill Henri but has no idea what Alphonse has been up to. He punctures Henri's canteen, and Henri dies of thirst. Who has caused Henri's death? Was it Alphonse? How could it be, since Henri never swallowed the poison. Was it Gaston? How could it be, since he only deprived Henri of some poisoned water that would have killed him more swiftly even than thirst. Was it neither then?

Strange conundrums like this one have fascinated lawyers and nonlawyers for centuries, raising problems of causation, intention, negligence, necessity, duress, complicity, and attempt. With wit and intelligence, Leo Katz's new book, Bad Acts and Guilty Minds, seeks to understand these moral, linguistic, and psychological puzzles that plague the criminal law. Drawing on insights from analytical philosophy and psychology, he brings order into the seemingly endless multiplicity of these puzzles: many of them turn out to be variations of a few basic philosophical problems, making their appearance in different guises.

To test his arguments, Katz moves far beyond the traditional body of exemplary criminal law cases. He brings into view the decisions of common law judges in colonial and postcolonial Africa, famous cases such as the Nuremberg trials, Aaron Burr's treason, and ABSCAM, as well as famous incidents in fiction.

The book, published by the University of Chicago Press late last year, has already received some enthusiastic pre-publication reviews. Michael S. Moore, Robert Kingsley Professor at the University of Southern California Law School and author of Law and Psychiatry: Rethinking the Relationship, said of it: "Leo Katz's Bad Acts and Guilty Minds is unique in the field of criminal law jurisprudence. The book combines a theoretically sophisticated discussion of serious issues with a lively, engaging style and fresh point of view... Katz's book should become a classic in the field for years to come. I recommend it to beginning law students and lay persons interested in an introduction to the field, as well as to criminal law academics interested in furthering their already well-developed understanding of criminal law theory."

Sanford H. Kadish, Morrison Professor of Law, University of California, Berkeley, wrote: "Bad Acts and Guilty Minds is a fascinating, profound and accessible review of the moral perplexities of the substantive criminal law. Mr. Katz can tell a story and probe an argument with equal dexterity."

An excerpt from the book begins on p. 25.