



Leo Renaghan

July 15, 1943 – December 31, 2018

Professor Emeritus Leo Renaghan, one of the first academics to introduce modern marketing methods to the hospitality industry, died December 31, 2018 of brain cancer. He was 75.

Renaghan joined the Cornell faculty in 1982 at the School of Hotel Administration. He was promoted to tenured associate professor in 1989, a position he held until his retirement in 2009.

An international hotel consultant, he served on the board of directors of Rezidor Hospitality Inc. – operator of hotel brands including Radisson, Regent and Park Inns – from 1992 to 2006. Renaghan also owned several consulting firms specializing in marketing planning, information technology and strategy development for major hotels, restaurants and service businesses around the world.

“He had an extraordinary talent for being able to apply academic principles to practical problems,” said Sherri Kimes, professor of operations management. “What was particularly wonderful was how that talent translated into his teaching. He made marketing come alive, and so many of his former students have told me about how he helped them to become the people they are today. Many attribute their success to having Leo as a teacher and mentor.”

Masters and doctoral students of the Hotel School selected him as Hospitality Teacher of the Year in 1994, 1995, and 2001.

Renaghan was also active in the administration of the Hotel School. He served as associate dean for academic affairs from 2001 to 2006, and directed several units, including the Center for Hospitality Research from 1994 to 1998.

“Leo was dedicated to the successful operations of the Hotel School,” said Jack Corgel, professor of real estate. “Twice he stepped up to take on administrative duties when there was a shortage of candidates.”

Alex Susskind, associate dean for academic affairs, said Renaghan had a strong influence on him during his early years at the Hotel School. “When he was associate dean, he taught me that there are always two sides to every story and there is no need to always be right; being fair is more important than being right,” Susskind said.

The author of numerous academic articles, Renaghan was on the editorial review boards of several journals, including the Journal of Foodservice Marketing, Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly and the Journal of Restaurant Marketing.

Renaghan was born in Somerville, Massachusetts, and spent his childhood summers working in the restaurant industry, washing dishes and cooking in Boston and Cape Cod, Massachusetts.

He earned a Bachelor of Science in Hotel Management from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 1965. After graduation, he served as a U.S. Army area studies intelligence specialist, spending three years in Munich, Germany. He completed an MBA from Michigan State University in 1970.

Renaghan began his academic career at Pennsylvania State University, where he was an instructor and assistant professor from 1970-76. After a year as an assistant professor, at Northern Arizona University, he returned to Penn State as assistant professor in 1977, earning his Ph.D. in marketing from that institution in 1979. In 1982, he joined the faculty at Cornell.

He is survived by his wife, Laurette Dubé, MPS '88, Ph.D. '90, a son and a stepson.

*Written by Susan Kelley
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