

# Maurice F. Neufeld

*October 27, 1910 — April 10, 2003*

Maurice F. Neufeld was a respected scholar, beloved teacher, and one of the two founding faculty members of the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University.

Maurice (he pronounced his name Morris) was born to immigrant parents in the District of Columbia on October 27, 1910. He was educated at the Webster School and Central High School in the District and subsequently enrolled at George Washington University and, a year later, in Alexander Meiklejohn's experimental college at the University of Wisconsin. He earned the B.A. and M.A. degrees in American History there by 1932 and was always grateful to the experimental college and Wisconsin for this defining experience in his intellectual life. The University of Wisconsin awarded Maurice the Ph.D. degree in 1935. While an undergraduate, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa.

Jean McKelvey and Maurice were appointed the first faculty members of Cornell's newly created ILR School in 1945 by its founding dean, Irving Ives. Mr. Ives left the university shortly thereafter for the United States Senate. Maurice served as secretary, then chair, of the committee that governed the school between Ives's resignation and the appointment of Martin P. Catherwood as Dean of the School in 1947. One of Maurice's most valuable contributions to the school was during this formative period in its history. By virtue of his dignity and erudition, as well as his considerable political skills, Maurice greatly facilitated the acceptance of the initially controversial multidisciplinary ILR School into the larger university community.

Maurice continued to serve a succession of deans and the university in a variety of administrative capacities until his election as Professor Emeritus in 1976. Nonetheless, his greatest legacy was as a scholar and, particularly, as teacher and mentor to four generations of Cornell students.

A gifted and inspiring professor, Maurice was urbane and dapper, demanding and thought provoking. He was possessed of a prodigious memory and a flair for the dramatic.

Maurice was devoted to his students and they to him. Invariably, when reminiscing about his classes, those who studied with him would recall Maurice's intellectual rigor and vast range of knowledge, his insistence on critical and analytical thinking in his students and on a clear and unaffected prose style in their written assignments. These were lessons, many of them would say, that would inform their lives. But they would also remember, as well, his sense of humor and his personal kindness.

For Maurice, teaching did not end at the classroom door. Countless ILR students in search of academic advice, or merely in need of a kind word, would turn instinctively to Maurice Neufeld, who was, until 1992, ably aided in a life of good works by an equally remarkable and dedicated partner, Hinda Cohen Neufeld. Hinda and Maurice's commitment to "their" students often led to a lifelong mutual regard and frequent exchange of letters and visits.

Replying to one such letter in March 1978, Maurice commented:

*"You knew more teachers than you thought when you knew me as a teacher. They stretch back through the centuries through me to you...the writers of the Bible; Plato and the Greek dramatists; Virgil and Catullus and Tacitus; Dante, Petrarch, Machiavelli, and Wolfram von Eschenbach; the nineteenth and twentieth century novelists and playwrights...and the great poets...You knew them unawares."*

He went on to recount all of the teachers who had inspired him and why, from Miss Farnsworth and her colleagues at Webster School (whom he individually named and described in detail) through Alexander Meiklejohn and George Clark Sellery at Wisconsin. "Keep in touch," he concluded, "I expect you to carry that torch, which in the ancient games, was passed on from runner to runner."

Maurice did not limit his generosity to students. Throughout his career he was a mentor for his younger colleagues and a succession of deans as well, and his services to the larger university community were legion. Maurice's scholarship is enshrined in thirty-five articles, monographs, and books on a variety of subjects, not the least of which is a translation into English poetry of Sophocles' *Antigone*, first published by the University of Wisconsin during his sophomore year at college and which was available in print for decades thereafter.

Prior to coming to Cornell, Maurice enjoyed a distinguished career as a labor official, state official, and officer in the United States Army.

Between the years 1935-39, Maurice was employed as an organizer for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in Philadelphia and, subsequently, was the education director of a large local of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in Trenton, New Jersey. He then took a position as Secretary and Chief Assistant in Research and Economics for the New Jersey State Planning Board. In September of 1939, Maurice was appointed the Director of the New York Division of State Planning, and, in May of 1941, was appointed as the state's Deputy Commissioner of Commerce.

Early in World War II, Maurice was appointed Director of the New York State Bureau of Rationing, and Chairman, Planning Committee, Federal Advisory Council of Defense, Health, and Welfare Services. Having entered the

United States Army in 1942, Maurice spent most of his military career in Italy. During the last two years of the war, he was executive officer (Captain), Regional Headquarters, Allied Military Government for the Sicily, Naples, Rome, and Milan Region.

In addition to his professorial duties while at Cornell, Maurice also found time to serve as a scholarly editor, as labor relations consultant for the Xerox Corporation for 31 years, and on arbitration and mediation panels for three states and the federal government.

Maurice's papers relating to his government career are at the Library of Congress. The balance of his records are housed at the Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives in the school's Catherwood Library.

*Michael Gold, James Gross, Richard Strassberg*