

Lewis Wilbur Morse

August 24, 1903 — January 25, 1982

Lewis Wilbur Morse, law librarian and professor of law emeritus, quietly left us after a notably active life distinguished by the theme of helpfulness to others.

Lew, born in Elmira, came to the Cornell Law School in 1925, after having been graduated in 1925 from Colgate, of which he remained an ever-loyal and active alumnus. In 1928 he received from Cornell the Bachelor of Laws degree. Upon graduation, Lew practiced in Newark, New York, and in Hawaii and then returned to practice in Pulaski, New York.

In 1931 Lew joined the Cornell Law School faculty as lecturer and assistant law librarian and was instrumental in moving the law library to the new Myron Taylor Hall from the later-demolished Boardman Hall. He became law librarian in 1936 and served with distinction in this post for thirty years, until he was named associate dean of the school in 1965. With minimal budget and staff through the Great Depression, he maintained the position of the Cornell law library among the top ten American law school libraries. In 1940-41 he served as president of the American Association of Law Librarians.

World War II, with the depletion of law students, decreased funding for the law library, and Lew's four-year military absence was a holding operation for the library. Lew, upon his return, restored the prewar momentum, providing efficient, economic, personal, and gracious library service for students, faculty, alumni, the local bar, visiting scholars, and other patrons.

While Lew was law librarian, the collections grew from about eighty-one thousand volumes in 1936 to one hundred eighty thousand volumes in 1965 and the library staff from one to seven, with the budget eventually reaching \$50,000. This was a record of remarkable growth during years when library resources were limited.

From 1965 to 1969, Lew rounded out his services for Cornell as associate dean for alumni affairs and placement. In 1969, Lew, having progressed through the various academic ranks, retired as professor emeritus. He thereafter represented his clients and real estate interests.

During World War II, Lew was in charge of the Army Judge Advocate General's law library buildup in the continental United States and around the world, an accomplishment recognized by the Legion of Merit Award. Lew retired as full colonel, remaining active in the Retired Reserve Officers Association.

Besides his professional associations, Lew cherished his nonresident membership in the Elmira City Club—on Church Street, across from the armory where his father once commanded the local National Guard.

Lew Morse possessed outstanding human qualities. He gave generously of himself. He was never too busy to listen to the needs and concerns of others and was always ready to put aside his own personal pursuits in order to give a helping hand to someone else. He had scores of friends and admirers whose lives had been touched in one way or another by his warmth and compassion. A typical remark heard at a Cornell law alumni gathering would be: “How is Lew Morse? Lew really helped me out when I was a student, and I owe him so much!” It is no wonder that Lew had such a strong claim on the affections of Cornell lawyers throughout the country, for his own life was a model of concern and service to others.

Lew left a devoted wife, Lorraine; two sons: Lewis Wilbur “Bill,” of Elmira, and Robert Clark, of Pelham Manor, both members of the New York Bar; and five grandchildren. When the grandchildren greeted Lew as “Gramps,” the affection was obvious.

Lew was an avid squash player, overwhelming most opponents in the Myron Taylor Hall and Grumman squash courts and continuing to play well beyond his seventy-fifth year. Through his squash games Lew developed many warm and lasting friendships, and squash proved to be an important part of his life.

Family services were held for Lew in his home in the Christian Science tradition, which sustained him in life and death. Interment was in the Onondaga Valley Cemetery, Syracuse, in April.

W. David Curtiss, Ernest N. Warren, Harry G. Henn