

Gustavus Hill Robinson

January 11, 1881 — September 11, 1972

Gustavus Hill Robinson, a former law teacher at Cornell, died on September 11, 1972, aged ninety-one years.

He took all his degrees at Harvard, Bachelor of Arts in 1905, Bachelor of Laws in 1909, and Doctor of the Science of Law in 1916. He came to Cornell in 1929, after distinguished service at Tulane, Missouri, California, and Boston University, and twice at Harvard College. Prior to his teaching he practiced law in New York City and was an early associate of Charles C. Burlingham, then and later one of the most distinguished and influential members of the American bar. He retired in 1949, becoming William Nelson Cromwell Professor of International Law, Emeritus, after his retirement.

Several times in later years he came back to active teaching to present his course in admiralty in which he had attained national and international distinction. In over thirty-five years he ranged over the whole law school curriculum except property and procedure. In 1926 he published his case- book on public utilities and in 1939 his authoritative textbook on admiralty, a copy of which was in a few years to go into the library of every American maritime captain. He was a consultant of the New York Law Revision Commission and an admiralty consultant of the United States Lend-Lease Administration in World War II.

These are the bare facts of a most distinguished career, at the end of which he had become universally recognized as the leader of American scholars in the field of maritime law and the mentor of a whole generation of members of the Admiralty Bar. Yet, these facts tell only part of the life story of a man who was sparkling and venerable at the same time.

Husband and father, teacher and scholar, he lived out — to the end — a rich and rewarding life. We, his colleagues, as well as the students and alumni of the Cornell Law School, all knew him as Robie. Our affection for him — earned by his wit and deep human understanding as much as by his brilliant contributions to legal learning — was many times made manifest, and especially in his later years, when his annual appearances at the spring reunion of the Law School graduates became a cherished tradition. As the senior member of the Law School community, he kept his office a meeting place for us, and for the present and former students of the school. He came daily to his office for over twenty years after his retirement, keeping regular working hours and always adding new bits of wisdom and of humor to the living legend of “Robie” — a legend that will remain in the hearts and minds of all

those who were fortunate enough during his lifetime to become captivated by the grace with which he bore his greatness.

Rudolf B. Schlesinger, W. David Curtiss, John W. MacDonald