

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION MIKE JACOBSTEIN

(1920-2005)

Mike Jacobstein, professor of law emeritus and director of the law library emeritus, passed away peacefully on March 25, 2005, at the Reutlinger Community for Jewish Living, in Danville, California. He was 85 years old. A member of the Stanford faculty for twenty-four years, from 1963 to 1987, Mike was a popular librarian who is credited with establishing the Stanford Law Library as a major research law library.

J. Myron (Mike) Jacobstein was born Joseph Meyer Jacobstein on January 27, 1920, in Detroit, Michigan. It comes as no surprise that a man with so many different names also wore many different hats: professor of law, librarian, prolific author, association president, mentor to many leaders in the profession, raconteur, beloved father, devoted husband.

Mike began his college education at Wayne State University, but World War II interrupted his education and Mike served in the United States Army Air Forces from 1942 to 1946. Mike spent his three years in the military at a remote air base in Hobbs, New Mexico. Following his military discharge, Mike resumed his studies at Wayne State University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in history in 1946. Uncertain about career opportunities for history majors, Mike received some good advice about librarianship as a career, and decided to give it a try. But first he gave himself a vacation.

Mike spent his two-week vacation in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York. There he met Belle Lottman and the two were engaged by the end of the two weeks; on September 29, 1949 they were married. Mike retired from his profession to care for his ailing spouse and Belle, his wife of fifty-five years, passed away less than a month after Mike's death.

Mike enrolled in Columbia University and received his master's degree in library science in 1950. Mike's first foray into librarianship was inauspicious: He worked just one year as a cataloger at the University of Chicago Law School, but was dismissed from that position due to his poor cataloging skills. Mike did not disagree with the assistant librarian who terminated him, and instead decided to refocus on other aspects of library science: administration and information service.

Law libraries interested Mike, and he enrolled at the Chicago-Kent College of Law and received his Juris Doctor degree there in 1952. After graduating from law school, Mike accepted the assistant law librarian position at the University of Illinois, and remained there from 1953 to 1955. Mike was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 1953.

Mike and Belle returned to New York City in 1955 where Mike accepted the associate librarian position at Columbia Law School.

It was while at Columbia that Mike met his principle collaborator, Roy M. Mersky. The Jacobstein Mersky partnership became one as "enduring and endearing as Rodgers and Hammerstein, Fred and Ginger, Bert and Ernie" as a bibliography in the *Law Library Journal* states. They frequently called themselves the "odd couple" as in almost every personality

trait they were opposites. To pinch pennies, they would share hotel rooms at law library conferences, with Roy opening the windows for fresh air, and Mike closing them to retain warm air in the room. Their spirited collaboration led to the publication of over twenty-five books together, including their widely-used *Fundamentals of Legal Research*. Together this “odd couple” presented legal bibliography with great clarity and foresight. They predicted the impact of computer-assisted legal research, explained the impact of vendor neutral citation, and helped researchers understand the interdisciplinary nature of contemporary legal research.

In 1959, Mike began his westward migration, and became director of the University of Colorado law library and from this moment on, Roy and Mike never lived closer than a thousand miles to each other, a fact that Professor Mersky says is “probably the single most important factor in allowing our friendship to survive.”

In the 1962-63 academic year, John Henry Merryman, who had been running the nascent Stanford law library, decided to become a full time law professor. A number of Columbia law professors – Gerry Gunther, Marc Franklin, Charlie Meyers and Howard Williams -- had very recently joined the Stanford law faculty around this time and these Columbia “refugees”¹ “campaigned enthusiastically to assure Mike Jacobstein would move from Boulder to Stanford.

Their recruiting efforts, led by John Henry Merryman, were successful and in 1963 Mike became Law Librarian and Professor of Law at Stanford and under his leadership the library grew and thrived. Dean Larry Kramer, upon Mike’s death, remarked, “Mike was the pioneer in creating Stanford’s law library. Although the number of volumes in the library tripled under Mike’s leadership, he was not simply concerned with its size. He created an atmosphere dedicated to people and service.”

Mike remained the library director at Stanford until his retirement in 1987. As Blair Kauffman, professor of law and director of the Yale Law Library, observed: “Mike was one of the towering figures of law librarianship and a generous and kind person. Stanford was blessed to have him as their law librarian for so many years. His book on legal research, co-authored with Roy Mersky, remains one of the best teaching texts for this complex subject.”

Mike was always extremely active in his profession. The Council on Library Resources named Mike a Fellow for 1972-73, for a study of the impact of interdisciplinary studies on academic libraries. Mike served on the executive board of the American Association of Law Libraries from 1973 to 1975, and as president of the organization from 1978 to 1979. Mike was active in both American Bar Association and Association of American Law Schools activities, and served frequently as an accreditation team member. In 1987 Mike received the Distinguished Service Award of the American Association of Law Libraries.

At Stanford, Mike directed the law library, taught legal research, cheered the Cardinal basketball and football teams and played a rather transparent game of poker; as Professor Barbara Allen Babcock has observed, “at the poker table he was very much in character – smiling impishly when he had a good hand, and humming a low, worried hum when he was ‘bluffing.’ No hidden ball, no deception, and you always knew what you were getting.”

¹ Gerald Gunther, J. Myron Jacobstein: For Mike, with Fond Appreciation, *Stanford Law Review*, volume 40, issue 1, pp.3-6 (November, 1987)

The professional accomplishment that Mike was most proud of was clearly the mentoring he provided for young librarians, both on his staff at Stanford and on the staffs of other libraries. Mike cultivated many in the profession and the present director of the Stanford Law Library credits his successes fully to Mike's guidance and rich career nourishment.

Mike was beloved dearly by his children: Ellen Rebecca Gilmore, an alumna of Stanford University, became a law librarian at the Boalt Hall Law Library. Bennett Jacobstein also followed his father's footsteps and chose librarianship as his profession. Ellen presently resides in Piedmont with her family, and Bennett resides in Milpitas with his. In addition to his two children, Mike is survived by three grandchildren.

Mike's devotion to Belle was a beautiful thing to see and Mike left the job he loved, in 1987, to attend to his ailing wife's health needs.

Beyond his teaching, scholarship and library administration, Mike was a friend and colleague to many in the university. Mike and Belle's wide interests in the humanities and natural and social sciences, plus his support for Stanford athletics, made the couple a close friend and colleague of innumerable faculty members across campus. Mike was remembered at a memorial reception at the Stanford Faculty Club on April 29, 2005.

Committee:
Lawrence Friedman
Paul Lomio
Erika Wayne
with John Merryman presenting