Obituary for Mortimer D. Schwartz (1922-2016)

Mortimer D. Schwartz was Director of the Law Library and Professor of Law at the School of Law of the University of California at Davis from 1965 to 1991. He passed away on September 10, 2016. He was born on September 3, 1922 and passed away on September 10th, 2016 of natural causes.

Mortimer D. Schwartz was born to Samuel and Shirley Schwartz in New York City but spent most of his early years in Connecticut. His undergraduate education was interrupted by World War II, during which he served in the U.S. Navy. After the war he received his J.D. from Boston University (1949), where he also received a master’s degree in law (1950). He then attended Columbia University where he received his degree in library science (1951). He frequently expressed gratitude for the G.I. Bill of Rights, which made it financially possible for him to attend these institutions.

Mort chose law librarianship as a career mainly because he enjoyed helping people, and his education gave him the opportunity to help law students, legal scholars, attorneys and members of the public. During his career he also was an informal, but greatly valued mentor to some of the younger people who joined the faculties where he taught.

Professor Schwartz was a prolific legal scholar. He co-authored or co-edited many books on an amazing variety of subjects. These included space law, legal ethics, children’s rights, pollution law, environmental law, legal history, and law library administration.

In his professional life Mortimer Schwartz was frequently a pioneer. When he began his career at Columbia University he was one of only twelve law librarians in the United States who had degrees in both law and librarianship. Shortly thereafter he became the first professionally trained law librarian at the University of Montana’s School of Law. From 1954 to 1965 he again served as the first professionally trained law librarian at the School of Law of the University of Oklahoma.

In 1965 Professor Schwartz came to Davis to create from scratch the law library of the soon to be opened School of Law. When he arrived, there were no books, no law school building, and no library staff. By the time he retired in 1991 the law library was one of the outstanding law libraries in the country.

Over the years Mortimer Schwartz received numerous awards and held many leadership positions. Among these were:
• The Marian Gould Gallagher Distinguished Service Award (1995), the highest award for service granted by the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL).

• Inaugural Class Inductee to the AALL Hall of Fame (2010).

• Inaugural recipient of the Matthew Bender Scholarship Award (1953).

• Founding President of the Southwestern Association of Law Libraries (1958-59).

• President of the Western Pacific Chapter of the AALL (1968-69).

• AALL Executive Board (1966-69).

After Mort retired he continued to be active both in professional and other volunteer organizations. He was on the Board of Directors of the Yolo Community Foundation and on the Board of Trustees of the Yolo County Law Library. One of his favorite activities was serving as a volunteer station host with AMTRAK, helping travellers by answering their questions and giving kindly advice. For most of his adult life he was an avid fly fisherman and enjoyed fishing the waters of Northern California and elsewhere. He was an active member of Fly Fishers of Davis.

Despite his many accomplishments, Mort was an unassuming and amiable man who never spoke about his high professional standing. He was loved for his warm personality and giving nature -- not for the awards he received and the positions he held.

Mort is survived by his wife of twenty-eight years, Giovanna Oettinger, and his son, Henry (Hank) Schwartz and Hank's partner in life Janet Hendrickson. His son Robert predeceased him. Mort’s first marriage to Gwen Schwartz of Davis ended in divorce. He loved and was loved by his stepchildren Sara Bowsky and Monica Dwyer and her husband Michael Dwyer, Gerald Oettinger and his wife Tasha Berevtas, Neil Oettinger and his wife Beth, Sara’s daughter Karabelo, Monica and Michael’s children Siena and Dominic, Gerald and Tasha’s daughter, Gabriella, and by Neil and Beth’s son Marcus.

A graveside burial will be held at the Davis Cemetery on Wednesday September 14th, 2016 at 11:30am.