Former Dean Louis Jaffe Dies
In Memoriam

Louis L. Jaffe, 1905-1996

Louis L. Jaffe, former dean of the University of Buffalo Law School, died December 11, 1996, in Norwood, Massachusetts, at the age of 90.

An early advocate of public interest law, Jaffe’s work as both professor and dean nourished an emphasis on public service that has become a hallmark of the Law School’s national reputation. During his tenure as dean, the Law School’s building on Eagle Street was constructed and the Buffalo Law Review began publication.

Jaffe was born in Seattle in 1905, the son of an often unsuccessful small businessman, and spent his youth in San Francisco. He graduated at the age of 19 from Johns Hopkins University with no particular direction in mind, but soon found his niche at Harvard Law School. He became an editor of the Harvard Law Review and ranked third in the graduating Class of 1928. With the recommendation of Professor Felix Frankfurter, he became a law clerk to Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis.

He completed an S.J.D. degree at Harvard Law School in 1932, and then, like many lawyers of his day, was rescued from unemployment by the New Deal. In 1934 he became an attorney with the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, one of the New Deal’s earliest and most comprehensive regulatory agencies. In 1935 he joined the National Labor Relations Board as an attorney.

In 1936 Jaffe became professor at the University at Buffalo School of Law, and in 1948 became dean of the school. Of his innumerable law review articles, his most famous cite was a piece published in 1951 in the first page of the first issue of the Buffalo Law Review: “Res Ipsa Loquitur Vindicated.”

Jaffe moved to Harvard in 1950 and began work on a treatise on administrative law, published in 1965 as Judicial Control of Administrative Action. His work on the scope of judicial review, and the distinction between questions of law and questions of fact, was of almost philosophic dimension, and was widely cited by other scholars and by judges. Judicial Control, as well as his co-authored casebook, Administrative Law: Cases and Materials, also became standards for law students in many law schools throughout the country.

Harvard Law School’s Byrne Professor of Administrative Law Todd Rakoff said that Judicial Control remains useful today. “Not many law books last 30 years. While the cases have come and gone, the issues Jaffe discussed remain at the center of administrative law. His analyses have both a depth and an elegance unmatched since.”

He married Mildred Dunbar Miles, the daughter of a prominent Buffalo business family, herself a barrister of the English courts. Jaffe is survived by his two children, Deborah Yeomans of Dedham, Massachusetts; and Miles Jaffe of Cambridge, Massachusetts; two grandchildren, and three step-grandchildren; and three great grandchildren.