

James O. Morris

February 8, 1923 — June 30, 1985

James O. Morris, professor of industrial and labor relations at Cornell's New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, died on June 30, 1985, at age sixty-two after a short illness. At the time, he was an active member of the Department of Collective Bargaining, Labor Law, and Labor History.

Jim came to Cornell in 1955 as an assistant professor, trained by Sidney Fine at the University of Michigan as an American historian (with a minor in Latin American history), and soon demonstrated his capacity to master new fields of scholarly endeavor. In 1958, the year in which Cornell published his first book, *Conflict within the AFL: A Study of Craft versus Industrial Unionism, 1900-1938*, he prepared himself to become a Spanish-speaking industrial relations specialist on Latin America. He accepted a Fulbright research fellowship for a year of study in Chile and, after a brief return to Cornell, went back to Chile in 1959, this time as ILR's representative in a three-year cooperative venture with the University of Chile in Santiago.

In those years he laid the foundation for a distinguished reputation in the field of Chilean industrial relations. He published, with Roberto Oyaneder, *Afiliacion y finanzas sindicales en Chile, 1932-1959* (Santiago: University of Chile Press, 1962) and, by himself, the more important work *Elites, Intellectuals and Consensus: A Study of the Social Question and the Industrial Relations Systems in Chile* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1966). In addition to these accomplishments he helped develop teaching and research in industrial relations at the University of Chile and, upon his return to Cornell in 1962, contributed for several years to ILR's own resident instructional program in international industrial relations by offering a course on Latin America.

In 1967 Jim returned to the field in which he had started his professional career. Henceforth he devoted his courses, research, and writing to United States industrial relations history, a subject in which he came to find biography and courtroom trials especially satisfying as a teacher of ILR undergraduates. In his research he stressed the period of his early interests and made time to acquire manuscripts and archival materials for the Catherwood Library. Collecting became a passion. ILR's especially strong holdings in American railway unionism are a testimony to the many hours he spent on the road. In 1975 he published the *Bibliography of Industrial Relations in the Railroad Industry* (Ithaca: Cornell, 1975). Before illness forced a sudden halt, he was hard at work on a book-length manuscript entitled "The Genesis of the Railway Labor Act: Politics, Power, and Progressivism in the 1920s."

Colleagues in labor history recognized these and other achievements. For many years he served on the editorial board of *Labor History*. He was a founding member of the New York State Labor History Association and served as its president and vice president. Most important of all, his colleagues recognized Jim as one of the few trained American historians in the mid 1950s who made a difference in the ways historians wrote about American organized workers.

In the life of the school he came to be trusted and respected for his sense of academic responsibility and fair play. He served for several years as associate editor and acting editor of the *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*. For three years he chaired his department, and he was also the first chairman of the Philip Taft Labor History Award Committee, which annually awards a prize to the best book published in the field of labor history.

Outside the domain of scholarship Jim was also a man of achievement. As an undergraduate at Hiram College during World War II, he enlisted, and soon, as a U.S. Air Force bombardier, he was flying out of southern Italy into Central Europe. Before the end of the war he had completed fifty missions, an extraordinary accomplishment. He returned to Hiram College and, by the time of his graduation, had married Nadie Lee Mathews, a fellow student. Nadie Lee and their children, Jim, Steve, Lisa, and Patty, and perhaps his grandsons, Scott and Kevin, more than anyone else appreciated the determination, thoroughness, care, and affection that characterized his work, for at home he also devoted himself to collections: to “contemporary antiques.” He restored in loving detail vintage automobiles that won prizes in national competition. Over the years he also assembled a large and unique collection of globes from old-fashioned gasoline pumps and, more recently, had begun a collection of early radios. Jim Morris will be missed and remembered.

John F. Burton, Jr., Ronald Donovan, Gerd Korman