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# Louis M. Brown: His Work in Preventive Law Receives Long-awaited Recognition

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By FORREST S. MOSTEN, *Trustee, NCPL*

**A**s Louis M. Brown nears his 85th birthday this September, it is fitting that there is a groundswell of recognition for his lifetime pioneering contributions to the legal profession and to society in general:

When Louis graduated from Harvard Law School in 1933, few could have predicted the historical impact he would have through his writing, teaching and tireless development of preventive law. His many accomplishments have included his revolutionary concept of "preventive law" as a discipline, redefining the role between lawyers and clients. He also recognized and endorsed the use of paralegals and other innovations in legal service delivery and law office management when such trends were decried as commercializing and de-professionalizing "an honored profession". His views affirmed a positive and proactive approach to law's educational use in contributing to the harmony and general welfare of people in all walks of life.

From the publication of his first book *Preventive Law* in 1950, Louis has been comfortable working in and outside of the established legal profession. Not concerned with possible criticism from traditionalists, he is as willing to write regular legal columns for the popular press and airline magazines as for law reviews and bar journals. He has never wavered from his belief that the legal profession is formed solely for the purpose of improving the life of clients:

Preventive law is the outlet of life's purpose. The objective is to help people in the way I know through a profession of learning that I have studied and experienced. It should be clear that I care more, much more, for the people that the profession is here to serve, than I do for the profession itself. Yet I believe that the help the profession can supply gives the profession a basis for its existence in our complex society of people.

L. Brown, *Lawyering through Life* (1986).

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FORREST S. MOSTEN first met Louis M. Brown in 1972 when Louis spoke out publicly to support him and his partners, Leonard Jacoby and Stephen Meyers, in their efforts to launch the nation's first private legal clinic. Since that time, Mr. Brown and Mr. Mosten have maintained a close professional collaboration.

## AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

At its 1994 mid-year meeting, the American Bar Association established a perpetual "Louis M. Brown Legal Access Award." The annual award shall recognize a person or organization that has contributed an innovative, successful model of the Delivery of Legal Services to Middle Income Persons. The ABA named this award after Louis due to his pioneering efforts in the development of legal services which include:

Chair of the American Bar Association Committee on Military Legal Services which developed the largest legal services plan in the United States. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird officially recognized Louis and his committee for this project;

Pioneering articles on Group Legal Health Plans and Prepaid Legal Services;

Co-founder of First Paralegal Training Program in a major law school (the Law Center of Southern California);

Public Support for private legal clinics in face of opposition of the organized bar;

Creation of the Newlywed Legal Counseling Project sponsored by the Beverly Hills Bar during his term as president of that bar association;

Creation of the "law office classroom" in law schools throughout the country as a setting where students can learn about preventive practice and other non-courtroom lawyering;

Creation of the entire field of Preventive Law, including the present use of Individual Legal Checkup in the joint project between the National Center for Preventive Law and AARP in Pennsylvania;

The Award shall be announced at the ABA's 1994 Annual Meeting on August 9 in New Orleans. Louis also will be present for a program on "Innovative Legal Service Models" sponsored by the ABA Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services (Presidential Show Case Status Pending).

## LOS ANGELES COUNTY BAR

In February 1994, the Alternative Dispute Resolution Section of the Los Angeles County Bar, of approximately 20,000 members, adopted a "Louis M. Brown Conflict Prevention Award". The award will be given each year at the Annual Major Los Angeles Awards Dinner sponsored by Dispute Resolution Services, the world's largest mediation organization sponsored

by a voluntary bar. Louis will be the award's first recipient in September 1994. The presentation will include a video produced by Ellen Miller of Harvard Law Audio Visual Department of his achievements in Preventive Law.

## **INTERNATIONAL CLIENT COUNSELING COMPETITION**

Louis has often said that conceiving of and implementing the Client Counseling Competition may be the greatest and most long-standing accomplishment in his 60-year legal career. As a professor at the University of Southern California School of Law, he had long desired to find a method to motivate and teach law students the principles of client-centered lawyering generally and preventive law in general. The development of the competition was the answer to that wish.

The competition became a process of successive simulated consultations between law students and a client. Each team of two students is assessed by a set of criteria, comparing them and critiquing their performances in counseling the same client. The assessment is done by an interdisciplinary panel of three to five judges composed of lawyers, law professors, therapists or clergy.

Beginning in 1969 with two teams (USC and University of San Francisco), Louis solely administered and funded the competition for three years until it had grown to 20 teams. In 1972 the American Bar Association Law Student Division assumed administrative responsibility with a \$25,000 grant from Louis, who

chaired the Competition Committee for its next 10 years. This Committee included such well respected professors and practitioners as Professor Thomas Shaffer (former Dean of Notre Dame Law School), Dr. Robert Redmount (author and lawyer-psychologist), and Harold Rock (current member of the ABA Board of Governors). Today, approximately 100 law schools in the U.S. and Canada participate.

In 1986 the competition went international, with the formation of the International Client Counseling Competition. England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Erie and Australia now offer their cultural and legal perspectives to this law school activity. In 1993 the competition became officially affiliated with the International Bar Association and was renamed the "Louis M. Brown International Client Counseling Competition" as an inspiration to future generations of law students throughout the world.

## **CONCLUSION**

Countless lawyers in this country and abroad, myself included, have long been inspired by Louis' mind, his gentle resolve, his devotion to the law and, most importantly, his love of humankind. Therefore, it is not unexpected that as he receives personal recognition, he is today focusing less on himself. His thoughts are more on the long-range impact that such recognition will bring to perpetuate his ideas and life's work through the mission of the NCPL and other institutions and projects to which he continues to contribute. ♦