

## Obituary

### FRANK LAWRENCE WISWALL JR

Frank Lawrence Wiswall Jr., Ph.D., attorney prominent in international admiralty and maritime law, died on May 31, 2023, in Bangor, Maine. He had been facing health issues for several years before his death.

He was born on September 21, 1939, in Albany, New York, the son of Frank L. Wiswall and Clara Elizabeth (Chapman) Wiswall. He had two older sisters, Elaine Wiswall Betts and Betty Ann Wiswall Conley. The family resided first in Albany, then in Loudonville and Saratoga Springs, New York, where the elder Wiswall, a former New York state senator, practiced law and bred and raced standardbred horses. When Frank was ten years old, his parents acquired a rental interest in the town of Castine, Maine, following Elaine, who with her husband Darby W. Betts had purchased a home there. Frank's lifelong love of the sea, and interest in admiralty law, was born in Castine, and the family relocated there permanently in 1954. In the meantime, Frank attended the Albany Academy and graduated from Colby College in Waterville, Maine, in 1962. He went on to study at Cornell Law School, serving as research assistant to Gustavus H. Robinson, a widely recognized authority on maritime law and author of a standard text in the field. Seeing Wiswall's potential, Robinson encouraged him to further postgraduate study, and in 1965 Wiswall moved to the United Kingdom and matriculated at Clare College, Cambridge, where he undertook a Ph.D. in the Faculty of Law. He completed his doctoral degree in two years, the rapid pace of which required a dispensation from the University, and his thesis won him the Yorke Prize for 1969. He later published the thesis as a book, *The Development of Admiralty Jurisdiction and Practice since 1800*.

Returning to the United States, Wiswall accepted a position as an Associate with the law firm of Burlingham Underwood in New York City, where his first assignment was to return legal documents associated with the *Stockholm/Andrea Doria* collision to the respective parent offices in London and Genoa. He worked for several years in the Marine Collisions department, gradually taking on a specialty in the legal affairs of Liberian-flagged merchant shipping. Admitted to the Maine Bar in 1965 and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar in 1968, he also began regular work with the Legal Committee of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the United Nations specialized agency based in London, and by the early 1970s had moved to Liberian Services, Inc., a subsidiary of International Bank, becoming Vice President and General Counsel, and eventually President. During this time, his work with IMO led him to contribute to the formation of the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (1973-1982), and he served as Vice-Chair, then Chair, of the Legal Committee of IMO. He also taught as visiting professor at the law schools of Cornell, Tulane, and the University of Virginia. A reorganization of International Bank in the early 1980s led Wiswall to independent practice, and while doing consultative work in maritime law, teaching became more central to his professional focus. He taught for eighteen years at the World Maritime University in Malmö, Sweden, as well as at the International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in Malta.

Wiswall was a longtime member of the Maritime Law Association of the United States, and became increasingly involved in the work of the Comité Maritime International (CMI), the world association of maritime lawyers. In 1997, he was elected Lifetime Honorary Vice President of

the CMI. A practicing Anglican Catholic, Wiswall assisted in the writing of the canon law of the Church.

In 1992 he returned permanently to Castine, and worked with the legal publisher Matthew Bender & Company, eventually editing seven volumes of the Bender series *Benedict on Admiralty*. The culmination of his life's work was his selection by the IMO as the recipient of the International Maritime Prize in 2015, recognizing Wiswall for his years of leadership, teaching, and dedication to the practice of admiralty and the preservation of lives at sea.

Wiswall married Elizabeth Curtiss Nelson in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, on August 9, 1975. He and Libby, as she is known, became active members of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, which was for Frank a renewal of an association he had begun as early as 1960, when he also served as Harbormaster for the Town of Castine. In recent years he served as District Captain for the Northern New England sector of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. He is remembered by all who knew him for his love of the sea, of Maine, and of science fiction. He is survived by his wife, Libby, daughter, Anne Wiswall Kowalski, and grandson Evan Kowalski, all of Castine; son, Frank L. Wiswall III of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan; and grandchildren Jennifer Larson, Katherine Kowalski, Henry Wiswall, and Geoffrey Wiswall.