

**George N. Gafford 1916-2014**

## California Western law professor and author was a student favorite

By **Melanie Brisbon**  
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**P**rofessor Emeritus George N. Gafford of California Western School of Law has died in La Jolla. He was 98.

He spent nearly a half-century working with the law school and was instrumental in its spinoff from the institution then known as California Western University.

"He engineered the separation of this law school from its parent university in the 1970s, without which the law school probably would have perished," Dean Niels B. Schaumann said in an interview.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1916, Gafford received a full scholarship to Yale University and graduated cum laude in 1936. He went on to Case Western Reserve University School of Law, receiving his law degree in 1939, and began working for the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission immediately afterwards.

During World War II, he



joined the U.S. Army Air Corps as a civilian and later joined the U.S. Navy for active duty from 1942 to 1946. He returned to Ohio after World War II and set up a private practice there for the next two decades. Later, he served as an assistant attorney general in Ohio before moving to San Diego and becoming full-time professor at California Western School of Law in 1969.

Gafford also authored four books: "Odyssey of a Law

School," "Lawyers Are Us," "80 Years of Adventure" and "Take It Easy!." He also coached law students in many mock trial competitions, helping them win three national championships.

"He was beloved by many of his former students," Schaumann said. "I think he was focused heavily on students and students' futures."

Gafford retired from the law school in 1986, though he remained involved. He served on the board of trustees for 25 years and left that position last year.

"He was an ongoing friend of the law school," said Schaumann. "He and his wife contributed financially to the school."

Gafford is survived by his wife of 34 years, Martha, three children, five grandchildren, six great-grandchildren and four nieces. Gafford was preceded in death by his daughter Diane Gafford, for whom the law school's Diane Ethics Award is named.

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