



*Richard S. Morse*

## Richard Stetson Morse

1911–1988

By Courtland D. Perkins

On a summer day several years ago, a teenager, Laura Morse, was sitting with several of her friends in a small lunchroom near Quissett Harbor on Cape Cod in Massachusetts. Up drove a spectacular sports car, from which emerged a vigorous, handsome, white-haired man who immediately changed the ambience in the restaurant. Laura turned to her greatly impressed friends and said in their vernacular, "That's my grandfather and he's a Cool Cat." The Cool Cat was Richard S. Morse, an eminent and successful entrepreneur, a member of the National Academy of Engineering, a blithe spirit, a brilliant engineer, and a success at many important undertakings. A man full of wit and the friend of almost everybody.

Dick Morse died several years later, July 1, 1988, of a massive heart attack after playing tennis with friends in his usual mode of full speed ahead. He was born on August 19, 1911, in Abington, Massachusetts, and therefore was seventy-six at the time of his death. His friends agree that his abrupt demise was a blessing as he would have been an impossible invalid.

Dick attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), from which he received a B.S. in 1933, and did graduate work at the Technische Hochschule, Munich, during 1933–1934. Later he received honorary degrees, a D.Eng. from the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute (1959) and a D.Sc. from Clark University (1960).

His forceful character was evidenced early when he met a beautiful young lady named Marion Elsa Baitz. He decided immediately that this was the girl for him. After their third date, he drove Marion to her home, went upstairs to her parents bedroom, woke them up, and announced that he was going to marry their daughter. It didn't bother him at all that Marion was engaged to someone else. Dick maneuvered around this difficulty and married Marion in 1935. This was a very successful marriage that soon involved two splendid sons, Richard S. Morse, Jr., a successful lawyer in Boston, and Kenneth P. Morse, like his father an energetic entrepreneur. Later the two sons married, and Dick and Marion acquired two outstanding daughters-in-law, Susan and Laura, both of whom they loved very much. This love was reciprocated fully. The family soon expanded with the birth of a handsome grandson, Richard III, and three lovely granddaughters, the Laura whom we have already met, and Amy and Allison. Dick was a hero to all four.

After Dick graduated from MIT and returned from his studies in Munich, he went to work for the Eastman Kodak Company in 1935. While on the staff, he became interested in the technology of high vacuums and their potential for new industrial products. Convinced of this potential, he left Kodak in 1940 to found the National Research Corporation of Cambridge, Massachusetts, a venture capital-funded organization dedicated to the development of new manufacturing techniques and new products. Among his successes were vacuum processes for powdered drugs, the coating of optical lenses, dehydrating food without sacrificing taste or vitamins, and refining metals without impurities. One of his greatest successes was helping to set up the Minute Maid Corporation in 1946 to promote his new technique for making orange juice concentrate. This resulted in the now-famous Minute Maid orange juice.

Dick Morse broadened his interests and slowly became involved with government programs in chemical, biological, and radiological warfare. In 1959 he resigned as president of National Research and became director of research and development for the U.S. Army. This position was later upgraded to a presidential appointment of assistant secretary U.S. Army for research

and development. Dick did not go along too well with the U.S. Defense Department's downgrading of many U.S. Army programs, in particular postponing development of the Nike Zeus and the awarding of almost all military space programs to the U.S. Air Force. In the election of 1961, Dick, an ardent Republican, was vocal against the candidacy of John F. Kennedy. This, of course, led to his eventual resignation in 1961.

After Dick left the government, he continued his interest in organizing small companies to exploit new developments in high technology. He had some successes and a few failures, but he continued his search for new technology-based ventures. He became involved with his old school, MIT, and its Alfred P. Sloan School of Management. He suggested the establishment of an MIT Development Foundation that would help MIT's innovative professors develop their ideas and organize new companies to exploit them. He felt that MIT should become a catalyst in this innovative process for if such companies became successful, MIT would also benefit. Dick pushed the idea for this foundation with his usual vigor. Unfortunately, the timing was bad, and it never was the success that he had hoped for.

Dick also became involved with the problems of pollution of the environment and the search for alternatives to energy production. This led him into contact with the U.S. Department of Commerce and his old MIT colleague, J. Herbert Hollomon, then the assistant secretary of commerce for research and development. He helped Hollomon organize a U.S. Department of Commerce Technical Advisory Board and for many years was an influential member of this active group. He received national recognition for this work and became an adviser to the administration and to the Congress on innovative solutions to problems involving energy and pollution. He attacked these problems with typical vigor and emphasized his basic philosophy of getting the data and moving out.

As a result of his many contributions to these national technological problems, he received much exposure on the engineering scene, leading to his being elected to the National Academy of Engineering in 1976.

He continued close connections with MIT and eventually was

named senior lecturer in the Sloan School. His great enthusiasm, broad knowledge of technologies and financial management, together with his personal relationships with the major people involved, made his courses in entrepreneurship and managing innovation extremely popular.

He was active in many important organizations, serving on the Defense Science Board and as chairman of the Advisory Board to the U.S. Air Force Systems Command. He was a trustee of the Aerospace Corporation and the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole, a member of the corporation of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution and the Boston Museum of Science, and a long-time board member of the Dresser Industries.

His greatest hobby was sailing. He loved the Quissett Harbor area of Cape Cod and had a summer home there for all his later life. In 1959 he acquired a beautiful 47-foot sloop, the "Mandarin", built for him in Hong Kong from a John Alden design. Someone asked Marion if she was worried that his first love seemed to be for his boat. Marion answered brightly, "It's all right as long as I'm in the top ten."

Dick was a unique man who made many contributions to the national scene. He was well loved by his family, his business associates, his neighbors, and his colleagues in the Academy and elsewhere. He was a hard-driving, brilliant, and witty man, and the comment of his granddaughter Laura, that he was a "Cool Cat," fits him very well indeed.

