



## Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse

BY CLIFF HIGHT

In 1967, White House staffers for President Lyndon B. Johnson sent a telegram to Manhattan, Kansas, resident Richard L. D. “Dick” Morse requesting his attendance at a swearing-in ceremony for Betty Furness, Johnson’s newly appointed special assistant for consumer affairs. Morse had been advising the Kennedy and Johnson administrations on consumer issues, and this telegram is one of many examples of Morse’s influence on what is known as the consumer movement.

The consumer movement represents individual and organizational advocacy efforts to corporations and government entities for protections from products and systems that can hurt people. Morse spent more than 60 years engaged in these efforts, starting as an undergraduate student in the 1930s. When he retired in 1987, he donated his papers to K-State Libraries and the collection became a pillar of the Consumer Movement Archives. He

encouraged those in his network to donate to the collection, which greatly expanded research materials from individuals and organizations involved in consumer protections.

Born in Iowa and raised in New Jersey, Morse attended



*Above: Dick Morse shakes hands with President Johnson at Betty Furness’ swearing-in ceremony on May 1, 1967. Furness is next to the president.*

*Left: Dick and Marjorie on their wedding day, May 2, 1943.*

colleges in the Midwest and capped those studies with a doctorate in consumption economics from Iowa State College in 1942. After graduation, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on the Pacific front during World War II. He completed his distinguished service at the rank of lieutenant in 1946.

While at Iowa State, he met Marjorie Johnson,

a native of Oklahoma who was pursuing her master's degree in child development. They married in her home state while he was on leave in 1943. During part of the war, Marjorie taught at Mills College and directed a nursery school in California.

After the war, Morse worked at Iowa State and Florida State University while he and Marjorie raised their growing family. They moved to Manhattan in 1955 when he became head of the Department of Family

Economics at K-State, and they became fixtures in the K-State and Manhattan communities. Morse became involved in the K-State Federal Credit Union and other local groups, as well as state organizations related to consumer protections and supporting older Kansans. Marjorie worked at the State Department of Social Welfare, was a Riley County Commissioner for a decade and volunteered on community boards.



Morse became a national expert in consumer credit and other personal finance topics. He was appointed to President Kennedy's Consumer Advisory Council in 1962, for which he chaired the economic welfare and consumer credit committee. He continued advising presidential administrations through 1980 and was a tireless leader among those pursuing consumer protections. He was the primary author and advocate for the Truth in Lending Act of 1968

and the Truth in Savings Act of 1991, laws that regulated financial institution disclosures on loans, credit and savings accounts.

The Morses had a deep interest in libraries. Marjorie helped start a public library in Tallahassee, Florida, and Dick's mother started one in New Jersey. From 1988 to 1993, they co-chaired the K-State Libraries' fundraising campaign and, in 1990, they donated \$100,000 to support the special collections department. After supporting the expansion of Hale Library, the Morses gave an additional \$150,000 in 1997. To honor their generosity, the department was named the Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections. It was a fitting capstone to their years of diligent effort for the department and the Libraries. Morse passed away in 2000, and Marjorie followed in 2003. Yet, their memory lives on through their family, as well as a named department, named scholarships and archival collections that will continue supporting scholars for generations to come.

In Morse Memos, the Richard L. D. and Marjorie J. Morse Department of Special Collections staff dig into the stories of our collections, which include archives and unique materials focused on the consumer movement, cookery, Kansas life and culture, and more.

Above: Morse family portrait in 1955 shortly after arriving in Manhattan.

Left: A 1967 White House telegram to Dick Morse inviting him to the Betty Furness swearing-in ceremony.

