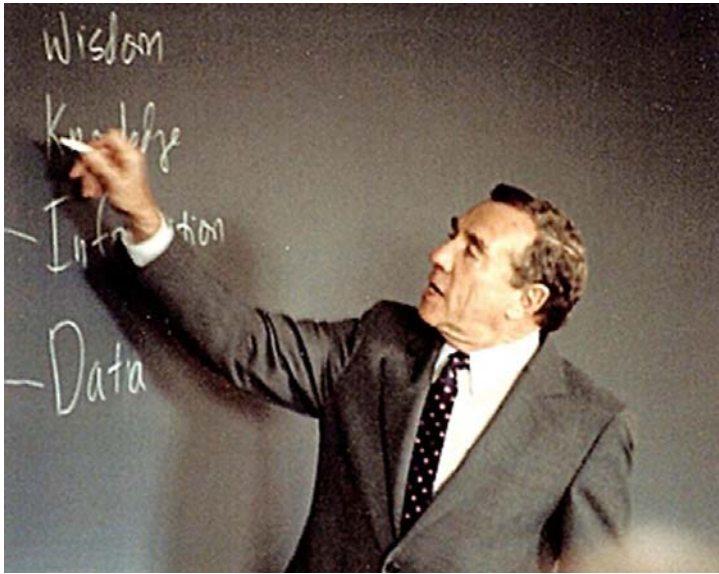


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Lincoln P. Bloomfield, 93; helped create tools to contain conflict



courtesy of the Bloomfield family

Dr. Bloomfield lectured in 35 countries and taught the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for 30 years.

By Bryan Marquard Globe Staff November 12, 2013

With the kind of self-teasing wit often apparent in his writing, Lincoln P. Bloomfield wrote in the mid-1960s that “pontificating about foreign policy and world affairs” can be “a form of self-flattery that Adlai Stevenson said won’t hurt you if you don’t inhale it. I hope he was right.”

No mere armchair analyst, Dr. Bloomfield [taught political science](#) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, served five US secretaries of state, held an administrative State Department position in the early years of the United Nations, and was director of global issues on the National Security Council staff in President Jimmy Carter’s administration. His own research helped lead to the creation of [CASCON](#), a historical database of dozens of post-World War II conflicts that assists diplomatic staffs, domestic and foreign, as they analyze and try to defuse emerging conflicts that could develop into war.

“He was always looking to perfect the mechanisms of de-escalation,” said his son, [Lincoln P. Bloomfield Jr.](#) of Alexandria, Va., a former deputy assistant secretary in the US State and Defense departments. “He truly believed there was a potential for nuclear war and above all was dedicated to finding ways to prevent that from happening. That was the core of his existence.”

Dr. Bloomfield, who also had hosted the Christian Science Monitor TV program “50 Years Ago Today,” [died](#) of respiratory failure Oct. 30 during rehabilitation at the Linden Ponds care community in Hingham. He was 93 and had lived in Cohasset for more than 56 years.

In 1956, he wrote that he had “fallen desperately in love with Cohasset,” and would “entertain any reasonable job offer in the vicinity.” While the town was his home, the world was his stage during the years he divided his time between the Center for International Studies at MIT, where he retired as a professor emeritus of political science, and the State Department, where among his bosses Dean Rusk was his favorite secretary of state.

Dr. Bloomfield formerly directed the MIT Arms Control Project and developed CASCON with his colleague Allen Moulton, a research scientist at MIT’s Sociotechnical Systems Research Center. In 1988, their work received the EDUCOM/NCRIPAL award for distinguished software in political science.

“He had a very strong instinct for how technology might be helpful in a practical sense for doing real foreign policy work,” Moulton said.

With his research that led to creating the conflict database, Dr. Bloomfield refined a historical approach to war-gaming, and “it’s now regularly used to try to simulate how nations or other international actors might interact with one another in ways that might create something that brews up into a war,” Moulton said. “It’s a very powerful mechanism, and to a large extent, he was the founder of that whole method.”

Even in retirement Dr. Bloomfield kept careful watch on world affairs, [writing a blog](#) that touched on everything from the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq to the conflicts in Egypt and Syria and lingering concerns about developments in China and Iran.

In his 90s, he also offered sharp comments in his blog about the Tea Party movement, presidential candidates who “demonstrated ignorance of some facts they should have mastered in grade school,” and the pitfalls of aging. Noting that some of his former MIT students designed his Internet destinations, Dr. Bloomfield wondered: “How come they haven’t made their cool websites more readable for those of us with less-than-perfect vision?”

Born in Boston, Lincoln Palmer Bloomfield was one of three children and divided his youth between New York City, where he graduated from the Horace Mann School, and his family’s summer home in Scituate.

He graduated from Harvard College in 1941 and served as a Navy officer in various posts during World War II. By war’s end he was working in the Office of Strategic Services and the State Department, where he stayed 11 years.

From Harvard, he also received a master’s in public administration in 1952 and a doctorate in 1956. Harvard awarded his dissertation the Chase Prize and it became “Evolution or Revolution,” the first of 14 books he published.

While on the State Department staff for United Nations affairs, he met Irirangi Coates, a daughter of Joseph Gordon Coates, a former New Zealand prime minister. “We were an early

UN romance, Iri being one of the New Zealand delegation's young political advisers as well as information officer of the embassy," Dr. Bloomfield wrote in his 25th Harvard class report. They married in 1948 at her country's embassy in Washington, D.C., with Rusk giving away the bride.

During his decades as an educator, writer, and government official, Dr. Bloomfield lectured in 35 countries and taught at MIT for 30 years.

"In his professional prime he was very focused. He had an amazing power of concentration," his son said, adding that when Dr. Bloomfield worked in his Cohasset home, "There could be a war going on outside, and if he was focused, he was focused."

Dr. Bloomfield's final book, published in 2005, was the memoir "[Accidental Encounters With History \(and Some Lessons Learned\)](#)."

He also skied, played tennis and golf, was a self-taught pianist, and wrote that he was a singer of "occasional nerve-racking solos" in the choir at First Parish, the Unitarian Universalist church in Cohasset, where he chaired the parish committee and performed in annual cabarets.

"He was an original, no question," his son said.

In addition to his wife and son, Dr. Bloomfield leaves two daughters, Pamela of Andover and Diana Calabasas, Calif.; and three grandchildren.

A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, Nov. 16, in First Parish Church in Cohasset, to which he used to walk from his nearby home with its view of the ocean.

"As one who never trusted anyone else to write my obituary, I should be grateful for this chance," Dr. Bloomfield began his entry in his 25th Harvard class report as he launched into a succinct, lively account of his first quarter century plying the trades of diplomacy and academia.

In his final blog entry, in January, he reflected on government gridlock, international threats, and the continuing "very real human and other costs of conflict," but ended on a note of optimism earned through years of observation and analysis.

"Bad things are still happening and the future has a habit of being unpredictable," Dr. Bloomfield wrote. "But the evidence seems to show an uneven but nevertheless welcome and widespread trend: Things are looking up."

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