

Europe mirrors my life

And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.—Isaiah 2:3–4

David Lewis, professor and diplomat, died May 15, 2015, aged 83.



If Europe's identity is that of the old world looking to the future, then David Wilfrid Paul Lewis was definitely a dedicated European. His great passions were those of the continent's high culture: oil painting, classical music and poetry. Yet Lewis was also a moral witness to Europe's rebuilding. Experiencing World War II at a young age, Lewis knew that European integration was primarily a means to avoid another war in Europe. Thus, according to him, the European Union was one of the "greatest historical achievements of the 20th century". This said, Lewis was no idealist. To some degree, he foresaw the reawakening of nationalism that currently threatens Europe. He also cared deeply about the preservation of national cultures, and the inherent dangers of total federalism.

Lewis participated in the European project directly and indirectly. After obtaining a B.A. Honours in French and German at The Queen's College, University of Oxford, Lewis studied at the College of Europe, in Bruges – his class was named after Raoul Dautry, a French engineer and politician from the South of France. The College was a recent creation, founded in 1949 by the likes of Churchill and De Gasperi, along with pro-European Capuchin friars, to "promote a spirit of solidarity and mutual understanding between all the nations of Western Europe and to provide elite training to individuals who will uphold these values". While at the College, Lewis was elected President of the Students and became friends with the Rector, Professor Hendrik Brugmans. It is here that Lewis converted from his father's Methodism to the Roman Catholic faith and took the baptismal name of Paul.

From 1958 to 1968, Lewis worked as a diplomat at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France. He became an expert on issues that affected all of Europe: adult education, study abroad programs, and environmental protection. In addition to creating and managing international cooperation programs, Lewis sought to educate and inform the European public about the Council's work. He took on lecturing assignments, drafted publication materials, and helped create a European Information Centre for Nature Conservation.

While Chair of the then Department of Modern and Foreign Languages at Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, and Director of the Lehigh Center for International Studies, Lewis wrote a book entitled "The Road to Europe". It covered the European Union's history, institutions and prospects. A the monograph's two main topics were the consequences of integration for Eastern Europe and the United States – Lewis would continue to think about these issues for the rest of his career. This book, along with Lewis' social ties to the College of Europe, brought him an offer to become the Vice-Rector and head of the College's new campus in Warsaw. Lewis accepted the offer, and postponed his retirement to the South of France.

From 1994 to 1996, Lewis helped create and run this new institution, dedicated to forming a new generation of Europeans. At the end of the Cold War, many Eastern European states were eager to become members of the European Union, and the College was there to train those who aspired to work for the European Commission, Council and Parliament. After Lewis finally retired to Provence, to paint, travel and spend time with his wife and son, he published his final work. The 1999 co-edited conference proceedings entitled *What Security for which Europe?: Case Studies from the Baltic to the Black Sea* discussed the impact of European Union expansion on European security. Recent events in Ukraine have given this collaborative work renewed relevance.

Lewis' conservative sartorial tastes were quite similar to his father's and grandfather's: suit, suspenders, cotton handkerchief. In a way, they provided a stark contrast to his cosmopolitan life-style. It could be said that Lewis enjoyed the benefits that globalization offers the higher social classes. At the end of his life, almost half of which he spent in France, Lewis held British, Canadian and American citizenships. In addition to his time in Strasbourg, Bethlehem, and Warsaw, he also worked in London, Montreal, and Thunder Bay. In his last position, as Vice-Rector of the College of Europe, Lewis' responsibilities included travelling to Europe's capitals to solicit grants from governments. Yet, he rarely let these responsibilities go to his head. For example, Lewis loved to tell the story of Queen Elisabeth II, who upon visiting the Warsaw campus showed more interest in the kilt-wearing gardener than in him, the normal suit-wearing head of campus.

In fact, Lewis' early education had already led him to distant lands. He was born in Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, on January 24th, 1932, the second of three children. While in grammar school, the young David studied French near Paris, where he became lifelong friends with his pen pal's brother, Michel Roche, who would later work for Mack Trucks. As an Oxford undergraduate, Lewis practiced his language skills at universities in Poitiers and Munich. In addition to a B.A. (1953) and an M.A (1968) from Oxford, Lewis obtained a diploma (1950) and a doctorate (1973) from La Sorbonne, in Paris. His doctoral thesis on Paul Verlaine's poetry received the jury's highest honours.

It might be these experiences that led Lewis to be a lifelong advocate of education, especial study *abroad*. In addition to university teaching, Lewis loved to teach chess, both to his children and to other children – as a teenager, David was the school chess captain, and at Oxford he was on the university chess team. During retirement, he continued this practice by teaching young French children at the town hall. Similarly, no matter where Lewis went, be it Strasbourg, Thunder Bay, Bethlehem or Warsaw, he created overseas programs and

encouraged students to take advantage of these opportunities. He sent Lakehead students to Mexico, Lehigh students to Paris and Poitiers, College of Europe students to the Balkans. Overall, Lewis had a rare ability to relate to the young, many of whom admired his intellect (at Lehigh, he was president of Phi Beta Kappa) and celebrated his accomplishments as an educator. Students from everywhere confided in him and kept in contact after graduation. Towards the end of his life, the French Ministry of Culture admitted him to the honorific order of the *Palmes académiques*.

Lewis also traveled for pleasure, mostly in Europe. In his youth, he would ski. In the second half of his life, he played tennis. But perhaps because of his life-long ailment of asthma and eczema, most vacations were dedicated to finding good places to eat, drink and paint. On at least one occasion, he mixed all these pleasures, and used sangria to paint a Spanish sky. Throughout his life, Lewis would travel with his family by plane, train, ferry, and car, touring Europe on a small budget. David's children grew accustomed to this lifestyle of cheap hotels, expensive food and leisurely travel. To alleviate the boredom of long car rides, he regaled them with pithy rhymes and bilingual puns – an oft-repeated classic was 'Some say no, some say yes, off we go to Cadaquès!'

Lewis also encouraged his children to travel – he once visited Uganda, where his daughter drove him 2000 kilometres to see the country's beauty. When his youngest son asked to spend a semester in Cairo, Lewis' passion for foreign studies outweighed his concerns, and he gave his blessing. Today, his children have continued this pastime. Within a recomposed family, David had 14 grandchildren – in Canada, the United States, England, France and New Zealand – who all loved to visit and play 'boules' with him. Lewis met his first wife, Felicity on a ferry in the English Channel, and they had four children. Nicholas, Rosamund and Lydia-Maria were born in France, while the cadet, Diana, was born in Canada. While in Canada, Lewis met his second wife, Avril, on a television set where the two were producing French-language programs. Avril also had four children, William, Jonathon, Emma (all born in the England) and Matthew (born in Canada), and later gave birth to David's youngest child, Olivier (born in the United States).

While working in Warsaw, Lewis returned regularly to the south of France to visit Avril and Olivier. During one of these visits, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, later thought more likely to be Lewy body dementia. For a man of such intellect, this was tragic news. By 2003, Lewis was losing his ability to paint. His shaking hands could no longer produce the talent that once allowed him to sell his watercolours, oils and acrylics. Still, with his customary sense of humour, he described this as his 'pointillist' period. Most of his paintings are no longer in his house – he has long since given them to friends and family. From Vancouver to Wellington, pictures of English gardens, French villages and Maine harbours hang on living-room walls, reminding loved ones not only that he cared about them, but why he thought life is worth living: for beauty, nature and culture.

By 2010, Lewis had gradually lost his ability to finish a sentence. As a once great linguist, conversationalist and speaker, not being able to communicate was especially distressing. At grammar school he received perfect marks in Latin and French and won a declamation trophy. At Oxford he was an officer in the university's French club. Occasionally, Lewis

would write poetry for family members. As a professor, he designed and gave French courses on 17th century literature and French for business and international careers. In social gatherings, be they weddings, cocktail parties or dinners, Lewis would enjoy being the centre of attention. From Bruges to Avignon, he could be found holding a glass of wine, telling stories and showing off his wit. When he met children, he would kneel down to share scary faces, funny sounds and bad jokes. Throughout his life, he partook in dramatic productions, often playing the role of a monster or a villain, and for the guests at his wife's gîte, he had become a main attraction. Ever spiritual, David did not hesitate to be contrary. For his funeral, he instructed his family that there were to be "no speeches", only private reflection and Haydn's Cello Concerto in D by Jacqueline Dupré.

During his last years, Lewis also lost his ability to listen to music attentively. This must have upset him, for he spent his entire life listening to classical music. In fact, he loved classical music so much, that he took on pro-bono responsibilities. From 1970 to 1975, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra Association; from 1971 to 1973, he was on the Board of the Ontario Federation of Symphony Orchestras; and from 1974 to 1976, he was a member of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Association of Symphony Orchestras.

Finally, by 2015, David could no longer walk. His remaining pleasures were enjoying good meals and the loving care of his wife, who took care of his every need as his condition slowly worsened. It could be said that nothing ever stopped him from enjoying the world's best foods. Even in his handicapped state, Lewis could distinguish fine goods from the bad. When Avril handed him a plate of appetizers, he would eat the *fois gras* and salmon, and leave the rest. While in Strasbourg, Lewis would, in classic French style, take long lunch breaks with friends and eat white asparagus by the kilo, accompanied with Gewürztraminer. In fact, even a world war could not stop Lewis' gastronomic pleasures. From 1940 to 1954, many foods were rationed in England. So while David's elder brother, Brian, and sister, Audrey, ate their daily butter ration as soon as possible, David saved a week's worth of butter, and waited for Sunday to enjoy it all in one glorious toast-and-butter feast.

Hegel once wrote: "no man can surpass his own time, for the spirit of his time is also his own spirit". It seems that Lewis understood this reasoning. On November 3, 1993, *The Brown and White*, Lehigh University's student-run newspaper published a review of the recent manuscript, *The Road to Europe*. When student reporter John Kish IV interviewed Lewis about the writing process, the professional educator and amateur poet answered: "the book was written with feeling because it mirrors my life".