

A Collaborative Tribute to Mickey Lee, WLS
By: Pete Consigli, CR, WLS and Cliff Zlotnik, CR, WLS, CMH
RIA Honorary Members and Cleaning & Restoration Industry Historians



Memories from Pete Consigli:

I recall my first meeting with Mickey Lee in August of 1994 at the Dri-Eaz inaugural Restorative Drying Symposium in Mount Vernon Washington. Mickey worked for Munters in those day and my affiliation with Dri-Eaz at that time, we formed an immediate connection. That was the beginning of a 3-decade long professional relationship and friendship based on a common interest in water damage restoration and drying technology. Over the years our relationship was cemented more than on a technical basis, but rather one steeped in integrity, trust, and the pursuit of mutual benefit.

In May of 1996 RIA, then known as ASCR International, held its first Water Loss Institute (WLI) Conference in Northern California, which led to Mickey's involvement in the association. He attended the first Water Loss Specialist (WLS) class in 1999 in Kansas City Missouri. In the mid to late 1990's the IICRC S-500 was in its 2nd revision, and I would cross paths with Mickey during those days as the drying sector of the industry evolved.

Over the next 2 decades Mickey Lee became a mainstay in restoration industry education in all things related to water damage restoration, drying and project management. Mickey volunteered his time and leadership to facilitate the updating of the WLS program, revisions of the S-500, the creation of the IICRC Commercial Drying Specialist (CDS) course, and the development of RIA's Project and Risk Management prerequisite course.

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Mickey occasionally attended the annual Westford Building Science Symposium in August, affectionately known as “Summer Camp,” where we had an opportunity to meet and network with leading authorities in an informal manner to advance our scientific knowledge in the applied building sciences.

In October of 2019 Mickey was part of an invitation only technical symposium on moisture testing of building materials held in Dublin Ireland hosted by Tramex Moisture Meters. Subject matter experts (SME's) from a range of industry sectors were invited to present on their experience and lessons learned in the drying and testing of various building materials. That week in Dublin a group of international SME's from the restoration, flooring, concrete, roofing, and hardwood industry sectors planted the roots that became known as the Moisture Mob. The Moisture Mob is a group of “gray hairs” who bonded as truth seekers!

The group became a professional fellowship of longtime experts in the related fields that collaborated on mutual interests to pass on their collective knowledge and experience to advance the interconnected building envelope disciplines. Over the next several years the group used IAQradio+ as a venue to share its knowledge and lessons learned through podcasts and blogs. Some of the members would meet at the building science symposium, known as “summer camp,” every August and several members presented at the annual Winter Break conference held in Southwest or South Florida in January or February for the past several years.

Mickey was an integral member of the Moisture Mob and took pride in sharing his knowledge for the greater good. I will always remember Mickey's “take” on the relationship of the 3 primary groups in the “Restoration Triangle”. Mickey's feeling was if everyone focused on the needs of “the project,” it would benefit the customer, contractor, and insurer alike. His premise was to do what was “right” for the project and all parties and stakeholders of a water loss and insurance claim would be best served.

The last time I saw Mickey was during an afternoon visit the second week of June while I was passing through Atlanta as part of a 2-week road trip. I had lunch with Mickey and his wife Kathy at their home. Mickey and I spent a couple of hours visiting and catching up on industry stuff in his home office and training room. Although Mickey was winding down his training and travel schedule the past couple of years, he struggled to say he was retiring. We talked about Mickey traveling to Winter Break in 2026 to meet with his Moisture Mob colleagues and brainstormed how we could collaborate on helping bond the next generation of industry educators and SME's into the fellowship.

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When I got the sad news of Mickey's passing, I realized how fortunate I was to share that afternoon with Mickey over a bowl of his famous "Hoppin John" homemade soup. I'll always remember that day with fondness. Mickey Lee was a true southern gentleman, a man of great faith and principle and an all-around good guy! I never heard Mickey speak ill of others and that may be a reason I have never heard anyone else speak ill of him. Mickey leaves behind a great legacy of industry achievement and his teachings and writings have and will continue to influence generations of restorers for years to come. He will be missed; may he rest in peace!

Comments from Cliff Zlotnik:

Consummate Professional

Mickey demonstrated exceptional skill, knowledge, and experience in his field, consistently delivering high performance and quality results. He was known for his reliability, commitment to excellence, and ability to handle challenges effectively. Mickey was also known for his ability to manage large and complex projects.

Gentle Giant

This phrase captures two aspects of Mickey. "Giant" refers to his stature, not in terms of his natural height more significantly, his achieved status and reputation. Mickey stood out, stood above, and was looked up to and respected by coworkers, colleagues, clients, and students. When Mickey spoke, people listened.

"Gentle" highlights his personal qualities: a true gentleman, calm, patient, considerate, and well-mannered, maintaining a high standard of personal behavior.

Character

Underlying all of these traits, Mickey was devout, loving, fundamentally honest, honorable, sharing, and caring.

Differentiator

One of the highest compliments a teacher or mentor can receive from a student or mentee, is to be acknowledged and thanked for the positive difference that they made in someone's life. Mickey Lee was a differentiator who made the disaster restoration industry more professional and more respected.