

DAN MORGAN: FRIEND AND TEACHER

One never knows where friendships will begin. Sometimes, one meets a person for the first time and has a friend for life. Other times, that friendship needs nurturing and years to grow. The best friendships have both, and that is the friendship that Norman & Edem is honored to have with Dan Morgan.

Emmanuel E. Edem*

I first met Dan about 32 years ago when I took Trial Practice in my final year at the Oklahoma City University School of Law. I had already been lucky to be named a member of the National Moot Court Team. It was one thing to stand at the podium and argue to a three-judge panel. But it was something else to try to persuade a jury of total strangers to give your client a favorable verdict. Not having been “home grown” and lacking the essential “southern drawl,” it was obvious that I needed special attention and a lot of help. Initially, I bonded with Dan because he did not give up on me. I have no idea what he saw in me. I always seemed to do better than what I thought I had done. To his credit, Dan Morgan created an Oklahoma trial lawyer out of nothing. My family, my friends, and my clients owe him a debt of gratitude.

One year after I graduated from law school, I found myself in a fairly difficult situation. I had a case transferred from Oklahoma County to an adjacent, but very small, county. None of the senior members of the office were interested in handling the case. I found myself in the dreaded position of being in small-town Oklahoma where I clearly did not seem to belong. I was lead counsel, and my second chair had only been sworn in as a lawyer just a few months earlier. I had my Trial Practice notes on counsel’s table with me! My current law partner, John Norman, of course, prepared me. However, the secret weapon was the notes I had

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taken from a small-town Wyoming lawyer, Dan Morgan. We ended up setting a record verdict that propelled my career beyond my wildest imagination. For this former President of the Oklahoma Trial Lawyers Association, the rest, as they say, is history.

It was not a surprise that I soon joined the Oklahoma City University School of Law faculty to teach Trial Practice as an adjunct, initially invited by Dan when he was the Associate Dean. I taught for over 20 years. During those years, Dan remained a good friend, and, yes, my teacher. When our law firm decided to sponsor the Norman & Edem professorship at Oklahoma City University School of Law, there was no debate about who should receive the first appointment. Dan Morgan had been a good friend and a great teacher. Not only had we learned a lot from him, but we also had actually been changed in a positive way by his drive and dedication.

Bradley E. Norman**

My first encounter with Dan was when I walked into his Trial Practice classroom at the Oklahoma City University School of Law. I had heard many great things about him from my colleagues and remember the excitement I had that day. I “doffed my fedora” and entered the classroom. Needless to say, I was not disappointed! Dan’s enthusiasm for the civil justice system and righting wrongs radiated throughout the classroom and put everyone at ease. It was that day that I knew we would be friends.

Our friendship continued to grow one summer. The house next to ours had been for sale for some time with many lookers but no buyers. One Saturday afternoon, while teaching my daughter Taylor how to flip off of the diving board, I noticed two vehicles pull up in the driveway of the house. Imagine my excitement when I saw Dan and “Andy” step out of the car! I immediately yelled to them, and I am sure the realtor assumed she had just lost the sale. Much to our enjoyment—and I am sure the realtor’s surprise—Dan and Andy moved in shortly thereafter, our friendship grew, and the teaching continued.

Dan’s arrival as my neighbor made for some exciting times. Even when he was not lecturing at the law school, he never stopped being a

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friend and teacher. Whether it was hosting students at his house while showing off his grilling expertise, or he and I sitting alone, sharing a half-full bottle of wine, discussing the issues of the day, I will never forget the times we shared together and the lessons he taught me.

It was not long thereafter that Dan told me he wanted to visit with me about something. One never knows what that “something” may be with Dan, but trust me, do not pass up the chance! I noticed as he approached that the bottle he was carrying was a little more than half full this time, so I knew the “something” must be important. It was that day he asked me to help him teach Trial Practice. “Help” probably is not the correct word because Dan did not need help teaching the class. He knew I would enjoy teaching and wanted to give me the opportunity and enjoyment that he receives from the class. I accepted, and our relationship has been invaluable in my practice, as I have continued to learn so much from him during our class. I am thankful he allowed me to be a part of it.

I never asked Dan about the half-full bottle of wine but recognized its significance during our class a few years ago. After convincing my father to teach the class on *voir dire*, Dan presented him with a full bottle of wine while grinning at me. I then realized I still have much to learn, and as long as Dan is my friend, that learning will continue. Enjoy retirement, my friend!