

## THE MANY ROLES OF DANIEL JOHN MORGAN

Von Russell Creel\*

### *Dramatis Personae*

DAN MORGAN  
ASSORTED FRIENDS, STUDENTS, STAFF, COLLEAGUES, AND  
OTHER BIT PLAYERS

As that master observer of the human condition once wrote, “And one man in his time plays many parts.”<sup>1</sup> In the years I have had the good fortune to know Dan Morgan, since he came to Oklahoma City University School of Law, he has been teacher, scholar, master fixer-upper, and friend.

### ACT 1, SCENE 1. THE UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING SCHOOL OF LAW

Daniel Morgan, on his way to teach class, stops in the administrative offices for a moment. There he meets the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Wyoming who is visiting campus that day.

Exchanging greetings, Dan says that in class he is going to discuss and criticize a recent opinion written by the Chief Justice. He invites the Chief Justice to come to class and respond to his comments. The Chief Justice accepts the invitation, and the class is treated to a stimulating and entertaining dialogue between the Justice and the professor.

### ACT 1, SCENE 2. OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

“Judge” Dan Morgan is in chambers discussing proposed jury instructions with members of his Trial Practice class. “Professor” Dan

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1. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *AS YOU LIKE IT*, act 2, sc. 2.

Morgan is explaining to some of his Torts students that while Civil Procedure, not Torts, is *The Foundation of All Law*, nevertheless it is important to know the difference between contributory negligence and comparative negligence. Before his Consumer Credit Law class, Dan Morgan is drawing detailed diagrams of the complex transactions the class will be covering.

These vignettes help explain why Dan Morgan, successful and accomplished trial lawyer, left the courtroom for the classroom. It was because Dan saw the classroom as an opportunity.

It was an opportunity to teach students a new language. It was an opportunity to teach students a new way of thinking, to think critically, to think logically, to use their little gray cells as they have never been used before. Students may have come to a Morgan class with minds full of mush. They left thinking like lawyers.

Dan Morgan brought to his courses complete mastery of the material. But that alone is not enough to be a great teacher. One can know the subject matter perfectly, and yet approach teaching as simply a job, a way of earning a living. For Dan Morgan, teaching is a calling; it is something for which Dan has a missionary zeal, and that is not easy for an Episcopalian. There is no better way to describe Dan Morgan, the teacher, than the title of Delderfield's great book, *To Serve Them All My Days*.<sup>2</sup>



2. R.F. DELDERFIELD, *TO SERVE THEM ALL MY DAYS* (1972).

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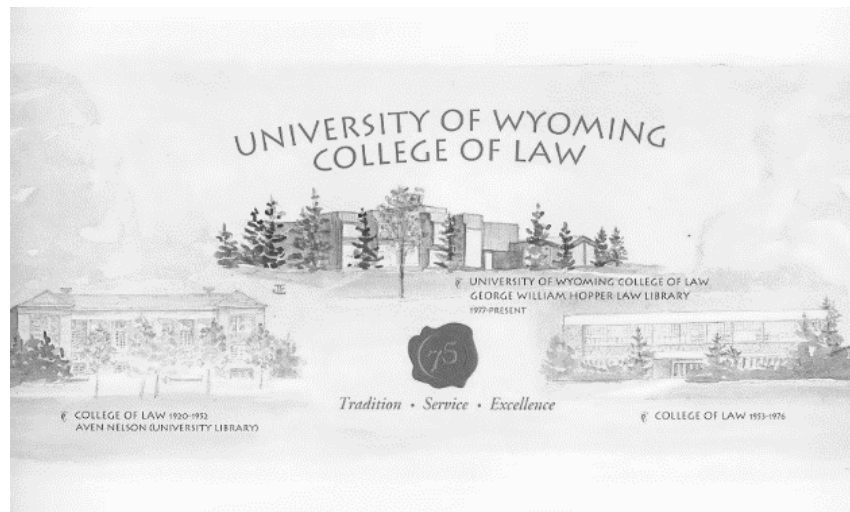
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## ACT 2. UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING SCHOOL OF LAW

Student Dan Morgan, research assistant to the dean, is delving deeply into intricate issues of water law. He finds that researching questions of law and then, as a great judge was wont to say, “putting one little word after another”<sup>3</sup> is an intellectual challenge that he enjoys.

Over the years, Dan has put pen to paper, and then fingers to computer keyboard, writing about many different areas of the law: water law, contracts, trial practice, consumer credit. All of Dan’s articles and books have an underlying goal, a definite purpose. That goal, that purpose, is to address a particular legal dispute, identify and assess fairly and objectively the underlying policy considerations, and suggest a resolution of the dispute, while acknowledging the arguments in favor of a different resolution. Dan never approaches a writing with the purpose of felling another tree. He writes on a topic only because in his considered judgment it is worthy of examination and elucidation. And Dan does not mind, indeed he hopes, that lawyers in the real world will find the finished product of value in their practice.

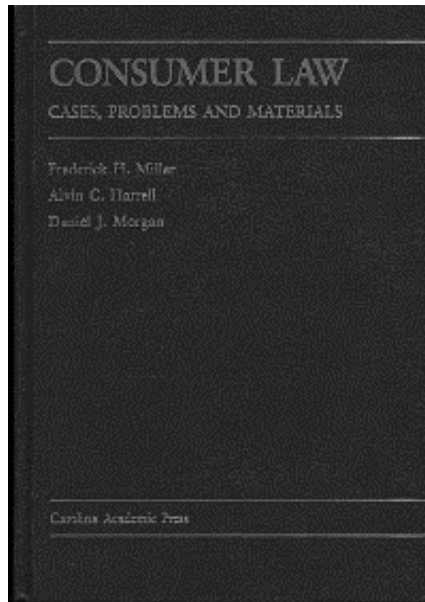
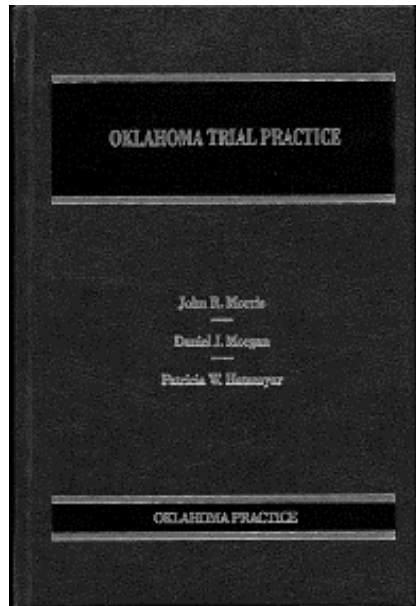


3. Alfred P. Murrah, Sr., Judge and Chief Judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit; Director of the Federal Judicial Center in Washington, D.C.; and Chair of the Judicial Panel on Multidistrict Litigation.

## ACT 3. OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

Regarding service, Dan's writ has not been limited to the law school. It has extended to the entire university. Law school deans, provosts, vice presidents for academic affairs, and university presidents have all sought Dan's counsel, diplomatic skills, advocacy talents, and Wyoming-Oklahoma common sense to solve difficult, challenging, sensitive problems. Dan has always fashioned successful solutions, although many times the credit has gone to others. Dan is the university's minister without portfolio. He is OCU's Harry Hopkins, a thought that surely warms Dan's New Dealer heart.<sup>4</sup>

To teacher, scholar, servant, I must add friend. Proverbs 18, verse 24, says, "and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." Dan is such a friend. He has never wavered in his friendship for, nor support of, our family in good times and in trying times. When Mary was in the hospital for the last time, there was not a day that he did not visit. Emerson penned that a friend is a gift you give yourself. In Dan Morgan, I have given myself a great and imperishable gift.



4. See *THE MAKING OF THE NEW DEAL: THE INSIDERS SPEAK* 176 (Katie Louchheim, ed., 1983) (discussing Harry Hopkins's role as administrator of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration from 1933 to 1935 and of the Public Works Administration from 1935 to 1938).

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Oklahoma City University is fortunate indeed that Dan Morgan came its way. His love for the school, his dedication to its well-being, and his faith in its future are plain for all to see. He has always given more than his share, but less than he wanted. It is then, as the Book of Common Prayer so aptly instructs, very meet, right, and our bounden duty to say, "Well done, Dan Morgan, well done indeed."

