



**IN MEMORIAM  
TRICOUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION**

**HON. DANE F. MOREY**

Two dozen voices filled the church with song. In their midst sat a chair on which lay a choir robe and a rose, a lack in their completeness. Hon. Dane Morey was gone, from them and from us. Dane died Saturday, November 1, 2008. Bar members attending the service witnessed a celebration of one who believed that life was a constant state of renewal, that mistakes could be redeemed, that failure was not the final word.

It could certainly be said of Judge Morey that he was not only highly respected but also loved by his fellow lawyers and judges. He was known by many names: beloved husband, father and grandfather, Dane, Judge, "Your Honor" and during his years of practicing law, by the name of "loophole", a term of endearment and an acknowledgement of his legal ability given to him by his many business clients.

Dane Francis Morey was born a "jackpine savage" in Trego, WI, on September 4, 1932. For the first 11 years of his life he lived in a home without electricity, running water, central heat or an indoor toilet and attended a one room country school. Following the early death of his mother, Dane had primary responsibility for cooking and other household duties for his father, a disabled World War I veteran, and his brother, Carl. He spent two years at Superior State College (now UW Superior) before enlisting in the Army during the Korean War.

Dane was assigned to the Army language school, graduating first in his class as a Korean language translator, ultimately serving in the Communications Reconnaissance Group in Seoul, South Korea. Off-duty he tutored the children of the former royal family of Korea, the Minn



family. After his return to the United States in 1955, he attended the University of Wisconsin at Madison, completing prelaw studies, then law school in January 1959. There he met a young woman “with the most beautiful smile” and married the love of his life, Ruth. Together they had 4 lovely daughters.

Following graduation he took a job as a lawyer in Mauston, WI, working for Attorney Roland Veith. In addition to private practice he was an Assistant District Attorney and later District Attorney of Juneau County. When his “big brother hero” Randy offered Dane a job with his partner, Jack Whelan, and him, Dane moved his young family to Mondovi. His starting salary was so low the local bank refused to loan Dane \$5,000 to purchase a home until Jack Whelan intervened. His first desk was located in the office waiting room, where he was given a pad of paper, a pencil and an adding machine to meet clients and prepare tax returns. Somehow he put four daughters and his wife through college on the meager salary the firm was able to pay him.

In the early days, Dane’s office manner was brusque and businesslike. The death of a close friend at age 37 made Dane realize the importance of people and for the rest of his career he nurtured open, friendly and mentoring relationships with his staff.

The firm prospered over the years, taking over the private practice of John Bartholomew in Durand when John assumed the bench as County Judge, which sent Dane to practice in Durand. They eventually opened a part-time office in the Village of Pepin as well. Jack Whelan’s son, Dave Whelan, joined the Mondovi office. The acquisition of the Cochrane practice of Belmont Schlosstein, the father of Judge Gary Schlosstein, eventually brought Attorney Michael Chambers into the firm. An expanding practice in the Durand office brought



Attorneys Dick Ricci and Robert Oesterreicher.

Because Dane's law firm had three widely dispersed offices in Durand, Mondovi and Cochrane, its lawyers did not see each other often and so to "reconnect" they would annually go on a winter "retreat" i.e. a ski trip to get to know each other better, to discuss items of legal interest, to talk smart and to dull any sharp edges that may have developed during the year. There were also a few Spring trips to Dane's father-in-law's cabin near Boulder Junction. The official agenda was musky fishing – but Dave Whelan doesn't recall ever seeing one, much less observed anyone catching one.

On one ski trip to Mount Telemark, the members of the firm had a chance to have fun, and to make fun of each other's failings on the ski hill. This particular trip found Dick, Bob and Mike having a bowl of chili while waiting for Dane to come through the food line. As luck would have it, Dane's tray full of chili slipped and his chili ran down the front of his new ski pants. It was hard for Dick not to laugh at his senior partner's dilemma until he noticed that the chili was running down into the ski boots that he had loaned Dane for the ski trip. Once again, Dane had the last laugh. Such stories illustrate why being around Dane was always interesting and fun.

Dane gave of himself in countless ways to help young lawyers starting out in private practice. Bob Oesterreicher recalls a case with somewhat convoluted facts on which Bob was unsure how to proceed. Dane, although he was in the midst of preparing for a jury trial in a slip and fall case, put his work aside to help Bob sort things out and steer him in the right direction. Six months or so later (after Dane had won a nice verdict in his trial), Bob again turned to Dane for help with the case. Bob asked Dane if he recalled their prior discussion, and Dane proceeded



to recite the facts and issues in great detail, far better than Bob could have done himself. Dane was a mentor who was genuinely interested and really listened.

Bob also recall one (of many) poker games. Dane was enjoying the spirit of the evening, and in one hand, raising every chance he got. Another player stuck around, and Dane was finally called. After the other player showed his straight, Dane, proud as could be, displayed his "full house flush". This was greeted by uproarious laughter, and upon realizing his faux pas, Dane laughed at himself the hardest of all. Bob said "Dane's bright, intelligent eyes, combined with his self deprecating grin, will never fade from my memory." Nor from ours.

The firm separated in the late 1980's due to illness, death and career changes. Dane continued in the Durand office, joined in the later years by Attorney Roger Hillestad.

Dane loved the outdoors, gardening and carpentry. He was a member of the Rotary club, Lions Club, community arts groups, church, and served on the school board. He sang tenor in various choirs and was active in community theater. He enjoyed exercise and healthy eating, and did not consume much alcohol, although when he did, he tended to put on quite a show.

In January 1990 Governor Tommy Thompson appointed Dane Morey to be Circuit Judge in Buffalo and Pepin Counties. He was reelected three times without opposition, retiring on July 1, 2005. Judge Morey enjoyed his years on the bench, making decisions rapidly and comfortably. He was known as a kind and human judge, enjoying trying to help those in trouble. Civil litigation was his long suit both on the bench and in practice.

Dane's brother, Randy, served as Family Court Commissioner for many years before Dane's appointment. Randy had never had his FCC decision overruled by the trial court, but it took Dane's less than one year on the bench to do so. Dane's comment to Randy was "You are

twelve years older than me, I thought you would have known better than that!”

Dave Whelan also experienced Dane’s refusal to let any relationships interfere with his work as a judge. After being the one who actually helped Dane with his robe when he was “installed”, Dane ruled against Dave in one of the first cases Dave tried before him. Dave remembers feeling he had a good chance of prevailing on the merits. Apparently Dane didn’t think so.

Dane remained with Ruth, the light of his life, until his death on November 1, 2008, attributing to her any success he may have had in life because of her loving support through good times and hard times. At his funeral, Dane’s son in law said that for his family Dane kept “their moral compass pointed true north, living life full speed ahead.”

Journey well, Judge Morey.

Respectfully submitted at the MidWinter meeting of the TriCounty Bar Association on January 9, 2009.

Randy Morey  
Gary Schlosstein  
James Duvall