

## Memorial: Donald J. Dunn (1945–2008)\*

¶1 With sadness I write a memorial in honor of my dear friend, colleague, and co-author, Donald Jack Dunn. Don was born on November 9, 1945, in Tyler, Texas. He died, at the age of sixty-two, on January 5, 2008, in Coto de Caza, California, of complications related to a cancer that he fought against valiantly for almost two years. He is survived by his beloved family: wife Cheryl Dunn, son Kevin, daughter-in-law Wendy, and two grandchildren, Camden and Tobin, as well as a host of friends and admirers.

¶2 Don was nationally known as an outstanding law librarian, a leading dean, a dedicated professional, a respected scholar, and a talented writer. He held leadership positions in the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL), the Association of American Law Schools (AALS), the American Bar Association (ABA), and the American Library Association (ALA).

¶3 Don began his thirty-eight-year career as a law librarian at the University of Texas Law Library. In February 1967, Don joined the Tarlton Law Library staff as a work-study student, filing cards in the public catalog. After receiving his M.L.S. from the University of Texas (UT) in June 1972, Don was promoted to supervising librarian of our Criminal Justice Reference Library, a position he held until 1973, when he joined the Western New England College School of Law (WNEC) as its law library director.

¶4 He was WNEC's first law library director. Don received tenure as professor of law at WNEC in 1980 and his law degree from the school in 1983.

¶5 In August 1996, Don became WNEC's interim dean, assuming the deanship in June 1998. In January 2002, he resigned the deanship, returning to law librarianship as WNEC's associate dean for library and information resources. WNEC and Dean Arthur Gaudio recognized Don's contributions to their programs on Monday, April 14, 2008, in "A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Don Dunn."

In his three decades at the School of Law, Don Dunn was both a contributor and a recorder of our history. From the makeshift law library he took over in 1973 in the Our Lady of Lourdes gym to the thriving law center he left at the turn of the millennium, Don was an important part of our evolution. His contributions to legal research and scholarship, library science, and American Bar Association study abroad programs have impacted legal education around the globe. Above all, Don has left a lasting mark on the memories of the many colleagues and students who were fortunate to share time at the School of Law with him. Please join us as we celebrate the life and legacy of the man we called dean, alumnus, professor librarian, scholar, and friend.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Invitation to "A Celebration of the Life and Legacy of Don Dunn (1945–2008), Monday, April 14, 2008" (copy on file with journal).

¶6 Today, the Western New England College School of Law's Donald J. Dunn Scholarship continues to enrich the lives of law students, providing financial support to deserving students.

¶7 In June 2003, Don joined the University of La Verne (ULV) College of Law as dean and professor of law, a position he held with distinction until his death on January 5, 2008. The university's President Stephen Morgan acknowledged Don's contributions:

Donald Dunn was an experienced administrator, dedicated educator and recognized scholar who had a profound and lasting effect on the University Of La Verne College Of Law. As dean, he provided keen leadership that helped carry our College of Law over the initial threshold of American Bar Association accreditation. . . .<sup>2</sup>

¶8 An active professional, Don was a member of the Law School Admissions Council, serving on the Program and Services Committee and the Sub-Committee on Professional Issues. Don had a distinguished history of AALL involvement. He served as a member of the Executive Director Search Committee in 1988 and as chair of the 2002 committee. Even after assuming deanship responsibilities, he remained an active AALL member, serving on the Task Force on National Legal Information Issues, the Education Committee, the Research Agenda Committee, the Scholarship Committee, and the Economic Status of Law Librarianship Committee. He also chaired the Academic Law Libraries Special Interest Section.

¶9 Don served on more than forty ABA site evaluation teams, was chair of five of these teams, and the sole evaluator for three summer abroad programs, in Moscow, Beijing, and Cape Town. A member of ALA, Don was also a former president of the Association of College and Research Libraries, Law and Political Science Section.

¶10 Additionally, Don was the founding president of the New England Law Library Consortium, and was active in the Law Librarians of New England chapter, serving on its executive board for many years and then as its president. Further, Don was a member of the American Law Institute and a Fellow of the American Bar Foundation.

¶11 A recognized scholar, Don became my co-editor and co-author. During Don's career at Tarlton in the early '70s, he assisted Myron Jacobstein and me in identifying articles for inclusion in the publication, *Index to Periodical Articles Related to Law*. It was not until 1991 that he consented to resume his association with the *Index*, joining Myron and me as a co-editor. After Myron's death, Don continued as my co-editor on the *Index*. Don compiled the *Five Year Cumulation*

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2. Current News, University of La Verne College of Law, *Donald J. Dunn, Dean of University of La Verne College of Law, Dies at 62*, Jan. 7, 2008, [http://law.ulv.edu/about\\_the\\_college/current\\_news/01-07-08.html](http://law.ulv.edu/about_the_college/current_news/01-07-08.html).

of Volumes 31–35, and he oversaw the *Index*'s transition from paper to electronic version when William. S. Hein & Company began publishing it in 2003.

¶12 Don was an early contributor to Jacobstein and Mersky's *Fundamentals of Legal Research* (FLR) and *Legal Research Illustrated*, and he became our co-author on the sixth and seventh editions of the books. Upon Myron's death, Don became my co-author on the eighth edition. In 2006, Don and I were honored by the American Association of Law Library's Academic Law Librarians Special Interest Section, which voted FLR one of the most influential texts in legal research over the last fifty years (1957–2007). Don was an incredible co-author. His attention to detail was impeccable. He oversaw the preparation and production of the various editions of FLR, and I remain grateful for his consistent focus on quality and content. He continued working on the ninth edition until his death. Professor Steven M. Barkan, law library director of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, has assumed Don's responsibilities, and he will be my co-author on the ninth edition. Don would be pleased.

¶13 A prolific writer of numerous books and articles, Don was a recognized authority on legal research and writing. He was a founding member of *Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing* and a member of its editorial board from 1991 to 2007. He was a member of SCRIBES, The Society of Legal Writers, and served in various leadership roles: chair of the Book Awards Committee, member of the Board of Directors, secretary, president-elect, president, and immediate past president.

¶14 In May 2007, Don was inducted into the University of La Verne's "ULV Academy," an honor given to those individuals who have demonstrated quality research and a clear commitment to the advancement of the University of La Verne.

¶15 His professional achievements were remarkable, but his greatest legacy was the profound impact that he had on the lives of his family, colleagues, and friends. He was admired, respected, and loved. Don was a unique and special person. He had an unpretentious manner, a quick smile, and a wry wit. Bred in East Texas, he had an innate Southern charm that was modest, yet exuberant and brash. Don communicated in a straightforward, down-to-earth manner, and he exhibited good common sense. When you shook his hand, you knew this was someone you would like to have as a friend and a colleague. He was someone you could count on.

¶16 When I turned to Don's family and friends for consolation, their recollections about his life and the impact he had on their lives brought back so many memories of this dear man who was admired by, and a friend of, so many. Daniel Martin, the law library director at Loyola Marymount, remembers Don as an extraordinarily kind person, encouraging to new librarians and a mentor to many. Bob Berring, University of Berkeley Law School, said Don was "one of life's good guys, and great company." Jonathan Pratter, Tarlton's foreign and international law

librarian, mentioned Don's consideration and respect for his professional abilities. Rich Leiter, director of the University of Nebraska Law Library, recalls Don's expertise as a knowledgeable member of accreditation teams. Terry Martin, Harvard law librarian, also recollects Don's accreditation expertise. Don had created his own accreditation questionnaire which he asked schools to complete, and on the day after his visits would have a draft report on the school completed. Terry also commented on the fact that Don was the most amazingly fast loose-leaf filer he ever saw. Bob Nissenbaum, director of Fordham's law library, vividly remembers that when he was finishing his first year at WNEC, Don allowed a basketball game during the library's temporary move from the temporary library home in a girl's school gymnasium. Dick Spinelli, senior vice president of William S. Hein & Co., Inc., mentions his most lasting impression of Don: "He was always calm, even keeled, well grounded, open and confident in every aspect of his life. In every venue there was a smile on his face that clearly reflected his entire personality. He always had time to listen and hear your point of view, which made you always listen to him in return and respect his point of view."

¶17 Dan Freehling, deputy consultant on legal education, ABA Section on Legal Education & Admissions to the Bar, and former professor of law, law library director, and associate dean for information services at Boston University School of Law, spoke at La Verne's memorial program for Don, and remarked that one of his lasting memories was the Hawaiian shirts that Don wore at meetings. Dan then removed his coat, shirt, and tie, revealing a Hawaiian shirt reminiscent of Don's signature attire.

¶18 What made Don special to me? What are my memories of him? Cheryl and Don doted on their son Kevin, their daughter-in-law, Wendy, and their grandsons, Camden and Tobin. In fact, a desire to be near Kevin and his family was one of the reasons that prompted Don's leaving WNEC to join the La Verne Law School faculty as dean. A great source of pride to Don was the fact that both Cheryl and Kevin became lawyers.

¶19 Generous in his affections, he included me in this family circle. In February 1967 Don joined the Tarlton Law Library staff as a work-study student. While my recollections of his student days were professional in nature, he recalled our relationship, perhaps more accurately, and certainly more fervently, in his article for the *Law Library Journal* on mentoring:

My first duty as a work-study student in the Tarlton Law Library . . . was filing cards in the public catalog. Almost every day this little guy would come rushing by and say, "Do this" or "Do that." Finally, I asked someone, "Who the hell is that?" I was told it was Professor Roy M. Mersky, my boss.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Donald J. Dunn, *Never Formally Introduced: Mersky As Mentor*, 91 LAW LIBR. J. 205, 205 (1998).

¶20 With that auspicious beginning, our friendship and professional relationship flourished. My children spent many hours in Don's company at Tarlton when he and I shared weekend duties. My youngest daughter Ruth's most vivid memories of the library are of filing catalog cards and shelving books with Don on Saturday mornings. While at Tarlton, he became an avid table-tennis player. Some of my fondest memories of Don center on the fiercely competitive matches that I watched him play against fellow staff members, students, and faculty in the library's basement.

¶21 After receiving his undergraduate degree from UT in 1969, Don joined the staff as a senior library assistant and assistant to the law librarian (me). Don's performance as an assistant was everything that I hoped for: he had a high sense of responsibility and commitment and never hesitated in accepting new responsibilities. He was intelligent and highly motivated. He was well liked by the staff, and I began to rely upon him for a myriad of tasks. But already he was exhibiting a spirit of independence and principle. One day, my comfortable world was shattered with Don's announcement that he had been drafted. Even though protests had begun against the Vietnam War, Don was a patriot and eager to serve his country. He and Cheryl made arrangements for her to live with her parents during his military career. The library gave him a going-away party and a gift. He left on the bus to report for duty on Friday; early the next week he returned to the library. The draft board had declared him unfit for military duty, so he wanted his job back. I told him OK, but that he had to return his gift. He never did.

¶22 While serving as my administrative assistant, Don assisted me and J. Myron Jacobstein in the summer institutes that we directed for the American Association of Law Libraries, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Court Administration. He helped organize the curriculum, managed the budget, and made our travel arrangements. At this time, Don had done little traveling beyond the Texas borders. But he was adventuresome by nature, and Myron and I found him to be an enthusiastic aide and traveling companion. Usually affable, Don could get testy when he was awakened in the middle of the night to perform tasks that Myron and I deemed necessary, for instance, when I asked him to swim laps at 4:00 a.m. During these jaunts, I learned to depend upon his competency and not to disturb his sleep.

¶23 Have I mentioned Don's integrity? UT allowed employees to work full-time and receive three hours leave-time a week to attend classes. With that as an incentive, Don enrolled in the UT School of Library and Information Science with my blessing. Once a week, he left work to attend class—or so I thought. One afternoon, well into the fall semester, the dean of the library school called me to ask why Don had not been attending classes. Immediately I called Don in to explain his absence. Very simple, he said: he found the classes boring. In the ensuing frank discussion, I told him that skipping classes was not an option; if he wanted a career

in law librarianship then he would attend classes, find them interesting, and graduate. A little sheepishly, he accepted my advice and completed his coursework.

¶25 A final reflection on the aspects of Don's life: His service to the legal communities, his committee leadership, and his creative and innovative approaches to administration and scholarship are all marks of his legacy to our profession. I will remember all of these. But my fondest memories will be of his laughter, his graciousness, and his love of family and friends. He was a good, kind, caring, and decent man. It was a privilege to be a part of Donald Jack Dunn's family.—*Roy M. Mersky*<sup>4</sup>

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4. Harry M. Reasoner Regents Chair in Law and Director of Research, University of Texas at Austin, Jamail Center for Legal Research, Tarlton Law Library, Austin, Texas. Tragically, Professor Mersky passed away a few days after writing this Memorial.