

IN MEMORIAM: DEAN JOSHUA MORSE III

Senator Trent Lott

When I entered the University of Mississippi School of Law, Josh Morse was the Dean. But his reputation as a trial lawyer in south Mississippi was already legendary. His record of victories with jury trials in Pearl River County was impeccable.

While he maintained the laid-back demeanor of a country lawyer, he was dramatically changing the image of the Law School. He brought in a bevy of Yale Law School graduates and successful Mississippi lawyers to engage in a debate about ourselves and our state. The debate was often hot, but always thoughtful.

I enjoyed my contact with the Dean and took as many of his classes as I could. I especially remember his small admiralty classes. He taught the class not as a professor, but as a lawyer who had actually practiced law in that area. The give and take inspired by his style of teaching was most educational.

I developed even more contact with the Dean after succeeding Robert Khayat, a future acting Dean and Chancellor of the University, as the acting Law Alumni Association Secretary. We wound up traveling and doing events together. We developed a friendship that we both called on in future years.

After graduating from the Law School in 1967, I returned to my hometown to practice law. During the governor's race that year, I met the local Congressman, Bill Colmer. His administrative assistant of thirty years would be retiring in the first part of the next year, and he was looking for a young lawyer in south Mississippi to take his place. He knew Dean Morse from his years of practicing law, so he called him and asked for a recommendation. I later learned that he recommended me to Congressman Colmer.

In April 1968, I went to Washington, D.C. to work in the Congressman's office. Four years later I succeeded him as the Congressman for the 5th District of Mississippi. Sixteen years

later I was elected to the U.S. Senate and served for nineteen years.

I have lived the American Dream, and Dean Joshua Morse had a lot to do with that opportunity. He taught me to think “outside the box” and recommended me for a job that led to a life of thirty-nine years working for the U.S. Congress.

I know there are many others whose life he touched and changed. What greater thing can one say: He changed the Law School, the state, and many lives.