



## A TRIBUTE TO RON MALLEN

*Ronald E. Mallen, preeminent legal malpractice authority,  
died on May 9, 2026, at the age of 83.*

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Ron Mallen was a preeminent national authority on legal malpractice and ethics and widely regarded as one of the nation's leading lawyers on the law of lawyering. He was a co-author of the five-volume treatise, "Legal Malpractice," first published in 1977. He was also a certified legal malpractice law expert, a former president of the Association of Professional Responsibility Lawyers, and the inspiration for the Legal Malpractice and Risk Management Conference, now in its 25th year. Mallen was also listed in Best Lawyers in America from its inception, and received numerous other honors. From 1967 to 1997, Mallen practiced with Long & Levit LLP, and with Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP, from 1997 to 2018. He is remembered here by some of the colleagues whose professional lives he impacted so profoundly.

As a young lawyer coming out of law school in 1976, I was supremely blessed to work with Ron at Long & Levit. At the time he had practiced less than a decade and yet had the wisdom and intellect of someone much older. I marveled at how he could work defending lawyers every day and still have the energy and focus to write his treatise on legal malpractice. These were exciting and challenging years as we worked with Ron and helped make the law in California on legal malpractice and ethics. But the best part was his kindness and mentoring and his willingness to give me and others the opportunity to fast track our career development. Once we proved to him we were trustworthy, there were no limits. As a result, we were the envy of young

lawyers in much bigger firms and as the years passed and many of us went off in different directions, we carried with us the self-confidence and skills Ron gave us and eternal gratitude for our time with him. —**James A. Roberts**

I was privileged to be at Long & Levit in "the early days" back in 1976-1981. Ron balanced his incredible knowledge with large doses of wisdom for us as we evolved into "seasoned" lawyers. My favorite example was a car ride with Ron returning from a trial after receiving a great verdict for our client. I was perplexed that Ron didn't seem more excited. "Steve, you are going to lose cases you should win and win cases you should lose. A different jury hearing the same evidence and arguments might have reached a different result than the one we got today. So, you don't want to seek satisfaction from a result you can't control. Instead, you want to gain satisfaction from what you can control; and the one thing you can control is doing your best job. I was excited yesterday when I gave my closing argument and I knew that I had given my client my very best." —**Steven A. Lewis**

Having spent 20 years practicing with Ron at Long & Levit, I can think of countless examples of how he helped me learn to be a successful lawyer for other lawyers. Exciting times and cherished memories. I will never forget how much he did for me and I am proud to carry on Ron's legacy at Long & Levit. There will never be a more impactful individual in our specialty. My thoughts and prayers are with Penny and his family. —**Joseph P. McMonigle**

It was my great good fortune to work with Ron for nearly 20 years at Long & Levit. Ron was a great trial lawyer; it was a privilege to try cases with him. He had complete mastery of the facts and legal issues. On the first day of trial in a legal malpractice case, he would present the judge and opposing counsel with copies of his treatise "Legal Malpractice." Opposing counsel would invariably attempt to support his argument by referring to a passage in the book, and Ron would pounce — explaining in detail why counsel had premised his entire case on a misunderstanding of the law. In their spare time, Ron and Penny were bird parents, raising parrots, cockatoos, parakeets and cockatiels. I once went to their house to drop off a draft brief. Ron answered the door with a large parrot on his shoulder. Inside, Penny greeted me with a cockatoo on hers. As we passed a small alcove, I noticed a bowl holding some large eggshells. Ron stopped and pointed out the shell that had produced the parrot on his shoulder. They once gifted me a cockatiel, Lily, who was an important member of our family for many years. —**Marsha L. Morrow**

Early in my years at Long & Levit, I entered Ron's office for a phone conference. The client was on speaker, and Ron was telling him that he was assigning Victoria Henley to the case. "Is that a woman you're assigning?" the client asked, with discernible apprehension. Ron said yes and explained why he thought I was well suited to the case. He also noted — in a lightly joking tone — that the client was lucky he wasn't in our office as he'd be getting worked over by both of us. Ron's mentoring was exceptional. He fostered rigorous professionalism and kept us striving to always do our best for every client (even the ones that didn't want a woman attorney handling their case). Decades later, I remain grateful to him for giving me such a great start. —**Victoria B. Henley**

I was a partner of Ron's at Long & Levit for 12 years. When I first joined the firm, Ron's prominence in professional liability was the stuff of legend. His treatise was on every bookshelf, and set the bar for scholarly material, long before reliable computer research replaced Shepardizing. I still smile remembering my days as a young lawyer, when I would turn to Ron's book for support on the very principle I was trying to advance, only to find the lone citation was *Rex v. Regina*, Court of King's Bench, 1694. Judges would ask if I perhaps had slightly more recent authority. I'd think "darn, Ron...update the damn book...". He was convinced it was still good law. —**Randall A. Miller**

Ron and I met when I joined Long & Levit in 1985; we also worked together at Hinshaw. Ron was a brilliant enigma dedicated to the profession. Rich and I traveled with him and Penny many times over the years. For our three-week South American adventure, Penny, Rich and I prevailed upon him not to bring his computer. A real coup since Ron constantly read new cases and edited his legal malpractice treatise himself, almost daily. We focused instead on his other passions, his wife Penny, food and wine and his love of nature, especially exotic birds. What a privilege to have had him as a friend over more than 40 years. —**Russell S. Roeca**

I met Ron when I was a young summer associate at Long & Levit almost 40 years ago; we also worked together at Hinshaw. Ron has been a friend, mentor and someone who generously provided countless opportunities to me and many others. He was always generous with his time and wise counsel. Ron shared a genuine passion for the practice of law. He will be missed by me and his many colleagues from all parts of the world. I am eternally grateful for the kindness and friendship he always showed me and my family. My three now adult daughters fondly remember the firm picnics he and Penny graciously hosted at their beautiful Napa Valley home. —**Robert J. Romero**

Ron was a brilliant attorney with a rare combination of superior intellect and practical wisdom. While he "wrote the book" on legal malpractice, he also acted as lead trial counsel on many serious cases, often defending high-profile firms in high-stakes litigation. He was a great partner and friend who was in many ways responsible for the expansion of the Hinshaw firm into both California and New York. He was a trusted advisor to me during my years as Chairman of Hinshaw. Ron's fondness for birds was also legendary —whether at dinner at his home in Napa with his pet macaws on his shoulder or even in New York on a trip together when he commandeered a macaw from a fellow patron during dinner! —**Donald Mrozek**

For several decades I was privileged to be Ron's practice partner after he joined Hinshaw. We traveled the country together giving "roadshow" lectures to lawyer and insurer groups, speaking at professional forums and tending to the development of our practice. His teaching method never compromised. He insisted on providing the profession with the most current and deepest understanding of the evolving law, along with his forward-looking insights into its future development. It was widely known that Ron was a credentialed foodie of the highest magnitude. (Was he a Zagat reviewer? Nobody was sure.) A Napa resident and peerless wine expert, he taught us to enjoy our time together. And as to his hometown, Napa, he once observed to me that "you know, Switzerland is indeed the most beautiful country...but it's not Napa." Ron's presence remains in the books he wrote, the lessons he taught, the reputation he built, and friendship, he gave so generously. I will remember him with deep respect, genuine affection, and enduring gratitude. —**Thomas P. McGarry**

Ron was a long-time partner at Hinshaw. Ron loved being a lawyer and he loved representing lawyers. He also taught thousands of other lawyers and judges how to practice law at the highest level of ethics and integrity and, simply put, how to be a better lawyer. We will miss you Ron and we thank you for your significant contributions to the law of lawyering and helping all lawyers be better. —**Peter Sullivan**

Contributions may be made in honor of Ronald E. Mallen for Brain Disease Research at Gladstone Institutes: <https://gladstone.org/make-a-gift>.