

David Morgan Memorial

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I've always thought that CPTSC is an outstanding organization, as much for the spirit of its membership as for its organizational content, and David Morgan's contributions to this characterization as a member only strengthened my opinion. I met David at the CPTSC annual conference in Utah in 2005. I learned that he had traveled to the United States from Australia, a 19-hour flight, landing only the day before, and arrived at the not-easily-accessible town of Logan, Utah, after a day's road trip across the country. I characterize the drive as a road trip because David told me about the stops he made to sightsee along the way and take in as much of the country as possible during his visit. Even after his trip to Logan, piggybacked from the long flight to the US, David was eager to join in an impromptu dinner after the first night's evening reception and keynote address. While at dinner, others mentioned their fatigue after traveling from in-country locations. David, with neither a yawn nor hint of irony, asked where we'd make our next stop on our night on the town. The next day, as we talked more, I learned that David had just retired (at the age of 77) and had become interested in technical communication as a post-retirement venture in which he was developing a unique communication manual to be used in workplace settings. I knew then that this was a man who never stopped seeing, learning, or interacting with people and places and appreciated all the opportunities that travel, interaction, and communication had to offer.

For many years, David and I kept in touch by mail—snail mail, in fact. David, undaunted by my dependence on email, waited patiently for replies to his letters, full of interesting details about his life, and that of his sons, John and Stephen, his daughter, Gwyn, and, later, his grandson, Alex. Stephen observes that David "revelled in his children's lives. He lived his own later life somewhat vicariously, and it brought him great joy to see his children involved in things that they loved rather than simply what paid the bills."

David's letters were also brimming with earnest assessment of our United States political policy and the failure of our politicians (2005–2008). David was directly, unapologetically engaged with the people and beliefs he encountered and made the effort to deepen his consideration of ideas,



David Morgan with son, Stephen, and grandson, Alex.

squeezing as much out of intellectual interchange as he did from the land, history, and culture of a country during his travels.

Four years after our first meeting, good fortune led me to teach in Australia in spring 2008, and by chance, in Brisbane, near David's home. This proximity allowed us to meet and spend the day walking the town. After we enjoyed trading news, only a few days before my return to the United States, we discussed how I should spend the rest of my time in Australia. David not only had plenty of suggestions but also called the next day to make sure that I had arranged to make the most of my time while in Australia, insistent that I should take advantage of my trip to his country as he had to ours. It might be David's enthusiasm and drive that I miss the most.

As much as we are diminished by David's passing, we continue to be enhanced by his spirit as individuals who had the privilege to know him and as an organization that expanded not only in international reach but also more importantly in heart.

I cannot express as well what Stephen conveyed, reflecting the same force of humor and good nature that characterized his father:

Letter from Stephen Morgan's to TyAnna

David Morgan was born on 28 September 1928 in Invercargill, the southern most town in New Zealand. If you have a look you can see it... lower, lower, a little bit lower... there. He was the older of two boys, his brother Keith arriving a couple of years later.

His father Llewellyn (the Welsh influence is strong, with links to the Tredegar Morgans) worked in a variety of jobs as Pa grew up. Although the Depression didn't hit New Zealand the way it hit the United States, that's because the Kiwis started from a lower level, and the family moved wherever the work was to be found. But there was at least always a family car—because Llewellyn was often employed selling them. And mother Doris was a fastidious homemaker, in the days when fastidious was a word and not an answer on Jeopardy.

There seems to have been little of note from his childhood that would distinguish it from that of any child of the 1930s. And the war had little real effect either... Llewellyn was too old for service, and Japan was already adequately supplied with earthquakes and obnoxious neighbours to be too concerned with conquering the shaky isles.

A good student, Pa went through school with colours regularly flown above half-mast and was accepted to the prestigious Victoria University in windy Wellington, where he received a master's degree in English. He also became heavily involved in his new found Catholic faith, and after finishing university, he headed to mother England with the view to studying in a seminary and perhaps becoming a priest... an affliction his children are grateful he overcame!

On returning to New Zealand, he became a fashionable man about town; his travel experiences, a pipe and a sadly archetypal open-topped sports car topped off the package... and many hearts were broken when he announced his engagement to a delicate flower from the provinces.

Marriage ensued, and the family moved to Australia, first in Sydney and then in 1965, husband, wife and two young children headed to Canberra—the bush capital (and in those days it certainly deserved that name!).

Throughout all of his life Pa had exhibited dangerous symptoms of Anglophilia, and after a short stint back in the mid 70s, and following the breakdown of his marriage he returned to Wales in 1979 with sons John and Stephen, although this meant leaving daughter Gwyn behind, which did affect him deeply.

With no parental reinforcements, the tribulations of Thatcherite Britain and two sons heavily into "godless heavy metal music" it is no surprise that he grew up and discovered that the real world offered considerably more challenges than he had imagined. The Welsh experiment was a failure in some ways, but the affinity that he and the boys felt for the land is still there... and it was an easy choice that some part of him be taken back to reside there.

On his return to Australia, he continued his teaching and became involved in a dangerous cult of technical communicators based in America. He was continually kidnapped and taken back to the States, where he would be thrust into a car and forced to drive to places with historical interest only to the most esoteric, and involve himself in conferences laced with chilli-eating rituals and obeisance to obscure country and western music. And my word did he love it. Photographs exist of every part of every trip—when pictorial evidence of motel forecourts, standard model rental cars and United Airlines 727s finally become as valuable as they should be—there's a fortune to be made!!

Pa also revelled in his children's lives. He lived his own later life somewhat vicariously, and it brought him great joy to see his children involved in things that they loved rather than simply what paid the bills. One son was based in London,

the other worked around the world, and his daughter Gwyn based herself in Melbourne... so there was always a bed and a welcome to be had somewhere on the planet.

Having spent most of his Australian life in Canberra, he moved to Brisbane to be near his most established (and only reproducing) child. The weather never suited him that much, and he knew few people... but he buried himself in his own world, visited Stephen and wife Jo regularly... and was never seen happier than when he was presented with a grandson, Alex.

He kept active and healthy... and when he was suddenly and mortally struck down it seemed vaguely unjust. But he went with dignity, he went surrounded by his family and smothered with love... and he left us all a legacy of simple decency in a world that often doesn't even recognise it, let alone value it.

We're all a little less for the loss... and a whole lot more for having the chance to know him and love him.

There's a story he loved to tell about his fastidious nature; he had finally been allowed to walk home from school by himself. He had learnt all the landmarks and studied the route, and at the first opportunity made it without a problem and proudly presented himself to his mother... at 10:45a.m., during the first school break!!

David Morgan left the world that same way... inevitably to the right destination, but just a little too early.