



QUINLEY RISK ASSOCIATES, LLC

CLAIMS COACH BLOG

by Kevin R. Quinley, CPCU, AIC, ARM

Requiem for an Insurance Heavyweight

I depart from my "usual" blog topics to pay tribute to a genuine titan of the insurance industry, Don Malecki, who passed away after a long illness on December 12th. The phrase "thought leader" is bandied about indiscriminately. In the case of Malecki, however, the shoe fits.

It is no exaggeration to say that Don was a titan of the insurance industry. He was a authoritative source on insurance coverage matters and a prolific author. Malecki was most recently a Principal at the risk management consulting firm of Malecki, Deimling, Nielander & Associates. He was a frequent contributing author to various publications from the Dallas-based International Risk Management Institute (IRMI).

His insurance career spanned 50+ years, starting as a underwriter trainee with Fireman's Insurance Company. He authored or co-authored 15 books, including three textbooks that have been used in the CPCU curriculum. He was a past President of the Cincinnati Chapter of the Society of CPCU and was an active member of the Society of Risk Management Consultants. Many may not know this, but Don was also a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, where he served from 1951-1955.

Don's résumé is lengthy and astounding but he was anything but pretentious. I don't pretend to have known Don as a close friend, but I did know him and enjoyed his prodigious intellectual content output, and his down-to-earth style.

I first met Don in the 1990s, when we were both speaking at one of IRMI's Construction Risk Management conferences. We had a speakers dinner the night before the program. After dinner, Don proved to be a compelling raconteur and entertained the table with a trick that involve him being able to get a dinner spoon to stick to his nose. (After a few glasses of wine, this seemed hilarious...)

It encapsulates the fact that Don was anything but a pretentious egghead. Our paths intersected over the years at various insurance conferences and meetings. In 2008, I began to entertain the notion of launching my own consulting an expert witness activists. One of the first individuals I went to was Don. Don was extremely helpful in giving him his advice as to how to go about launching such a consulting practice. I deeply appreciated his thoughts and insights.



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As an aside, Don said he was trying to wind down his own consulting an expert witness practice by jacking up his rate to \$650 per hour. He observed wryly and ironically that, ever since increasing his hourly rate, is number of engagements had actually increased.

I last saw Don in October 2013, when we were both attending a conference in Charlotte, North Carolina of the Society of Risk Management Consultants. He was in good cheer, and I had no insight at the time of any health issue. This did hit my radar screen, however, in December of 2013. I approached Don about the referral of an expert witnessing engagement from a Michigan attorney who sought an expert in underwriting and policy interpretation. The first recommendation that came to my mind was Don Malecki. I called Don about the prospective engagement and he explained that you just returned home to Cincinnati from a lengthy plane flight from the West Coast, and developed medical problems from that. He politely declined the engagement, citing his doctor's advice that he not travel or take on any new work. At some point in early 2014, I learned of Don's illness.

Don exemplifies a life well-lived -- not just professionally but personally. He touched so many in the insurance industry but it would be difficult to underestimate his impact. His legacy perpetuates not only through his prodigious intellectual content in the field of insurance, but in the relationships in the lives of individuals that he touched. One risk professional, writing on an interest group listserv, commented "Everyone else in the insurance industry just moved up one notch." Don was at the pinnacle and the likes of him are unlikely to be seen again in a very long while.

While we mourn Don's passing, we can celebrate his life and the ongoing, positive ripple effect of the legacy he leaves for the insurance industry.

Farewell and Godspeed my friend...

Kevin Quinley CPCU is the founder and Principal of Quinley Risk Associates LLC in Richmond, VA. He consults with law firms and other clients nationwide on matters related to bad faith, adjuster standard of care and ways to effectively market to insurance companies. He can be reached at (804) 796-1939 and at kevin@kevinquinley.com.