
IN MEMORY OF DOUGLASS W. DEWING, Esq. 10/7/1954 – 4/9/2022**Description**

DOUGLASS W. DEWING

The VLTA *Examiner* Committee and Title Industry professionals came together to compile thoughts and memories of Douglass W. Dewing, Esq. to share with VLTA Members, Title Examiners in Virginia, and the Title Industry as a whole.

Throughout his career, Douglass W. Dewing, Esq. was a trend setter with his ground-breaking publication of *A Virginia Title Examiner's Manual*. Known as "Doug" to many, he was a mentor for Title Examiners and Title Industry professionals in Virginia. He devoted a great deal of time revising and expanding upon the original manual by Sidney F. Parham. This manual became and continues as the "go-to-resource" for Virginia Title Examiners and Industry professionals. Doug then continued to update the manual adding new title information and new Virginia Statutory changes, with his most recently published *A Virginia Title Examiner's Manual – Fifth Edition* published April 1, 2022, which is available through Juris Publishing, <http://www.jurispub.com/Bookstore/Real-Estate-Law/A-Virginia-Title-Examiners-Manual-Fifth-Edition.html>.

Doug made many contributions to the Title Industry during his career, to include the many education courses presented for Title professionals, and his written contributions of articles for the *VLTA Examiner Magazine*.

The following is a collection of contributions from just some of Doug's fellow industry colleagues:

My first memories of Doug go back to the 1990's, when he worked in Fredericksburg for Lawyers Title. Doug had begun work on his *A Virginia Title Examiner's Manual* and even still, he took the time to educate local Title Examiners. If a Title Examiner wanted to do title work for Lawyers Title in Fredericksburg, they had to pass the Title Examiner Test that he had developed.

During this time, besides Sydney Parham's manual, there were not many resources available to examiners to study. There were many Fredericksburg area Title Examiners that took his test, and it was extremely challenging. Even after this Doug continued to challenge, mold, and guide us in our knowledge. Doug was a trail blazer, and unique in the respect that even though he was an Attorney and worked for a Title Insurance Underwriter, he understood the perspective of a Title Examiner, and the value and importance of Education.

We are incredibly grateful for all of Doug's many contributions over the years. We will keep what he has taught us close to our title hearts. Doug will be profoundly missed by all.

Julie Ann Rutledge, VCTE, President Land Title Research, Inc., VLTA Past President

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Doug Dewing and I joined Lawyers Title at roughly the same time in the late 1980's, him as a title attorney in Norfolk and me as a management trainee in Richmond. Our paths would cross as I traveled to Tidewater for training. After managing the Fredericksburg office of Lawyers Title, I figured that it would make sense to add an attorney to our staff, and Lawyers Title agreed. Doug was promoted to Branch Counsel in Fredericksburg and moved his family there in January 1991. He liked to say that his move coincided with the abolition of dower and curtesy and the establishment of the augmented estate.

As most of you know, Doug was quite a title scholar and was a valuable member of our team. He quickly became active in the local bar association and held an office (Secretary, I believe) for a number of years. His background as a journalist, paired with his legal experience, made him an excellent writer, and he was a valuable resource to provide editorial comments to some of my correspondence. He had a professorial air about him, and his knowledge of title matters made him very well respected in the region. Being familiar with his writing style, I always assumed that the "Titles by Tute" articles in *The Examiner* were contributed by Doug. Like most good underwriting counsel, Doug was excellent at finding ways to say "Yes, if" as opposed to No, when faced with a challenging underwriting issue.

When he moved to Fredericksburg, he had already started revising Sidney Parham's *A Virginia Title Examiner's Manual*. He spent years painstakingly researching the topics, crafting the ultimate resource for information regarding title matters in Virginia. I can remember going by the office on many late nights and seeing the light on in Doug's office, while he worked on the book. It looks like the second edition (his first) was published in the spring of 1992. I purchased one of the first copies and asked him to autograph it. His inscription was something along the lines of "Thanks for all you did to help make this book a reality, not that I had done anything. I am embarrassed to say that I loaned it to one of his successors and it was never returned."

Doug had a large family (four boys and a girl) and he enjoyed spending time with them. He was active in Scouting with the boys, and spent many nights at bingo sessions, raising funds for their school, Montfort Academy. In those days, the courts and offices were generally open (at least a half day) on Christmas Eve. I can remember Doug heading out at 1 pm with a Christmas shopping list. I got the impression that the list was a little more than a few last-minute items.

One summer, Doug's wife, Christine called my wife to invite her and my daughters for a day trip to the National Zoo. They loaded up the family car, a 15-passenger van as I recall, and headed up I-95 one morning. For anyone who had made the drive to DC from Fredericksburg in the morning or the reverse trip in the afternoon, you know that it can be a grueling journey. On the ride home, with a pair of mothers with frayed nerves after chasing around seven children at the zoo and making those two long drives, one of the boys asked my wife if his dad would still have a job the next day. My wife Joyce assured him that everything was fine, and I could only imagine Doug urging his children to be on their best behavior, travelling with his boss's wife.

In the summer of 1996, he was recruited to return to Norfolk and serve as Branch Counsel. I think that they made several runs at him and finally made the offer attractive enough for him to accept. He always seemed fond of Fredericksburg and seemed to have some regret, leaving the area. He wrote a farewell essay in the local bar publication, and for years, local attorneys would mention Doug and the article as our paths crossed. Later in the 1990's as I travelled to Norfolk on occasion for my role with Lawyers Title, our colleague, Colleen Fitzgerald would say, "The way he talks about the place, you would think he was born and raised there!"

In 2018, Doug was through town as a presenter for a title continuing education course. I replaced his book and had it autographed. We went to lunch and had a chance to catch up. He had taken on a role as a project title examiner, which seemed to take him full circle, as one of his first roles was examining title for the Croatan Beach area, south of Rudee Inlet, in Virginia Beach.

I was shocked to hear of his passing at such a young (at least to me) age. I was fortunate to be able to attend his funeral service in Richmond, and to speak with his former wife, Christine, and some of his children. His oldest son, Neal, and Doug's 2 brothers provided heartfelt and moving eulogies. I know that he must have been very proud of the adults that his children have become. Rest in peace, my friend.

Mark A. Steele, President, The Title Professionals, LLC

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Doug was a treasure. Title, record rooms, statutes, and case law were not just important—they were sacred, and he was a title purist in every sense of the word. Notwithstanding he was the author of Virginia's only book on title exams, he was modest and humble. His friendship and expertise will be missed.

Frank McCormick, Fidelity National Family of Companies

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Doug Dewing was both my friend and a respected industry colleague. He was my go-to resource for advice whenever I encountered an unusual or complicated land title issue. I could count on Doug for an informed opinion on the matter in question, often seasoned with a related war story or two. He was an asset to this association and the Virginia Bar and I will miss him.

Mark Ailsworth, VLTA Past President

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Perhaps Doug's greatest legacy is the time he spent updating arguably the most important resource on our industry: A Virginia Title Examiners' Manual, a volume that he faithfully shepherded for 30 years. His contributions to that work and to the industry will not soon be forgotten.

Kevin T. Pogoda, Esq., 1st V.P. VA State Manager, Northern Division, VLTA Past President

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Doug Dewing was a friend, a business associate whom I could contact to discuss obscure legal issues related to real estate ownership in Virginia without him thinking the discussion was unusual. But even he could not find out why the traditional search period in Virginia is 60 years. That may be the only thing he couldn't pin down. He was very, very good at details, at searching title to the very source of initial ownership in the land records, at finding the source of ownership of our 2 acres, when it was originally hundreds of acres. He enjoyed complex issues.

Doug was also good at explaining things in writing. His editions of *A Virginia Title Examiner's Manual* followed in the footsteps of Lucian B. Cox and Sidney F. Parham. It continues to provide a succinct and quick means of reference to statutes and cases pertinent to examination of title to real estate. The book is ubiquitous, found in every title examiner's and most title underwriter's offices. It's a solid foundation of information related to real estate issues. Replacing him as author will be a significant challenge for the publisher.

Whenever anyone passes away, it's similar to digging a hole in the sand at the beach. We all know the hole will eventually be filled with sand, sooner or later. With Doug's passing, a large hole is left in the real estate community that will take significant time to be filled. He will be missed by us all.

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Kay M. Creasman, VP & Virginia State Counsel, Old Republic Title, VLTA Past President

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