

Remarks of Owen Keiter '18, Casidhe McClone '18, Elizabeth Brasher '18, Romane Paul '18, presenting the Willis L.M. Reese Prize for Excellence in Teaching

Columbia Law Graduation

Monday, May 14, 2018

There are plenty of nice things we could say about Mr. Morrison. However, we've elected to take this opportunity to roast him. Accordingly, we will say none of those things.

Hailing from the cold-hearted lands of Chicago, Mr. Morrison is an expert at a game called "hide the ball." The game is simple. Once class begins, Mr. Morrison will ask you a question.

If you're wrong, Mr. Morrison won't attempt to coax the right answer out of you. Rather, he will loudly announce your wrongness to the class. But that is not the injustice here.

Because if you get the answer right, Mr. Morrison will loudly announce to the class that you are wrong. "But wait," you'll say, "I DID the reading!"

But that won't deter Mr. Morrison. He'll argue against you, arguing against the reading he assigned, and only ten minutes later, after you've admitted defeat and the whole class is laughing at you, will he relent. "You're right!" He'll finally say; "keep pushing back! I'm just being a jerk."

But perhaps the best dig we have against Mr. Morrison comes from his UChicago collaborator and former professor, Douglas Baird, who emailed us the following story. As professor Baird told us, he was collaborating on a paper with Mr. Morrison (then lowly law student "Ed Morrison"), when Mr. Morrison added a single footnote without Professor Baird's knowledge.

Now, this footnote was only a theoretical prediction, but the paper's referee demanded empirical analysis backing up the prediction. This analysis ended up turning a simple theoretical paper into a massive empirical project, a huge increase in work that Professor Baird refers to as "The Morrison Conjecture."

Not unlike professor Baird, many a law student has felt their heart jump in fear when faced with a Morrison conjecture. But luckily for Professor Baird, the Morrison Conjecture turns out to be a very neat example of how theoretical work can inform empirical work. And luckily for Columbia Law students, working your way through Morrison Conjectures turns out to be a fantastic way to learn.

Professor Baird also told us that "The sun rises and sets with Ed." Well, the sun is setting on our time as law students. But thanks to our time spent in Mr. Morrison's classes, we know that we are ready to work through the night.

We are honored to present the recipient of the Willis L.M. Reese Prize for excellence in teaching: Mr. Ed Morrison.