

Richard Q. Devine

Dick Devine was a small-town lawyer with his main office located in Norwich (population 10,000), New York. Dick and his two partners also maintained several branch offices in the surrounding communities.

He was able to practice tax law while overseeing a high-volume practice built around substantive systems, preprinted materials, well-trained staff, and proper delegation.

On October 23, 1976, his three-story office building was destroyed by fire. The recovery efforts were chronicled in the winter 1978 issue of *Legal Economics*. More than 3,000 original wills, housed in fireproof cabinets, were buried under tons of debris. Thousands of open files were destroyed or damaged. All of the in-house forms, hundreds of preprinted form pages, and the substantive system manuals were destroyed along with all of the office equipment and furniture and hundreds of abstracts belonging to clients.

The remarkable part of the tragedy is the story of how the firm and the community came together to provide temporary accommodations while trying to recreate the firm's intellectual capital. Dick and his people were able to get back on their feet and moved to a new building, appropriately named "The Phoenix Building" to commemorate the ascendancy from the ashes.

Dick Devine was quiet and unassuming, but he was a quick study and freely shared his knowledge and talents with his fellow lawyers.

. . . *Jimmy Brill*