People and Places: Dudley Field Malone (1882–1950)

Randy Moore

Dudley Field Malone (Figure 1) was born in New York City on June 3, 1882. The son of William Malone (a Tammany Democratic official) and Rose (McKenny) Malone, he became a lawyer and member of the Democratic Party, and in 1913 was appointed Collector of the Port of New York. Four years later, Malone resigned to protest President Woodrow Wilson’s failure to advocate a Women’s Suffrage Amendment. In 1920, Malone ran for governor of New York on the Farmer-Labor Party ticket, but his 49,953 votes fell far short of the 1,335,617 votes garnered by the winner, Republican Nathan Miller. When Wilson appointed William Jennings Bryan as Secretary of State, Malone was appointed Third Assistant Secretary under Bryan. Later, Malone developed a thriving international divorce business in New York.

Malone, a witty and well-dressed orator, was in Dayton for the Scopes trial because of his work with Arthur Hays, his legal partner, who was a part of Scopes’s defense team. Despite his rather accidental presence, Malone delivered a speech in the fifth day of the trial that generated the loudest and longest applause. According to John Scopes and others, Malone’s speech was the turning point of the trial; when Malone was finished speaking, Scopes said he could tell that Bryan felt defeated. The press, breaking its customary silence of neutrality, gave Malone a standing ovation (the court stenographer’s transcript noted the loud, prolonged applause) and legislator-turned-reporter John Butler described Malone’s speech as the best of the century. Scopes agreed, noting that Malone’s reply to Bryan was the most dramatic of his (Scopes’s) life. Even Bryan begrudgingly acknowledged that Malone’s speech was the greatest he’d ever heard. Years after the trial, Malone admitted that his famous speech in Dayton was the only extemporaneous speech he ever made.

After Scopes’s trial, Malone was asked by Will Rogers to join him on stage at the Ziegfeld Follies. When the Tennessee Supreme Court set aside Scopes’s conviction on a technicality (thereby eliminating the chance of further appeal), Malone—the only professing Christian on the defense team—condemned the decision as legal trickery used to protect Tennessee’s religious fundamentalists.

When Bryan died in Dayton five days after the trial, Malone—unlike Darrow, Mencken, and others—praised Bryan. Later, however, Malone later became critical of Bryan. For example, on September 19, 1925, Malone used a speech at the national convention of the Laymen of the Unitarian Church of America in Lenox, Massachusetts, to respond to Bryan’s posthumous Last Message. Malone expressed his contempt for Bryan’s views and branded him the leader of a sinister movement.

Malone, who had been accompanied to Dayton by his wife, returned to his divorce business in New York, and got divorced. His work often took him to Europe, and during the voyages he often oversaw wagers on the accuracy of the day’s projected mileage. Malone represented some of the biggest names in sports, including Jack Dempsey (the heavyweight boxing champion) and Gertrude Ederle (the first woman to swim across the English Channel, breaking the men’s record by almost two hours). Malone also spoke at the funeral of his friend George Lewis “Tex” Rickard, a promoter who in 1925 built New York’s Madison Square Garden. In 1929, Malone’s most memorable speeches were published in Unaccustomed As I Am: Miscellaneous Speeches. The book included texts of Malone’s speeches about Woodrow Wilson’s policies, women and suffrage, Russia, prohibition, and his electrifying “There is never a duel with the truth” speech from the Scopes trial.
After serving as a delegate from New York to the Democratic National Convention in 1932, Malone used his booming baritone voice to launch a new career in Hollywood as an actor. His most prominent role came in 1943 when he played Winston Churchill in *Mission to Moscow*, a wartime film requested by President Roosevelt to support America’s Russian allies.

Malone died on October 5, 1950 in Culver City, California.

**About the Author**

Randy Moore is the HT Morse–Alumni Distinguished Professor of Biology at the University of Minnesota. His latest book, coauthored with Sehoya Cotner, is *Arguing for Evolution: An Encyclopedia for Understanding Science* (Santa Barbara [CA]: Greenwood, 2011).

**Author’s Address**

Randy Moore  
University of Minnesota, MCB 3-104  
420 Washington Avenue SE  
Minneapolis MN 55455  
rmoore@umn.edu