

Lael Morgan Biography

Lael Morgan was born in rural Maine, got her educational start in a two-room schoolhouse in East Vassalboro, and went on to become a drama major at Emerson College with no plans acquire a degree. In 1957 she transferred to Boston University School of Public Relations and Communications, while working a six-day week as a hotel night clerk with a double shift on Saturdays. She graduated cum laude in the summer of 1959 and traveled with her husband, Dodge, to Anchorage, Alaska, where she worked for an advertising agency. In 1963 the Morgans sailed half way around the world in a 36' schooner. On return in 1965, Lael moved back to Alaska while her husband pursued work on the east coast. They divorced in 1971 but remained on excellent terms.

Morgan started her journalistic career as a writer for the *Malden Press* in 1958. Later she became a photojournalist at the *Juneau Alaska Empire* in Alaska's capitol city, and then covered crime and politics for the *Fairbanks News Miner* just south of the Arctic Circle. In 1969 she signed on as a reporter/photographer on to the *Los Angeles Times* where in 1970 she won the Photographer of the Year award for best photo feature. The award of an Alicia Patterson fellowship and a Rockefeller Foundation grant in 1972 helped her establish a national reputation reporting on Native Americans.

Morgan subsequently embarked on a freelance career working for *Alaska Northwest Publishing*, the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *National Geographic Magazine*. From 1974 to 1987 she served as roving reporter for Alaska Northwest Publishing which assigned her to visit every Alaska village named in the Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement. Of the 220 that qualified she visited all but 13.

In 1988 Morgan won her master's degree from Boston University with a focus on publishing. Then, in 1988 with a partner Kent Sturgis, she established Epicenter Press, a regional house that now the major publisher of Alaska titles with has more than 100 books to its credit. That same year she joined the Department of Journalism and Broadcasting, University of Alaska Fairbanks, where she taught writing, photography, and multimedia.

In 1999, after serving three years as department chair, and winning a Fulbright to Fiji, Morgan returned to her native state to become managing editor of the *Casco Bay Weekly*, an alternative newspaper in Portland, Maine, owned by her former husband. In January of 2000 she advanced to publisher and continued in that capacity until the paper was sold in 2003.

From September of 2003 until the summer of 2005, she was a visiting professor at the Department of Communications, University of Texas at Arlington, and still teaches media writing on line for that institution from her home in Saco, Maine.

In addition, Morgan remains acquisitions editor for Epicenter Press and occasionally utilizes her California private detective's license which she has held since 1981.

The writer has 16 published books to her credit, including *Good Time Girls of the Alaska Yukon Gold Rush*, which in 1998 placed seventh on the *Los Angeles Times* best nonfiction list and also won her the distinction of being named Alaska Historian of the Year. Her most recent works are *Eskimo Star: From Tundra to Tinseltown: The Ray Mala Story*, and *Wanton West: Madams, Money, Murder and the Wild Women of Montana's Frontier*. Both were published in 2011.