

## A.X. Foster

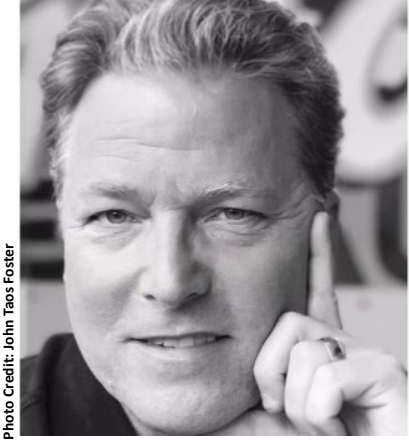


Photo Credit: John Taos Foster

“Write what you know!” Was Mark Twain speaking across five generations to A. X. Foster, author of the new (*Publication Date: June 27, 2023*) legal thriller ***Gavel to Gavel***? Some might say so, considering Foster’s experience as a prosecutor for 20 years and as a criminal defense attorney for the past 15 years. You might also consider that Foster’s protagonist in ***Gavel to Gavel*** is also a prosecutor, a prosecutor trying what first appears to be an open-and-shut homicide case that soon becomes a tangled web of deception and danger.

Foster himself has handled thousands of criminal cases. He was a prosecutor in Maryland, rising to the level of Senior Assistant State’s Attorney. In that position, he tried many serious cases such as murder and rape, and he was the prosecutor in more than 100 trials decided by juries. His work on animal abuse cases also helped convince the state legislature to pass Maryland’s first law raising the level of certain animal cruelty violations from misdemeanors to felonies, and he says he’s “very proud of that.”

Foster knows how the system works from both sides of the law – how a prosecutor thinks, having himself won first-degree murder and rape cases, and from the other side, as a criminal defense attorney who has successfully defended individuals charged with murder, rape, and other serious crimes.

“Being a prosecutor and then becoming a defense attorney,” Foster says, “is a bit like playing chess, first with the white pieces, and then playing a second game, but this time with the black pieces.”

In ***Gavel to Gavel***, a wealthy business tycoon is murdered by his high-society wife. The only eyewitness is their nine-year-old daughter. Her testimony is the key to the case. But is she telling the truth? Top prosecutor “Mac” MacIntyre is calm, confident and, like Foster, he hates to lose. Mac relies on his courtroom cunning to maneuver through a maze of office politics, the bright glare of the media spotlight and his own ethical dilemmas to navigate from crime scene investigation to jury selection, to fierce cross-examination, to a shocking verdict.

Foster imbues in his main character what he believes is more than a small dose of “theatricality” which the author maintains helps prosecutors prosecute and defense attorneys defend. Foster knows something about theatricality; after his undergraduate years at Vermont’s Bennington College and a brief New York City stint in advertising, and after traveling around Europe “for the next few years,” he “surfaced” in Amsterdam and worked for two years in the

Netherlands as a professional actor with the English Speaking Theatre of Amsterdam and later, back in New York, he says, "I landed a bunch of parts on various TV soap operas of the 1980s, including stints on 'Ryan's Hope,' 'As the World Turns,' 'Another World,' 'Search for Tomorrow,' and 'The Guiding Light.'"

He notes that he's read "all 37 Shakespeare plays" (his character Mac MacIntyre quotes Shakespeare frequently). "I also acted," Foster continues, "if you can really call it that, in dozens of TV commercials, and I did one off-Broadway stage production down in Greenwich Village."

"I became interested in entertainment law and, frustrated with pounding the pavement, I took the LSAT, Law School Aptitude Test, on a lark with no preparation. To my great surprise, I scored highly on this test. Call it luck, or call it Fate. I applied to a dozen law schools and was accepted into a handful, since my background as a quasi-hippie at Bennington College and soap opera actor in New York was not the best foundation for a law school application."

"So," Foster said, "it was off to Emory Law School in Atlanta. I excelled there, particularly in the areas of Moot Court and Mock Trial, where my performance skills and naturally competitive nature drove me to win the Moot Court Tournament. I came in first out of 300 competitors, and also won the Best Oralist Award and the Best Brief Award for legal writing, a triple crown of sorts which had never been accomplished before at Emory. I was also named to the National Moot Court Team and represented Emory Law School in national tournaments against other law schools. Those were the Reagan years when the economy was booming, and I received many offers of employment upon graduation from Emory in 1988. Instead of taking a boring job in a law firm for a big salary, I became a prosecutor, first with the Department of Justice in Delaware and then, when my wife was transferred to work in Washington, D.C., with the State's Attorney's office in Maryland."

"I stayed as an Assistant State's Attorney, unexpectedly, for the next 20 years. There, I rose through the ranks and tried many serious cases. *Gavel to Gavel* is based on my experiences as a prosecutor there. After 20 years, I decided to go into private practice and I opened my own law firm. I've been taking on clients in serious cases since then, for the last 15 years."

Foster noted that his interest in writing stemmed originally from his mother's work; she was Anne Tolstoi Wallach, who *The New York Times* once said, "rose to the executive ranks in the male-dominated New York advertising world, then wrote a saucy, much-discussed best seller about a fictional woman who does the same."

In addition to his mother's work, Foster has been influenced by writers Agatha Christie, James Michener, John Grisham, and Scott Turow, the latter two both noted authors of legal thrillers.

Foster continues, "When Covid hit, about three years ago, the courthouse was mostly shut down for a few months and then gradually opened up again, but most cases were heard via Zoom etc. During that slow time, I decided to write a manuscript of a legal thriller, which eventually shaped up to be *Gavel to Gavel*."

“As I read the feedback and reviews from readers who have purchased my book, I see that my background as an actor has greatly influenced my writing. People keep mentioning the characters and the dialogue, and parts of the book read more like a play than a novel. Maybe that's what's called my 'style,' I don't know. I also see the influence of my Madison Avenue advertising days (he worked for two years as a copywriter for the ad agency Ogilvy & Mather), because I tend to favor short sentences, snappy headlines, easy to read scenes, crisp dialogue, action, and keeping the story moving ... what happens next?”

“What happens next” for A.X. Foster and “Mac MacIntyre?” Foster says he is already about two-thirds of the way through his manuscript of the novel ***Double Blind***, “Book Two” of Foster’s fictional “Seneca County Courthouse Series.” Four pages of the first chapter of ***Double Blind*** are previewed at the end of Book One, in ***Gavel to Gavel***.

And who’s the prosecutor in ***Double Blind***? You might guess that it’s Mac MacIntyre again, and you’d be correct. You might otherwise guess that the prosecutor is the alter ego of a writer named A. X. Foster, and – you guessed it – you’d be right again!

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***Gavel to Gavel: The Seneca County Courthouse Series, Book One***®

A Legal Thriller, Copyright 2023, By **A.X. Foster**

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**Publicity Contact for *Gavel to Gavel*: Sandra L. Goroff, [sgma@aol.com](mailto:sgma@aol.com), 617-750-0555.**