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The *University of Denver Water Law Review* began in 1997 when the outgoing editor of the *Water Court Reporter* called a meeting with the newly appointed staff. At the time, I had no idea that this small group of students could change the educational experience for DU law students for years to come. When the outgoing editor explained the Reporter's mission and our responsibilities, I naively asked why the publication did not include academic articles like other law journals. The *Water Court Reporter* was successful in its own right, and, even though others had asked the same question, no one had been able to take the publication to the next level.

As an evening student, I worked full-time as Executive Director of Sponsored Programs and Technology Transfer at the University of Colorado in Denver and didn't need a new challenge. I already had my hands full with responsibilities as a Chancellor's Scholar and an editor of the *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy*. But the new staff of the *Water Court Reporter* encouraged me to utilize my experience in academia to lay the groundwork for starting up a water law journal. I could not refuse.

Although I knew creating a new academic journal would be very different from publishing a well-established journal, I did not realize exactly how much it would involve. By taking it one step at a time, it became manageable. The first step was to schedule a meeting with Dean Robert Yegge to discuss the concept. Dean Yegge graciously listened to my presentation but concluded the meeting with skepticism. He was not totally convinced that law students who come and go would have the wherewithal to see the project through to completion. Nonetheless, Dean Yegge said he would give his support if we could accomplish the following: 1) find a faculty sponsor, 2) raise funds to finance the journal, and 3) recruit students capable of doing all the work.

At Dean Yegge's suggestion, I met with Professor Federico Cheever to see if he would be our advisor. Professor Cheever recommended that I approach Professor George (Rock) Pring who taught the water law courses at DU. Even though I did not know Dr. Pring, he agreed to a meeting. Initially, he was reluctant because he thought it would be worse to start a journal and have it fail than to have no journal at all. However, after explaining my business plan, Dr. Pring was pleased to accept.

Dr. Pring was instrumental throughout the start-up process and played a major role in its continued success. He suggested contacting David Phillipps, Director of the Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation (RMMLF), because the foundation had grant funds available. I felt encouraged as I had a strong track record of writing successful grant proposals. If we could get a grant, it would help cover publication costs until we were able to build our subscriber list.

After RMMLF awarded us with a grant, Dean Yegge also provided some start-up funds from his discretionary budget. The next step after securing funding was to talk with publishers and develop a budget and publication timeline. There were two law journal publishers at the time and, after interviewing both, I selected Joe Christensen, Inc. in Nebraska because they offered the best price and their contact person offered the most support for a start-up publication.

The publisher made me realize there are a lot more decisions to be made in publishing an academic journal than I had anticipated. They range from minor details, such as the paper size and the font type, to more substantial decisions regarding publication goals. As editor, I had to answer the following questions: What should the cover look like? Would I provide a logo design? How should the pages be laid out? What sections should be included? I also needed to decide the following: How would we solicit and select articles? Who would edit and cite check them? How could we recruit more staff? Could we get more staff on board to produce the first edition? What would be their job descriptions? How would we recruit an advisory board? What would be the board's role? Who would be our target audience? How would we market the journal? How could we solicit subscribers and how much should we charge? Could we collect

enough money to publish future issues? More importantly than making the decisions, I needed to act quickly to publish an issue before our small staff graduated.

The organizational tasks were time consuming, but thankfully not daunting as I relied upon my administrative and managerial experiences to coordinate the project. What I lacked were contacts in the water community. My master's degree in International Studies and contacts in the area of Asian Studies were not very helpful. In law school, I had taken courses in environmental and natural resources law, but had no experience in a law firm. Fortunately, I could rely upon the other Water Court Reporter editors (Jon Alby, Art Folsom, Greg Lemkau, Christina Longhitano, Matthew Paulson and Rebecca Welborn), as well as law school faculty to recruit Advisory Board members.

Our first Advisory Board consisted of Colorado Supreme Court Justice Lohr, State Engineer Hal Simpson, Denver Water Manager Hamlet "Chips" Barry, First Assistant Attorney General Wendy Weiss, Rocky Mountain Mineral Law Foundation Director David Phillips, and several well-known practicing attorneys from around the state. These individuals helped recruit authors, made recommendations regarding content, and helped spread the word as we solicited subscribers.

In discussing the articles, the editors were passionate about creating a journal that would become the "go-to" publication for water practitioners, as well as attorneys. We agreed to begin by focusing on Colorado water issues, expand later to Western water issues, and ultimately include global water concerns. We were honored that Colorado Supreme Court Justice Gregory J. Hobbs, Jr. agreed to write an historical overview of Colorado water law for our first issue. It was just what we needed to launch a new publication on water law, and the significance of his continued contributions is undeniable. In addition to publishing articles written by water law authorities, we were unanimous about retaining the Water Court reports. There was no question that they were valuable to practitioners. Additionally, the reports, book reviews, and book notes would provide research and writing opportunities for journal staff.

After reviewing many other law journals, I recommended the following content: subscription information, manuscript solicitation and guidelines, editorial Board recognition, advisory board and DU law faculty acknowledgment, and the editor's note. At the eleventh hour, Professor Pring suggested adding a tribute page to recognize prominent past members of the water law community. Staff decided the editor-in-chief should write the tribute. The first issue honored L. Ward Bannister who taught at the University of Denver College of Law from 1899 to 1904 and was a special lecturer at Harvard and Columbia Universities. He was remembered for developing a water law course that served as a model for law schools for many years.

While the other editors pounded the pavement soliciting articles and subscribers, I gathered information from other law journal editors about recruiting staff through a testing process. I wrote the exam, instructions, and answer sheets. We administered the exam before spring semester ended and added twenty well-qualified students to the staff. But everything else took longer than expected. This meant the first issue was now on track for publication in the summer.

As the term was ending, we only had a couple articles and I learned a valuable lesson — one that both Dean Yegge and Professor Pring had foreseen. When push comes to shove, students begin to panic about the bar exam and publishing a journal is no longer a top priority in the spring. I too began to panic. Not just about the bar exam, but about fulfilling my promise to Dean Yegge and Dr. Pring that we would not fail. Realizing I could not finish the journal alone, I was grateful that Production Editor, Rebecca Wellborn, also had a passion to succeed. She tenaciously coaxed authors to submit their articles, regardless of the amount of editing that remained. We said we would do it. We also agreed to research sources that needed to be acknowledged and to complete the citations. Thanks to many, many hard-pressed hours, Rebecca helped get the first issue to press.

Students today probably have no idea of what it was like to edit a journal twenty years ago. Although university resources had progressed from typewriters to computers, our computers had been dug out of storage and were old; the software was primitive by today's standards. Our files were so large the computers kept crashing and we repeatedly lost updated information. The editing process was slow, tedious, and frustrating. We barely finished editing in time for the bar exam and did not meet the publisher's deadline. The first issue was not published until Fall 1997, but all the pieces were in place. In the end, it was satisfying to know that we had laid the groundwork, documented all the steps, and found shortcuts that would make the next issue much easier to produce.

To celebrate publication of the first issue of the *Water Law Review*, we held a formal luncheon with the Advisory Board members. Over the years, these board meetings have continued to serve as a means of soliciting ideas for improving the journal and recognizing all the individuals contributing to the journal's success. Reflecting back, it's hard to believe what a small group of students accomplished in a short period of time. I am proud to have been a part of this group and look forward to reading the *Water Law Review* and keeping up-to-date with water issues.

Dr. Vicki L. Spencer
Founding Editor of the *Water Law Review*