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Dedication: Honorable Johnathon W. Hays

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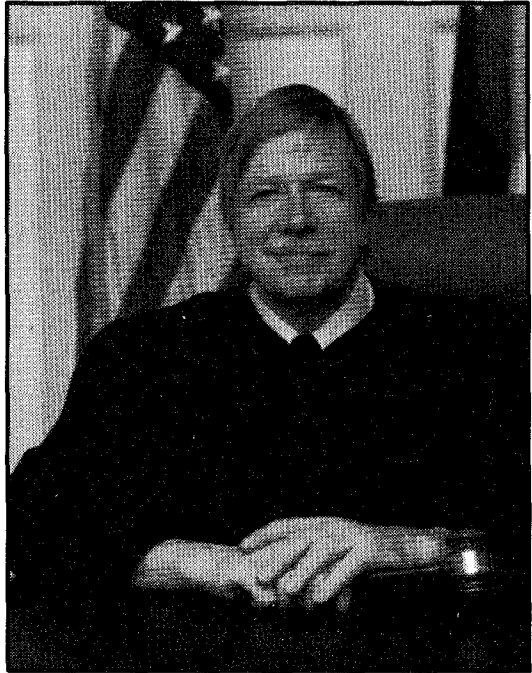
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Dedication: Honorable Johnathon W. Hays

DEDICATION: Honorable Jonathan W. Hays

The Honorable Jonathan W. Hays passed away on September 16, 2014, in Greeley, Colorado. Judge Hays spent nearly forty years on the bench in the Weld County, Colorado District Court, including more than ten years (from 1993 to 2003) as the designated Water Judge for Water Division 1, with jurisdiction over the South Platte River Basin. He was a man of intelligence, passion, deep curiosity, and humor. These traits governed both his life and his work as a lawyer and judge.



During his years in the water court, Judge Hays had a profound impact on the landscape of Colorado water law. He presided on the bench for the busiest water court division, during a period when population growth and increasing water use in Colorado were beginning to stress the available water supply, and oversaw many significant water court cases involving the thirsty cities and water providers of Colorado's front range. With his wisdom, compassion, sense of humor, and at times stern management of his courtroom, Judge Hays left his mark on Colorado water law and on all who appeared before him.

Among other significant matters, in 2000 Judge Hays presided over an eight-week trial held in South Park, Colorado. This case was noteworthy not only for its subject matter—a conjunctive use project involving water development in South Park for delivery to the front range—but also for the location of most of the trial proceedings—a combined auditorium/cafeteria in the local high school in Fairplay. In another multi-week trial involving municipal exchanges on the South Platte River, Judge Hays ruled on an issue of first impression concerning the water court's jurisdiction over certain water quality matters. In recognition of his contributions to water rights jurisprudence, the Colorado Bar Association ordained Judge Hays into the "Ancient and Honorable Order of the Water Buffalo" in 2006.

More than just a Water Buffalo, however, Judge Hays was a dedicated lawyer, jurist, and student of the law in every sense. After graduating from the University of Colorado School of Law in 1968, he began his legal career in the Weld County Public Defender's Office. Later, he made the somewhat unusual choice to switch sides and become a prosecutor in the District Attorney's Office.

Appointed to the County Court bench in the early 1970s, he soon rose to the District Bench, where he presided over a mix of civil and criminal matters. When Colorado reinstated the death penalty in 1979, Judge Hays presided over two of the state's first death penalty cases and related sentencings. Attorneys who participated in these proceedings have expressed great admiration for the manner in which Judge Hays handled these difficult cases. Clearly this was a challenging period in his life that he handled with professionalism, dignity, and respect for the legal system.

In his private life Judge Hays was known as a kind and thoughtful man, with a big heart and a sharp sense of humor. He had a passion for singing and acting, and was an active participant in both the Greeley Chorale and in numerous Greeley theater productions. Judge Hays also had a deep love of the outdoors, and travelled frequently to the Grand Canyon for weeks of hiking and camping. He and his wife Roberta also spent time travelling to visit either family or new destinations. Finally, those who knew him well could regale you with seemingly endless tales of his love of "shooting pool," lunches at Dutch's in Greeley, making homemade beef jerky, driving old cars, tinkering with various projects around the house, and tirelessly taking up new challenges.

Both authors had the honor and great pleasure of clerking for Judge Hays during his time as the Division 1 Water Judge. Although the stories would fill pages, the authors' lasting impression of Judge Hays from a legal standpoint was his dedication to understanding both the law and the (sometimes extraordinarily complex) facts related to each case that he heard, and his unending enthusiasm for working through problems until the right outcome was reached. From a personal standpoint, the authors remember Judge Hays as a man of honor and great humor. His contributions to life and the law cannot be measured in words, and he will be missed.

William Caille
Law Clerk - Water Division 1
2000-2001

Stuart Corbridge
Law Clerk - Water Division 1
2001-2003