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Dedication

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Dedication

DEDICATION

[Editor's Note: This past May, Hamlet J. (Chips) Barry died in a tractor accident. Chips was one of the members of the WATER LAW REVIEW'S Advisory Board, and he is missed by all our members. This issue is dedicated to him.]

Chips Barry epitomized the role of the natural resource attorney as a public servant. He did have a short stint in private practice, but spent the bulk of his career in the public sector, working on natural resource issues and also representing the under-served.

Although he is best known as the Manager of Denver Water for 20 years, he had a varied and colorful career. A Denver native, Chips graduated cum laude from Yale College in 1966 and Columbia University Law School in 1969. After law school, he was a Vista volunteer in rural Alaska, a law clerk to Judge Robert McWilliams on the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver, and a legal services lawyer in Micronesia.

Prior to becoming Manager at Denver Water, Chips was engaged in various positions at the Colorado Department of Natural Resources, including Director of the Mined Land Reclamation Division, Deputy Director, and eventually Executive Director under Governor Roy Romer.

Chips was also involved in the broader community. He was a grader for the Colorado Bar examination and a member of the Board of Governors for the Colorado Bar Association. He was a Trustee of the Colorado Chapter of the Nature Conservancy. He served on the Boards of Water for People, the Association of Municipal Water Agencies, the Water Utility Council of the American Water Works Association, and the Western Urban Water Coalition.

Beyond his *curriculum vitae*, Chips was recognized as an innovator and leader in water policy in the west. He was known for his directness, often expressing in groups what many were thinking but unwilling to state. But he often did so in a self-effacing and humorous style, which not only took the edge off his point, but also helped him make it.

Chips was a broad thinker, who had big and often self-admittedly unattainable ideas for resource management. Yet by raising such thoughts he allowed others to also look at problems from a broader, solution-oriented perspective.

Chips joined Denver Water in the wake of the Environmental Protection Agency's veto of the Two Forks Dam. Up until that point, Denver Water's vision was the primary water provider for the entire Denver metropolitan area. The agency had in large part developed its impressive collection, storage and distribution system by coercion, and perhaps as a result had become insular. With the demise of Two Forks, the agency was adrift.

Chips was the right person at the right time for Denver Water. He helped the Denver Water Board develop a Resource Statement that

defined the role of the agency in the post-Two Forks era by committing its service obligation to the “build-out” of its Combined Service Area. He brought openness to Denver Water’s relationship with the West Slope by forging a partnership in the development of Wolford Mountain Reservoir, and initiating a negotiation process that has put Denver and the West Slope on the brink of a wide-ranging agreement on how Denver Water operates, develops and utilizes its West Slope facilities. His emphasis was on finding solutions, not conflict.

Chips guided Denver Water through a series of unanticipated challenges. In 2002, an unprecedented drought brought into question the assumptions of the agency regarding the long-term yield of its system. The 1996 Buffalo Creek and 2002 Hayman fires destroyed much of the watersheds above Cheesman and Strontia Springs Reservoirs, and resulted in degraded water quality and massive sediment deposition in Strontia Springs Reservoir. The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks brought renewed focus on the need to protect the security of key facilities and systems. The draw-down of Colorado River system reservoirs confronted the availability of water under the Colorado River Compact, and the potential impacts of climate change. Recognizing these uncertainties, Denver Water accelerated its commitment to conservation and efficiency, to recycling, and to the enlargement of Gross Reservoir.

The aftereffects of a 2001 car accident brought personal challenge as well, in the form of deteriorating hearing and eyesight. Yet Chips maintained his traditional humor and outlook, maintaining his squash game at the Denver Athletic Club, and enjoying – and unabashedly cheating at – golf.

Chips’s life came to a premature yet not unfitting end, doing something he loved. He was proud of his professional career, but enthusiastically looking forward to his retirement plan of spending time on his Macadamia nut, honey and coffee farm in Hawaii, and in Denver playing golf and squash.

Denver Mayor and Governor-elect John Hickenlooper provided an apt summary of the feelings of the friends and professional associates of Chips Barry. “However great his legacy in water, what we will miss most is the person – the warmth and the wit, the charm and the kindness. He was one of the most gracious and considerate people I’ve ever known.”¹

*Jim Lochhead,
CEO/Manager
Denver Water*

1. Bruce Finley & Virginia Culver, *Chips Barry, Denver Water chief on verge of retiring, dies in Hawaii*, The Denver Post, May 4, 2010.