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FELIX LARRY SPARKS



IN TRIBUTE

Mr. Felix Larry Sparks has led a remarkable life. He was born and raised in Miami, Arizona, a town where three mining companies employed one hundred percent of the working population. At the onset of the Depression, the companies closed, leaving all jobless and some homeless. Mr. Sparks' family supplemented what food they had with government

provided staples—flour, lard, salt pork, oranges, grapefruit, and dried beans. Right after high school and amidst the Depression, Mr. Sparks hopped trains to travel the country in search of a job, leaving his family and home. He had eighteen dollars to his name which his father had borrowed from a neighbor. After spending some time in Corpus Christi, Texas, looking for a job, he headed to California hearing there was work there. Upon arriving in California, he did not have a cent left and had been sleeping in parks. Walking down Market Street in San Francisco, Mr. Sparks encountered an army recruiting sergeant who asked him if he wanted to join the army. Surprising even himself, Mr. Sparks said yes. The officer gave him streetcar fare and directions to the dock where the boat to Angel Island arrived to pick up new recruits. At that time, the building of the Golden Gate Bridge had just begun. That was only the beginning of Mr. Sparks' military service, a service marked by unusually young promotions, liberation of a World War II concentration camp, a number of injuries, and innovation.

He was by no means your ordinary enlisted man—early on in his military career, he was an entrepreneur. While stationed in Hawaii at Fort Kamehameha, Mr. Sparks constructed and ran his army base's photo lab with virtually no experience (other than having read a how-to book), but with persuasion, a loan from the base's Post Exchange, and enough demand to keep him working until three o'clock in the morning, eventually needing to hire three additional soldier-employees. When his enlistment ended, he sold the business to his employees and arrived back in Arizona with "a bundle of cash for those days."

Mr. Sparks completed undergraduate work at the University of Arizona. He also enrolled in law school there, where, after enrolling for his second semester, he received notice he had been drafted. This stint in the military took him to Europe for World War II. In total, he spent forty years of his life in active and reserve service for the United States Army. He is a veteran of eight campaigns in the European Theater during World War II with the 45th Infantry Division. When he retired, he had achieved the rank of Brigadier General. For his service, he was awarded the Silver Star with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Legion of Merit, the Army Commendation Medal, the Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, the Combat Infantry Badge, and the French Croix de Guerre.

After the end of World War II, Mr. Sparks enrolled at the University of Colorado at Boulder's law school in order to finish his law degree, receiving his LL.B. in 1948. His past professional experiences include serving as a senior partner in the Delta, Colorado, law firm of Sparks, Conklin & Carroll; District Attorney for the 7th Judicial District of Colorado; Justice of the Colorado Supreme Court; Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources and the Colorado Water Conservation Board; Colorado Commissioner for both the Upper Colorado River Compact Commission and the Arkansas River Compact Commission; and legal counsel for the Ute Mountain Ute Indian Tribe.

It is with pleasure that the *Water Law Review* dedicates this issue to Mr. Sparks. For an in depth examination of Mr. Sparks' career in water law, see the *Practitioner's Perspective* section of this issue.

