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David H. Getches: 1942-2011

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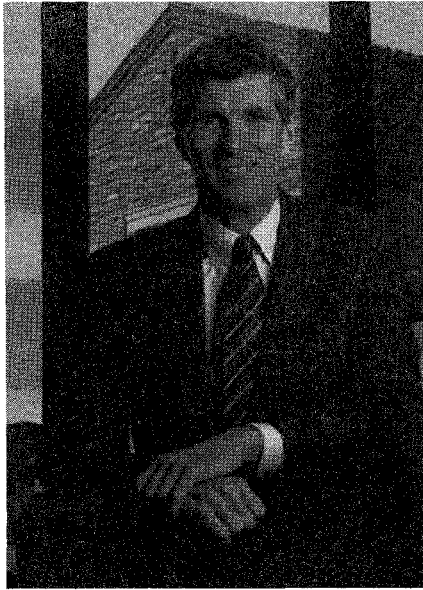
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DEDICATION



DAVID H. GETCHES
1942-2011

David Getches, who succumbed to pancreatic cancer on July 5 at the age of 68, was a giant in the field of water resources law. Teacher, scholar, administrator and public servant, he left a lasting mark of excellence in each of these areas of service.

Educated at Occidental College and the University of Southern California School of Law, David practiced law in California and was co-directing attorney for California Indian Legal Services. In 1970, he came to Boulder to be the founding executive director of the Native American Rights Fund. There his compassion and commitment led to a remarkable lifetime impact on the development of American Indian Law. The National Congress of American Indians posthumously awarded David its Lifetime Achievement Award, noting that "Your piercing intelligence, diligent work and compassion for the Native cause brought hope and justice to Indian communities nationwide. We thank you and lift you up in our hearts."

In 1979 David joined the faculty of the University of Colorado School of Law. During more than thirty years of teaching and research, he wrote several widely acclaimed books and numerous articles on Indian law, water law, and the management of natural resources. His foresight and perception of the issues were applauded by a generation of scholars and practicing attorneys, along with the hundreds of law students to

whom he communicated his unfailing enthusiasm for the law. He grasped the changing environment for land and water in the American West and was a leader in the establishment of the Natural Resources Law Center, created to examine these issues in depth.

Forever committed to public service, David served from 1983 to 1987 as Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Natural Resources under Governor Richard D. Lamm. The challenges of that position - at a focal point of natural resources administration in the West - sharpened the common-sense approach to wise resources management for which he was much respected.

David Getches was appointed Dean of the University of Colorado School of Law in 2003, a time of unusual challenge. The School's plans for a much-needed new building had been sidelined because of a sluggish economy and reduced state revenues. Undeterred by the obstacles, David welded together the support of the faculty, students and alumni, fashioned an ambitious fundraising campaign, and brought the new Wolf Law Building through to completion. In addition to its design and environmental merits, the facility is a testimonial to David's tireless efforts and intense personal commitment.

After eight years of successful leadership, David stepped down as Dean on June 30 of this year, looking forward, as he said, to returning to teaching and writing. Sadly, it was not to be.

The milestones of David Getches' distinguished career mark him as an intellectual visionary in the development of Indian law and water law. To those of us who had the joy of knowing and working with him, he was far more. He was a dear friend, mentor, leader, advisor, and delightful companion. He was a man of many interests who passionately lived a full life, filled with compassion. As his close friend and colleague, Professor Charles Wilkinson, noted of David at the time of his passing, "We will not see his kind again."

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