

Tribute to Theodore M. Zorich

Ted Zorich was a Colorado native raised on the slopes of Greenhorn Mountain in Huerfano County, where his family raised cattle and alfalfa. As a boy on the homestead property, it was many times necessary to drive the cattle to water when a particular watering hole dried up. As a young man, Ted served two years in the U.S. Navy and worked for the AT&SF Railroad in Pueblo, and spent most summer weekends on the ranch helping his mother with the alfalfa crops and anything else that needed attention. Ted's daughter still remembers following along with Ted, "helping" to divert and channel water in the fields, opening and closing headgates, and making sure the neighbors didn't use more than their share of the water. The neighboring ranches all got along fine on a social level but you would often hear about those who were stealing water again!

Ted's life changed dramatically in 1956 when he came down with polio. For those of us that knew Ted, his crutches were one of his trademarks. Professional training for his water career began when he enrolled as an engineering student at CSU, after recovering from the polio. Ted excelled as a CSU student and received his Bachelor's Degree in Agricultural Engineering in 1961, his Master's Degree in Civil Engineering in 1962, and his Ph.D. in Watershed Management and Applied Hydrology in 1966.

After brief research and teaching assignments in California and Nebraska in the late 1960's, Ted returned to Colorado to begin his water consulting career with W.W. Wheeler and Associates. In 1973, Ted founded Zorich Engineering, which later became Zorich-Erker Engineering, Ted Zorich and Associates, and ultimately TZA Water Engineers.

During those years, Ted represented a legion of clients throughout Colorado. He pretty much built the water portfolios for several cities, including Colorado City (where he retired) and Lafayette. Ted also helped train many of the current water engineers in Colorado who worked for him early in their careers, and also helped train many of the current water lawyers about the engineering aspects of water rights.

He was willing to take on most anything, despite his physical disability. Once, when his firm was overseeing the enlargement of the water treatment plant for Breckenridge, the contractor wanted him to look at something in a deep hole near the foundation. He climbed into the bucket of a big excavator and they lowered him into the hole. He made an engineering decision and the work continued.

Ted was well known for his dry wit and good humor. His forte as an engineer was in always seeing the big picture and accurately assessing the bottom line. It was always a pleasure to work with Ted and a challenge to work against him.