

For the Amicus, by Amy Steinfeld

In 2002, I eagerly applied to Professor Getches' job posting for a summer water law research assistant. Even though I had never met him, his work spoke volumes and mirrored my interests as a fledgling law student. After learning that he had narrowed the candidates down to three, I turned to desperate measures. I surreptitiously slipped a letter under his door explaining how honored I would be to work for him. I think the fact that I wrote the letter in Spanish tipped the scales because Professor Getches was looking to share his seminal water and Indian law articles with a Central and South American audience.

During my first summer working for Professor Getches, I was exposed to the complex world of Colorado River management, which provided a strong foundation for my current position as a water attorney in Santa Barbara, California. As Professor Getches' research assistant, I was constantly reminded of the importance of the Colorado River. In class at the University of Colorado I studied the "Law of the River," a compilation of agreements, contracts, treaties, legislation and U.S. Supreme Court cases which allocates and regulates the river's resources. Yet it was not until I discussed Colorado River issues with Professor Getches that I began to fully understand the significance of this vital resource to life in the West. I am now officially an "urban lower-basin dweller," a term which makes many upper-basin residents cringe. Therefore I was surprised when Professor Getches encouraged me to return to California to practice law, explaining with a sly grin, "California's water law is a mess. Go sort things out." And it was Professor Getches who helped me secure my dream job: a summer law clerk position at the boutique water law firm, Hatch & Parent (now Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck). That was seven years ago.

When Professor Getches became dean he remained committed to his groundbreaking legal work, which meant that I still had a job for the next two years. At our weekly meetings, his eyes would twinkle when we discussed the issues that he was most passionate about: Indian water rights, the intersection between water rights and the Endangered Species Act, and natural resources management. It was through Professor Getches that I first learned of the multi-state effort to encourage California to reduce its take on the Colorado River and where I first heard the acronym, the QSA, or Quantification Settlement Agreement, a series of 35 agreements that quantify the top three agricultural priorities in California to Colorado River water and reduce California's use. Professor Getches laid the foundation for my current work defending the historic QSA on behalf of the San Diego County Water Authority.

A year before his death, Professor Getches presented me with a book that he had edited and to which he contributed, *Out of the Mainstream: Water Rights, Politics and Identity*, which uniquely addresses water in the context of power, justice and culture. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to delve into the book until I embarked on my recent honeymoon to Turkey. Ironically, I picked up the book after touring the Basilica Cistern, a vast underground system, built in 532 A.D., to store water from the surrounding forests to meet the growing demands of Istanbul. Like arid Istanbul, without the elaborate system of dams, reservoirs, aqueducts, and pumping facilities, southern California would not be what it is today. I would have loved to share this parallel with Professor Getches. And I deeply regret not fully expressing my gratitude to him for instilling in me a passion for Western water law, for ardently supporting my career, and

for encouraging me to think creatively and critically about natural resources. But in return, I vow to “make waves,” as Professor Getches once wrote to me, in the field that we both love.