

Anthony van Westrum

BY BOB KEATINGE AND BILL CALLISON

A long and well-lived life cannot be encapsulated in a few short paragraphs. Anthony Colby van Westrum was a son, a husband, a father, and a grandfather. But we knew him as a lawyer, a colleague, and a beloved friend. We also knew him as a lodestar, who always quietly guided others along their own paths. A conversation with Tony was about family, travel, good books, politics, law, and stories.

Tony van Westrum was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on April 10, 1944, and he died in a fall on January 20, 2019 while on a walk in the woods with his camera.¹ He loved being outdoors with his camera, and it is appropriate somehow that he was doing what he loved when he died.

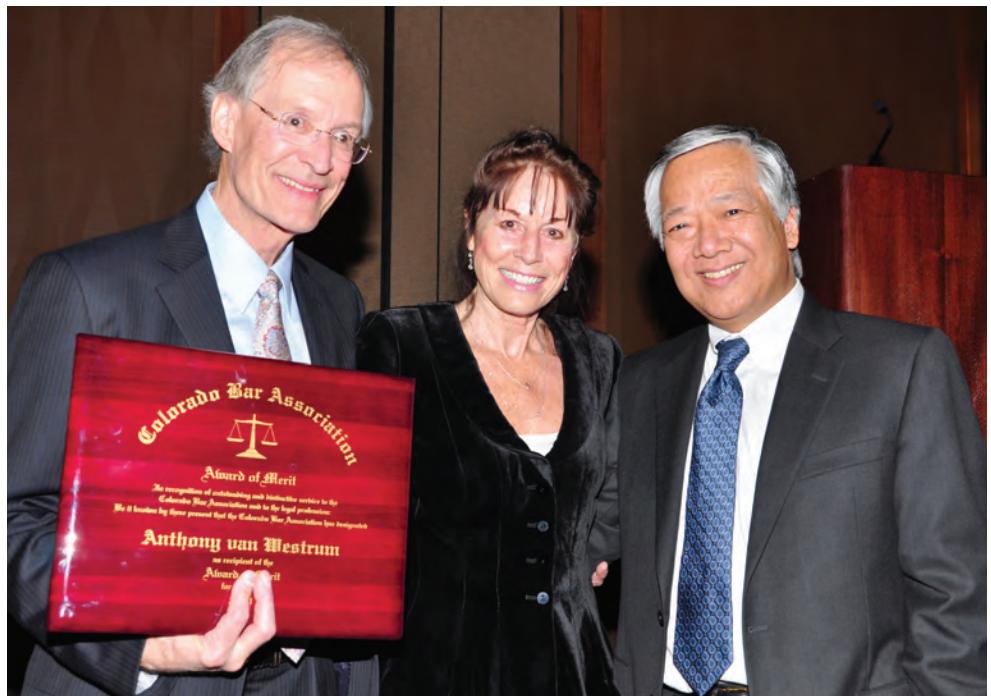
After college at Purdue University (a B.S. in Mechanical Engineering) and law school at the University of Michigan, Tony moved to Colorado to join Davis, Graham & Stubbs, first as an associate and then as a partner. In 1991, he became special counsel with Burns, Wall, Smith & Mueller, P.C., and he practiced as a sole practitioner from 1994 until 2019. His practice focused on commercial and corporate law. Not surprisingly, Tony also focused on legal ethics, and he served on the Colorado Bar Association's Ethics Committee and the Colorado Supreme Court's committee on the Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct. As Gary Blum has put it, "Tony was the conscience of the Bar." Not surprisingly, considering the depth and breadth of his interests and knowledge, Tony was an extremely competent expert witness and arbitrator.

Tony was recognized for his service to the bar and received the CBA Award of Merit in 2010,



the Denver Bar Association's Award of Merit in 2006, and the CBA's Sue Burch Legislative Award in 2001. Tony frequently referred to the bar association, and his many lawyer friends, as his "law firm," and he delighted in his many bar activities, his mentoring of younger (and older) lawyers, and his frequent contacts with colleagues for lunches, dinners, and social events. Importantly, Tony recognized a lack of racial diversity in our bar organizations, evangelized about it, and attempted to do

Below: Tony celebrating his Award of Merit with wife Jenny and CBA President Paul Chan.



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something about it. It would be a fitting tribute to Tony for others to deliberately continue these efforts.

Tony was a keystone in the drafting of business legislation for Colorado and in every other group activity in which he participated. In all cases, Tony's hard work, knowledge, and openness encouraged participants to leave their personal interests at the door and to do their best work collaboratively. Over the last 30 years he was involved in drafting corporation, limited liability company, limited partnership, general partnership, and other statutes. He kept the various committees on task, and he served as amanuensis (always with his computer at the ready to post revisions in real time) and sage. He was great at the theoretical, and brilliant at the technical, aspects of the statutory drafting craft. His engineering and problem-solving nature shone through when dealing with thorny statutory drafting issues. Even peculiar ones, such as whether the New Year begins at midnight (with the old year ending at 11:59:59) or one second after midnight. Lesser characters among us might roll our eyes and say "yes, it does indeed do one of those things," but Tony found these questions interesting.

But it was after drafting, over beers, that the real Tony, a charter member of what Cathy Krendl refers to as "the Shelby's gang," shone through. Shelby's was the site of many long conversations about friendship, politics, religion and atheism, law, books, travel, science, the meaning of life, and just about everything



Above: Tony with CBA Past Presidents Bill Walters and Dick Gast.

Left: Tony with Michael Valdez, Chuck Turner, and Judge Terry Ruckriegle (ret.).




else under the sun. This is the part of Tony, the part that loved laughter in the company of his friends, that we will miss most. Tony loved knowledge of all things, and even more he loved the wisdom that comes from constant reexamination of that knowledge. He was always eager to take another look at his own work and beliefs to refine, reinforce, or correct them to make them stronger.

Tony van Westrum was a humble man. When he traveled to Utrecht, The Netherlands, several years ago, he went to the Domkerk cathedral to see where the van Westrums of old were interred. It thrilled him when he was directed to a janitorial closet marked by a floor stone

telling him that that was the place. It thrilled him even more to tell the story.

Tony was a giving man. He gave his time, his smile, and his brilliance to his many friends. He incessantly gave away books, and ideas about books, and ideas in books. He gave his energy and talent to his profession. He gave his love to his wife, Jenny, his children Derek (Jen) and Heather (Mike), and his granddaughter, Ruby.

Tony van Westrum is sorely missed.² 

NOTES

1. Over the years, *Colorado Lawyer* has proudly featured Tony's photographs on its covers, most recently in June 2018. In tribute, one of Tony's photographs is featured on this month's cover.

2. Authors Bob Keatinge, of counsel with Holland & Hart LLP, and Bill Callison, a partner with Faegre Baker Daniels LLP, each consider one of their greatest professional honors and pleasures the times and activities they shared with Tony van Westrum and Allen Sparkman, who also passed away recently (see In Memoriam, p. 60).