

John A. Love (1916–2002)

One of the Greatest

BY REBECCA KOURLIS AND STACY KOURLIS GULLON

This article is part of the “Six of the Greatest” series profiling outstanding lawyers in Colorado history.

John A. Love would be proud to be included among outstanding lawyers in Colorado’s history. And I think he would be proud to have the two lawyers in his family (daughter Becky and granddaughter Stacy) authoring this profile of his life and career. John highly valued his legal education, his law degree, and his legal practice. Perhaps more to the point, he valued the ability of the law and lawyers to serve the public, and it was to that service that he dedicated his life.

Neither of us was around for the first half of his life, but we capture it here from stories he told the family, family records, and his biography.¹

Childhood Years

John was born on November 29, 1916 in Gibson City, Illinois. His father was a farmer, but contracted tuberculosis in 1920 and migrated to Colorado for the dry air and proximity to other family members. John spent all of his “growing up” years in Colorado Springs—in the Broadmoor area, but, as he would tell it, “on the wrong side of the tracks” and “on the close side of poverty.”

John started a paper route at age 12 when he acquired a bicycle, and did other odd jobs, including cleaning stables, exercising polo ponies, driving tourists around town, and working as a car hop. He also spent a couple of summers on a cattle ranch in Arizona, which likely honed his skills for his stint as a rodeo star in high school.

He remembered those years in Colorado Springs very fondly. From them came the



Love’s campaign photo.

elements that defined his life—a love of Colorado and its natural beauty and wildness, a commitment to education, a deep sense of duty to public service, and a yearning to succeed.

On to Law School

John received a scholarship to the University of Denver and eventually became involved in campus politics. He supported Alfred Landon in his campaign against FDR because of his own fiscal conservatism, became editor of the student newspaper, and was elected president of the Rocky Mountain Collegiate Press Association.

He decided that he wanted to be a participant in the events of his times and that the best training for that participation was law school, so in 1938, he entered the University of Denver College of Law.

John said that he learned “to think” at law school, not only from his excellent professors, but also from his outstanding classmates. The class of 1941 was quite remarkable: John; Robert McWilliams, who served as chief justice of the Colorado Supreme Court and as a member of the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals;² Leonard Sutton, another chief justice of the Colorado Supreme Court;³ Howard Jenkins, who served on the National Labor Relations Board and was one of the first African-American graduates of DU Law School;⁴ and Elizabeth Koefed, the only female in the class, who excelled in practice in the San Luis Valley. John and Bob McWilliams used to argue about who placed first on the Bar exam, and who placed second, but between them and their classmates they swept the field.

During law school, John reconnected with his future wife, Ann Daniels. Both had attended the Cheyenne Mountain Schools, but Ann was a couple of years older than John. He talked about having developed a crush on her when he was in fifth grade—but it took him a couple of decades to act on it.

Military Man

Almost immediately after learning he passed the Bar, John was called to fight in World War II. He enlisted in the Navy Aviation Cadet Program in 1942. On the same day that he received his

wings, he and Ann were married. He headed off to war while she worked at a war bond office, with one child in tow (Dan) and a second soon to come (Andy).

If any single period defined John, it was his service in the War. If law school taught him how to think, the War taught him how to survive adversity. He flew patrol and rescue missions in the South Pacific, in an amphibious plane called a Patrol Bomber Consolidated (PBY). He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery in action, rescuing downed pilots. He faced death, he understood what it meant to rely on a squadron member, and he developed a profound allegiance to our country and its ideals.

Early Practice Years

John returned to the United States in August of 1945. He and Ann made their way back to Colorado Springs and he opened up his law practice, office-sharing with a local lawyer and doing court appointments in competency hearings to pay the bills. Over the next 15 years, he built a very successful law practice, ultimately representing Bud Maytag in his acquisition of Frontier (and then National) Airlines, the Broadmoor Hotel, and some very successful land developers. In fact, he apparently turned down an offer to represent the group that started Vail Associates, on the grounds that he was too busy.

During this time, he and Ann became very involved in the civic life of Colorado Springs. He served as president of both the El Paso County Young Republicans and the Colorado Springs Chamber of Commerce, and he was instrumental in bringing the Air Force Academy to Colorado Springs.

Becky was born a year after Ann and John bought a house near the Broadmoor Hotel. One of the advantages of being a last child—born to older parents—is that the parents have already begun to make their mark. For Becky, her dad was a heroic figure from the very beginning.

Life in Politics

In 1961, John decided to run for Governor of Colorado. It was a long shot because he had never been involved in statewide politics, but



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- 1 John, Andy, and Becky in 1973 Christmas card.
- 2 Stacy and Papa circa 1985.
- 3 Governor and Mrs. Love in front of Colorado State Capitol.

he was charismatic, smart, handsome, and driven. He and Ann (and sometimes the whole family) crisscrossed the state, attending coffee and dinner meetings, walking the streets of the small towns, and visiting with local leaders. Ann kept the index card file with everyone's name, address, phone number, and role—and John drove. That index card file later became Ann's Christmas card list, and for years she sent hundreds of handwritten Christmas cards. They were a winning pair, and win they did—first at the Convention, then at the primary, and then in the general election.

John went from a nobody to governor in the space of about 12 months. It was a whirlwind that could not be repeated in today's times. In January of 1963, the family moved from Colorado Springs into the Governor's Mansion, and John began the first of his three terms in office. His

first inaugural ball was at the Brown Palace, and tickets were one dollar. He did not want anyone who had volunteered on his campaign to be priced out of attending the ball. Four thousand people came. He was much loved—as was Ann.

He was reelected twice, in 1966 and 1970. The issues he dealt with were not dissimilar from those that we deal with today. He enhanced the economy in Colorado by enticing businesses to come here, while simultaneously keeping a watchful eye on the environment. He added 129 new industries to the state, and also shepherded the passage of the Colorado Air and Water Pollution Act. Education was a primary focus of his years in office, and the state rose to fourth in the nation in local and state financial support for public education. He increased scholarships and tuition waivers in higher education by 92%. He cut income taxes and concentrated on trying to ensure that Colorado was governed through local entities and at the state level, with diminished reliance on the federal government.

An excellent listener, he was known as a collaborator and consensus builder. He was also a peacemaker. Following Martin Luther King's assassination, he walked around Five Points and

said he found himself joining marchers in front of city hall singing “We Shall Overcome.” When students protesting the Vietnam War set up shanties on campus at the University of Denver, John went to talk to them. They applauded him, but did not remove the shanties. So he called out the National Guard—but without any weapons. The shanties disappeared, and no one was hurt.

During these years, John was beginning to build a reputation on the national stage. He gave a nomination speech for William Scranton for president at the 1964 Republican Convention, when Barry Goldwater swept the party. John teamed up with a group of governors who became known as Rockefeller Republicans—moderates in the Republican party. He was opposed to extremism and to infighting in the party, and tried to combat it. He was mentioned as a candidate for vice president, and even for president—but it was not to be.

He did get his chance to play a role in D.C., but it did not work out the way he intended. In 1973, President Nixon asked him to take on the job of director of the Office of Energy Policy. He would later joke that when the press started calling him the “Energy Czar,” he should have seen the writing on the wall—given what had happened to other czars in history.

In June of 1973, he resigned as governor and began to immerse himself in the depths of the energy crisis. In October, the Middle East War broke out and Saudi Arabian oil supply was shut off. He became convinced that we were in the midst of a crisis that required serious steps and firm leadership. What he underestimated was the “other” crisis that was brewing in the White House—Watergate, and a beleaguered presidency. John had limited access to the president, and his ideas were rejected.

Return to Colorado

Ultimately, on December 2, 1973, John resigned and returned home. His Western idealism and his unwavering belief that all problems are solvable could not triumph over the chaos and distrust that then reigned in D.C., but he hoped for a time when the tides would change.

John became senior vice president and


shortly thereafter chief executive officer of Ideal Basic Industries—a cement and potash company with about 4,000 employees that was on the New York Stock Exchange, based in Denver, and rooted in Colorado history. For almost 10 years, he captained that company, during a very turbulent time.

In 1982, he resigned and, beginning in 1985, served as counsel to Davis, Graham and Stubbs, returning full circle to the practice of law from which he had come. During his practice of law, and later during his (semi)retirement, he once again had the time and freedom to feed his deep love of learning. As a father, grandfather, friend, and bridge partner, he was not only charismatic and engaging, but also a treasure trove of information. He read six newspapers a day, and his only acquiescence to technology was the 24-hour televised news playing in the background, so he was more than ready to engage in political debate with anyone who came his way. He had an archive of memorized poetry suitable for any occasion—ranging from Burgess’s *The Purple Cow* for blithe moods to Auden’s *Funeral Blues* for somber ones. Ever a believer in the wisdom of history, he poured over tomes on Rome and Churchill, readily sharing anecdotes and quippy quotes from their pages. His love for words and their power has proven hereditary, though we find it difficult to do it justice here.

Final Years

He devoted his final years to friends and family. Over card games at the Denver Country Club or trips to share European history and culture with his young grandchildren, he imparted not only his encyclopedic knowledge but also his values: integrity, grit, patriotism, and a wry sense of humor. He became increasingly pessimistic

as he aged—but then again, most of us do. But, were today’s challenges his own, we think his Western idealism would have equipped him to take on these problems too, just as he did those of his own time.

John passed away on January 21, 2002—Martin Luther King Day. He died as he lived, on his own terms, cogent and capable to the very end. His proudest achievements were the ways in which he was able to improve the State of Colorado, and the achievements and character of his children (Dan, Andy, and Becky) and his grandchildren (Scott, Julie, Stacy, Kate, and Tom). 



Rebecca Love Kourlis is a former Colorado Supreme Court justice and the current executive director of the Institute for the Advancement of the American Legal System (IAALS). She is the daughter of John and Ann Love. **Stacy Kourlis Guillon** is a litigator with the firm Lewis Roca Rothgerber Christie in Denver. She practices primarily agricultural law, representing farmers and ranchers in commercial, probate, public lands, and other disputes. She is John and Ann’s granddaughter.

Colorado Lawyer’s “Profiles in Success” column celebrates those individuals, living and deceased, whose contributions to the practice of law lend themselves to inspiring narratives. To suggest an article, contact Brendan Baker at bbaker@cobar.org.

NOTES

1. Walker, Jr., “John A. Love: The Story of Colorado’s Thirty-Sixth Governor,” 17 *Historical Studies Journal*, University of Colorado at Denver (Spring 2000). Walker wrote this piece as a history graduate student at CU-Denver, based on 35 interviews conducted with John A. Love and others, as well as his review of various documents.
2. Hon. Robert H. McWilliams, Jr. received the CBA Award of Merit in 1993.
3. See Kintzele, “Leonard von Bibra Sutton (1914–2002),” 41 *Colorado Lawyer* 61 (July 2012).
4. See Corrada, “One of the Greatest: Howard Jenkins, Jr. (1915–2003)—Mr. NLRB,” 46 *Colorado Lawyer* 74 (Aug./Sept. 2017).