

MEET THE SPEAKER
BANQUET



Pat O'Meara

J. W. "PAT" O'MEARA is the Executive Vice President of the National Water Resources Association. He has had a long and distinguished career in the nation's development of a saline water conversion program. Formerly Director of the Office of Saline Water when that agency was merged with the Office of Water Resources Research to form OWRT in 1974, he has seen it become an internationally-recognized leader in developing processes for the desalinization of water. O'Meara's services for the Department of Interior earned him the coveted Distinguished Service Award.

SWEEPING SAND IN THE DESERT

Pat O'Meara
National Water Resources Association

It seems fitting and appropriate, at the very outset of these remarks, to take a few minutes this evening to make some comments about a very special guy. A down-to-earth, intelligent, aggressive, and exceptionally perceptive person.

Born just before the great depression, he lived in and endured, poverty and want. The good things in life were denied him during his boyhood and the simple pleasures of life were denied him during his boyhood. The little luxuries that bring joy, like a baseball, glove and bat or a bicycle were beyond his financial ability to acquire.

But, by sheer determination and initiative, he literally pulled himself up by his bootstraps. He obtained his grade and high school education, even though he had to work after school every night, at all kinds of menial jobs, to help support his family and to put aside a nest egg to pay for his golden dream -- a college education. He had early come to realize, through hard and bitter experience, that education was his only hope of breaking the shackles of poverty. He relentlessly pursued his golden dream. In spite of adversity and tribulation, he worked his way through college and graduated magna cum laude from one of the finest engineering schools in the country.

Almost immediately he applied his talents to water resources conservation and development. Shunning more lucrative offers of employment in the private sector, he devoted his energies to improve the water posture of his state, and indeed the nation, through government service. Widely recognized and admired by his peers for his inspired leadership and continuing contributions to his chosen field of endeavor, his unique record of service is without parallel. Well, Steve, I think that's enough about me -- I had best get on with my remarks.

Over the years it has been my pleasure to be involved in several New Mexico activities. The first, was say back in 1958, when I was on the program of the third New Mexico Water Conference to report about the new U.S. program to produce fresh water from sea or brackish water sources. I used to know a lot of fine people from New Mexico. Now I find they are all buildings -- Clinton P. Anderson Physical Science Lab, Stucky Hall, Roger B. Corbett Center. One guy I met then who isn't a building yet was the State Engineer. It was the same one then as it is today, the nation's most durable Steve Reynolds.

I went back to my files and dug out the remarks I delivered at that third annual meeting because I am just vain enough to want to know if anything I said at that time was sufficiently incisive to stand the test of nearly a quarter of a century of time. 300 months, 1300 weeks, 9125 days -- a whole lot of water under the bridge.

To my surprise and pleasure, I noted one remark I made way back then is almost as germane today as it was when Eisenhower was President.

For those of you who are here tonight and were present when I spoke at the third annual meeting, I apologize for the re-run, but since some time has elapsed, perhaps it will serve to jog your memory. I quote, "The challenge of providing adequate supplies of water to meet our growing demands is indeed great, but to me, this conference is witness to the fact that you, here in New Mexico, firmly resolved not to let the lack of water curtail the future expansion of your population, your agriculture, and your industry. By drawing on your inspiring heritage of water resource development, groups such as this will provide the necessary leadership to meet and answer the challenge."

I'm glad I said that. I think it was worth repeating, because we have much the same challenge in water resources development today that we had 25, 50, 75, or 100 years ago. Steve, not much has changed.

You may think it is arid here in New Mexico, but it's like the guy who asked, "How's your wife?" And the fellow responded, "Compared to what?"

When I worked in the U.S. desalting program, I made several trips to Saudi Arabia. Once when I disembarked from a plane in Jiddah, at the foot of the steps there was an old Arab dressed in his flowing white robes. He had a long stick in his hands to which

was tied a bundle of twigs. With this primitive broom he was industriously sweeping sand from the walkway to the terminal building. As I watched him dutifully perform his never-ending task, the thought went through my mind, "Wow! Sweeping sand in the desert, that's really job security!"

I would like to tell you a couple of things I learned about Saudi Arabia. First of all, the Arabian peninsula is a land mass approximately the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River, and in that entire area there is not one single flowing stream.

With the enormous financial income the Saudis now enjoy from the sale of oil, the government is desperately trying to advance their nation almost overnight from the 16th century to the 20th century. One thing they must do to create a modern society is to provide a reliable and adequate source of water. Since dams to create reservoirs are infeasible and known resources of underground water supply are virtually nonexistent, the government has apportioned funds for a modest initial desalting plants construction program. (You will note that I said apportioned. In a democracy you appropriate, in a monarchy, you apportion.)

The Bureau of Reclamation, from its inception in 1902, until its name was changed last year to the Water and Power Resources Service, has completed \$6.3 billion worth of project facilities. I repeat, \$6.3 billion investment in reclamation project facilities in 77 years. The Saudi government has embarked on a five-year program to

build power and water desalting plants for which they have apportioned \$15 billion. Plans now being developed for a second five-year program are being drafted in the range of \$20-\$30 billion.

One of my past trips to New Mexico was to escort a group of Russian nuclear desalting experts on a tour of U.S. facilities. As we were sitting in our plane at the Washington National Airport, the head of the Russian delegation was studying the route I had sketched on a map of the tour we were about to undertake. From D.C. we were going to North Carolina, then Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Freeport, Texas; and Roswell, New Mexico. He looked up from the map, and through the interpreter he asked, "In Roswell, is it arid?" I asked the interpreter to inquire if the Russian knew the Bible. He answered, "Yes, a little." I asked if he knew the parable of the deluge, when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights. "Yes, yes," he said, he knew that. "Well," I told the interpreter, "tell him at that time Roswell got a quarter of an inch."

I got to thinking the other day about that poor old Arab sweeping sand in the desert, and it occurred to me that he did not have near as good job security as working on water resource development in the United States. Yours truly, Ralph Stucky, and Steve Reynolds are living proof of that.

I think part of the problem we have had is that every new administration brings a bunch of new bureaucrats to Washington and they energetically set about to solve the problem. Each new group comes to town with the bright idea that within four or eight years

of enlightened leadership they can wrap up our water problems in a pretty box and tie it with a bright blue ribbon.

Of course, that is not true of the present administration. It seems to me that they have decided if they ignore the problem it will go away, so they have promulgated a program that is based on hit lists, conservation without storage, flood plain management and nonstructural development. They seem to think they discovered conservation and it will cure all our ills.

You know, and I know that ever since the first white settler arrived in the West, water conservation has been a way of life. When the Carter administration developed a water policy that deliberately eliminated the word storage, Governor Scott Matheson of Utah, one of the many western water leaders who were deeply concerned by the new policy, worked diligently, but unsuccessfully, to get the administration to broaden its definition of conservation. He has emphasized that conservation also means storage of excess water supplies in times of abundance to be used in times of scarcity.

There is an old truism that says: "It doesn't rain in the West -- it snows!" The essence of conservation in the west means the storage of spring run-offs for use later in the year. As you know, the President vetoed the \$1.8 billion public works bill in October 1978, and he has indicated he will veto the public works bill approved by the House and now awaiting action by the Senate.

The administration has proposed a cost-sharing program for water projects. Your Senator is a cosponsor of S1241, the so-called Domenici-Moynihan bill which proposes some radical changes in the way a water project is authorized and funded. Among other provisions, it would require a 25% front-end contribution by the state in which the project is located. It provides for an annual federal appropriation to be divided among the states on a formula that is based on square miles and state population.

I haven't figured out just why Senator Domenici is pushing for such a bill, but I can understand Senator Moynihan. He is from New York and the formula certainly augers in favor of his state. While New Mexico has more than twice the area of New York, New York has 18 times as much population, and lots more rain! The formula says nothing about need, conservation, wise use, planning, operation and maintenance, or a host of other factors essential to a reasonable and responsible water resources program.

Neglect might be a good word to describe the current situation in Senator Moynihan's state and other states in the New England area, a region richly endowed with a generous average rainfall. I remember back about ten years ago, they had a severe drought in New York. It lasted nearly three years. If you had received the same rainfall here in New Mexico that they received in New York during the drought, you would call it the three wet years!

But for all of their God-given water, the New England states face severe water problems. They have recently estimated it will

require \$25 billion to bring their water systems up to acceptable standards. It is mostly a distribution system problem brought on by neglect; and now they want Uncle Sam to bail them out -- with grants.

For example, Boston embarked on a long-delayed maintenance program to replace all city water lines that were 100 years old by the year 2000. But they now are so far behind on the schedule that they now plan to replace all lines that are over 150 years old by the year 2000. Meanwhile, 50% of the water delivered to the city is lost through leakage.

New York City gets a major share of its water through two huge tunnels. The water demand is so large that they can not close down one or the other tunnel for maintenance, so they must build a third tunnel which is currently estimated to cost \$5 billion! If either of the present tunnels fails before the third is completed, we will have 8 million people without an adequate supply of water. A mass exodus would be the only answer. Good planning.

I don't know how an engineer determines the age of a system and its maintenance requirements; I'm sure there are many variables.

I would like to talk briefly about the Association I represent, the National Water Resources Association. We are a confederation of the state water associations in the 17 western states and Hawaii. Our New Mexico affiliate is the New Mexico Reclamation Association. The water concerns of the state of New Mexico and the policies you espouse relative to water development have been expertly articulated by your representative to the National Water Resources Association

Board of Directors, Mr. Wayne Cunningham. The Board has recognized his ability and capability by electing Wayne Treasurer of the National Association. It has been a great pleasure working with Wayne, and I want you to know it is also very comforting and encouraging to know that we have the strong support and backing of Steve Reynolds!

In my invitation to speak to you this evening I was asked to say something nice about Steve Reynolds. Kinda reminded me of the time a reporter asked President Eisenhower to say something nice about Nixon. Ike said if they gave him a week he would think of something. Well, I've had more than a week, and like Ford (not Jerry), I thought I had a better idea.

I asked some distinguished Americans to say something nice about Steve, and I want to share with you what they had to say:

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 22, 1980

It has been my good fortune to work with the best State Engineer in this country during my eight years in the Senate. Steve Reynolds is widely recognized in the water business as an expert in the field and considered by many to be the best of all. New Mexico is indeed fortunate to have Steve running its water business.

I need not repeat my firm beliefs on our impending water crisis nor my desire for wise management and innovative solutions to the problem nor New Mexico's specific problems. However, I firmly believe that Steve Reynolds has guided our state down a path of wise water management and has helped to prepare us for future water demands.

As energy development begins to consume our water resources in New Mexico, I believe we are prepared to meet those demands because of the firm direction we have received from Steve Reynolds during the past 25 years.

The honors that have been conferred on Steve and the offices that he presently holds are staggering. He seems to live and breathe water. He has not only carefully guided water uses within New Mexico, but has well represented our state on numerous compact commissions.

The State of New Mexico will sorely miss Steve Reynolds, but I know that he will never acutally "retire" in the sense that he will continue to play an active role in ensuring proper water management in New Mexico. I want to pay the highest tribute to Steve Reynolds, a man who has not only served New Mexico, but its elected representatives in Washington.



Pete V. Domenici
United States Senator

HARRISON SCHMITT
NEW MEXICO

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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

April 24, 1980

Mr. Pat O'Meara
National Water Resources Association
955 L'Enfant Plaza, S. W.
Washington, D. C. 20024

Dear Mr. O'Meara:

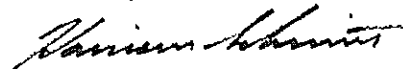
Steve Reynolds is a man of whom all New Mexicans can be proud. In a state where water is its lifeblood, he has handled his critical duties in a most dedicated manner.

There is virtually no question Steve cannot answer with respect to water in our state, and my staff has affectionately awarded him the title, "Mr. Water." Never has he been accused of being "all wet;" Steve, however, has gone to bat at every occasion in support of water rights and equity for the State and its citizens. While there are times when we may have disagreed with some of his decisions, I have found that working with Steve has been an experience in cooperation and mutual "give and take."

Certainly there is no one in the State of New Mexico more knowledgeable about specific water problems and about the general problems of the western United States. We wish that Senators and Congressmen from other states had one percent of his understanding and, if they did, the West would have a lot easier time resolving their basic water problems with the federal government.

I am pleased to join in honoring "Mr. Water" today and hope that our efforts to resolve the water problems of our state and the West will continue in the cooperative and productive spirit which has been the case thus far.

Sincerely,



Harrison Schmitt

HS:co

MANUEL LUJAN, JR.
1st DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO

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April 21, 1980

J. W. O'Meara
Executive Vice President
National Water Resources Association
Suite 1202 North
955 L'Enfant Plaza, S. W.
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Pat,

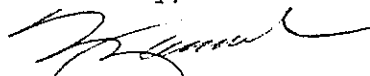
I am delighted to hear that my good friend Steve Reynolds is being honored at the New Mexico Water Conference in Las Cruces. The water folks couldn't have chosen a more appropriate time nor a more deserving person for the honor.

Never have western water rights and water laws come under such heavy attack as they are today. The administration appears determined to bring under federal control every drop of water that's not closed up in a bottle with a heavy stopper. And all of the carefully worked out agreement of the past, such as the agreements in the Colorado River Storage Project Act, are to be consigned to limbo if the President and Secretary of the Interior have their way.

Steve has been the strong right arm as we have fought for the retention of traditional western water law, states' rights and the honoring of the interstate agreements that were ratified by Congress. He knows what he's talking about because he helped make those agreements, and he helped write those water laws. When facts are needed, a phone call to Steve gets the facts. When we need testimony before our Committee to refute the weird water law opinions of the Solicitor, Steve is there. And he not only refutes those opinions -- he demolishes them.

The West in general, and New Mexico in particular, is very fortunate to have a nationally-respected man of Steve's stature standing in the breach in times like these. Because of the knowledge and dedication of men like him, state water jurisdiction and the time-tested application of prior appropriation water law will be around long after the strange philosophies of the current White House have retired to a brief footnote of history.

Sincerely,



Manuel Lujan, Jr.

ML/jdjk

HAROLD RUNNELS
20 DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO

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April 24, 1980

Mr. Steve E. Reynolds
New Mexico State Engineer
Bataan Memorial Building
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87503

Dear Steve:

It is an honor for me to be among your many friends who are formally recognizing your long service to New Mexico and your profession.

There is an old expression that, "We never know the worth of the water until the well runs dry." I cannot think of a more appropriate comment on your importance to our state, and I don't know what we will do when you finally step down.

Virtually every water project in New Mexico that I have dealt with as an elected official I have relied on your expertise and your knowledge in my evaluation. You have developed and maintained a reputation for thoroughness and fairness that many, many people in our state, and around the nation, have come to depend on. We appreciate all you have done.

The only thing in New Mexico more valuable than water is our people. You have built a career that combines both and doubly enriched our state.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,


HAROLD RUNNELS, M.C.

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