

✖ Last week, California and the nation lost a true giant of water law and policy, Tom Graff, who founded the California office of the Environmental Defense Fund in 1971 and had a hand in every key water battle or negotiation (as well as many other environmental developments) since then. EDF's memorial page is [here](#); it includes a link for sharing remembrances of Tom. Contributions in his memory can be made to EDF's California water program [here](#). Stuart Leavenworth wrote a moving tribute in the [Sacramento Bee](#). Obituaries have also appeared in, among others, the [Washington Post](#), [LA Times](#), and [SF Chronicle](#).

[Bob Infelise](#), Acting Executive Director of Berkeley Law's Center for Law, Energy and the Environment, offers this remembrance:

Tom Graff died last week. I didn't know him well enough to even know he was sick. I thought about him recently, though, when I told a colleague that Tom was much more qualified than me to mold future environmental lawyers at Berkeley Law. Much more qualified.

Tom's steadiest client was the environment. His client did not bestow great wealth on Tom, but it did give him the opportunity to litigate every major federal environmental statute while heading up the Bay Area branch of Environmental Defense. He grew to be a giant within the environmental bar.

I first met Tom when he spoke to my students about the merits of tearing down Hetch Hetchy Dam near Yosemite Valley. It is a complex issue, and nobody could have illuminated those intricacies better than Tom. He was a skilled teacher, as generations of Environmental Defense lawyers can attest. Two years later, I phoned Tom and asked if he would speak to my students about the issues presented by the relicensing of dams in the western states. He laughed and said, "Bob, I don't know a damn thing about the relicensing process but I sure like your students, so I'll fake it." If Tom was making it up, it certainly did not show. He was as mesmerizing as when he was discussing an issue as to which his knowledge was second to none. And there were plenty of those.

Although I subsequently talked to him several times by phone, I never actually saw Tom again. During our last conversation I told him that I couldn't imagine too many lawyers had accomplished as much as he had. Always humble, Tom responded, "I'm nothing special, but I had one helluva client."

On the day Tom died, his client paid tribute. Grey wolves stood at attention. Condors flew in formation. The sky had never been so blue. Global warming cooled its heels. And somewhere in heaven, Tom's law office opened for another day.