

Professor Leonard B. Dworsky Biography



(Leonard Dworsky shaking hands with President Lyndon Johnson)

Professor Leonard B. Dworsky (1915-2008), was a pioneer in shaping national water policy in the 20th century. During a career in local, state, national, international and academic worlds, he retained a respect for Michigan and her students whom he trusted would lead the nation and the world.

He received his Michigan B.S. in Civil Engineering in 1936, his American University M.A. in Public Administration in 1955, and he returned to Michigan's School of Natural Resources in 1955 to pursue a Ph.D.

In 1936, Dworsky was assistant Sanitary Engineer in the Illinois

Department of Public Health. At that time, states alone had the dominant political role in agriculture, public health, drinking water, and sewage management, so the young engineer's practical duties were extensive and deep, serving all of Illinois. Dworsky also found opportunities for research, organization, and planning - early on he designed studies collecting data in support of future environmental legislation. His titles prior to leaving for active military service in 1947 were Senior Sanitary Engineer, and Chief Engineer, Cook County Department of Public Health

Two formative experiences occurred during his Illinois years. Dworsky organized relief during the 1937 Ohio River Flood disaster; floods always result in disease danger, and the 1937 flood was

massive. Then, in 1938, he was an emergency managing officer during the typhoid fever epidemic at Manteno State Mental Hospital. The population of the hospital was 5,000 patients -- and much of the hospital staff abandoned the site as the epidemic took hold. For 4 months, and 500 cases, Dworsky and a handful of public health personnel managed the sanitation, food, and care for the entire mental hospital until the epidemic abated.

In 1947 he entered World War II as 1st Lieutenant, Sanitary Corps. Serving out of Trinidad and Puerto Rico, he was responsible for the public health of 20 major U.S. posts, camps, stations, and troop ships in 8 countries from Florida to Brazil Spending time at the Naval School of Military Government for the Far East and the Civil Affairs Staging Area in Monterey California furthered his exposure to city planning. He ended the war as Lt. Colonel.

After the War, re-employed as Chief Engineer, Cook County Department of Public Health, he studied and reported on Chicago and Cook County's water supply system, as part of the Chicago-Cook County Health Survey. This 1317 page book was the first comprehensive public health research by any state and was published in 1949 by the United States Public Health Service. The national importance of the study and its use for planning purposes pointed the USPHS toward its new role, as more Americans (and

Congress) understood the relationship between health, pollution control, and sanitary engineering.

In 1946, with many of his WWII Sanitary Corps colleagues, Dworsky became a commissioned officer in the USPHS. Under Assistant Surgeon General J.K Hoskin, he was in charge of comprehensive planning for water resources and water resources research. He served as liaison to the PHS international health activities office, and worked with Surgeon General Parran in bringing PL 80-845, 1948, the Water Pollution Control Act, to passage. As Assistant to the Chief of the new Division of Water Pollution Control, his design of new programs, none of which previously existed at the Federal level, was the origin point for the direction pollution control, water quality, sanitation, and public health would take for the next 80 years.

Between 1948 and 1955, Dworsky served as Division Program Planning Officer and Acting Chief, Operations Branch; Chief, Reports and Statistics Branch; and Chief, Reports and Education Branch. An important product of those years was a series of 15 major river basin summary reports covering the nation's 226 sub-basins and concluded in the report, Water Pollution in the United States. This report established for the first time definitive data on the nation's pollution problem and the requirements needed to control it. It established river drainage basins as the unit for managing pollution,

an organizational departure from the Federal Security Agency which had organized its field offices by political boundaries.

With river basins the new organizational units, Dworsky left D.C. and became Regional Director of the Federal Water Pollution Control Program in the Missouri and Columbia River Basins as well as Director, first of the Missouri River Basin Interagency Committee and then the Columbia River Basin Interagency Committee-implementing the inter-jurisdictional river basin management he'd helped create. He initiated water quality monitoring programs, administered sewage works construction programs, developed regional plans for energy, water supply, and pollution control, initiated legal action against interstate pollution sources, and coordinated education, conservation, and citizen interests in service to the public.

During his PHS years, Dworsky acted as legislative liaison to both state legislatures and Congress. He reviewed proposed legislation, committee studies and reports, interagency agreements, and water resource development programs of the federal construction agencies. He testified frequently before Congress and prepared testimony for others. He travelled extensively with members and staff of the House Committee on Public Works. For the entire year of 1954 he was assigned to the development of water pollution control

legislative proposals for Secretary Hobby of the Department of

Health, Education, and Welfare for presentation to the Congress in 1955. His proposed policies led to the Water Pollution Control Acts of 1948 (80-845) and 1956 (84-660), the Water Supply Act of 1958 (85-500), the Water Resources Research Act of 1964 (88-379), the revisions to the Water Pollution Control Act of 1972 (92-500), and the Safe Water Drinking Act of 1974 (92-523).

In 1962 he returned to Washington as Assistant to the Chief of the Division of Water Supply and Pollution Control of the PHS. By that time, pollution control and water resources management had firmly established itself in the public imagination, and universities across the country were developing institutions devoted to water resources research. In 1964 he left public service to become the director of the Cornell University Water Resources and Marine Sciences Center, where he focused on the coordination of government-university relationships in the expanding national water pollution control research efforts. In 1972 he founded UCOWR, the Universities Council on Water Resources.

Dworsky was principally concerned with bridging the gap between technology and the social, economic, and political aspects of water resources and environmental controls. He spent 40 years at Cornell; the dozens of interdisciplinary reports produced by the Center

helped expand the disciplines of academic and policy communities into what became the environment and sustainability movements. His personal research interests were concerned with modernizing political institutions to more effectively use appropriate technology for societal benefits.

Dworsky's graduate seminars attracted students from the entire university, and taught them to bring forward new policy ideas while grounding them in history His establishment of the Great Lakes Inter-University Seminars in partnership with other American and Canadian universities created a population of students and policy professionals who saw beyond their national and discipline boundaries.

Dworsky's CV is long with pages of publications . A partial list of activities would show he was a member of President Johnson's Office of Science and Technology senior staff under Don Hornig, and a member of the President's Science Advisory Committee Panel on the Environment, as well as a member of the House of Representatives Committee on Public Works Science Advisory Committee. He was a consultant to The Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the United Nations Center for Natural Resources, the U.S. Information Agency. He served on the Research Advisory Committee of the International Joint Commission. He chaired conferences for the U.S. Water Resources Council, The National

Academy of Sciences, The Universities Council on Water Resources, the American Water Resources Association, AAAS, The National Academy of Sciences, The Engineering Foundation, and the American Society of Civil Engineers. He conducted the first environmental training programs for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the 1960's, and in 1970 published a comprehensive documentary history of water and air pollution in the United States. He received the Caulfield Medal for Exemplary Contributions to National Water Policy, and the Hudson River Environmental Society Achievement Award.

After becoming Emeritus, he continued his graduate seminars at Cornell and became an adjunct professor at the University of New Mexico Law School and a contributing editor of the UNM Law School's Natural Resources Journal, working steadily writing articles, producing reports, chairing panels, and convening and participating in international conferences. He was a renowned expert in international boundary water institutions with a specialty in US-Canada and Mexican-US relationships. Closer to home (UMichigan) he also received a Certificate of Recognition for his lifelong contribution and service to the field of water resources from the former Michigan Dean of the School for Environment and Sustainability, Dr. Rosina M. Bierbaum, in 2005.

His eldest son, Richard F. Dworsky, B.S.F., School of Natural Resources, 1965; M.S., Outdoor Recreation, University of Colorado, 1972; Ph.D, Water Resources, University of Massachusetts, 1986, served as the chief forester of Puerto Rico, and worked at the Interstate Commission on the Potomac, the Lake Champlain basin study of the New England River Basins Commission, and the Genesee Finger Lakes Planning Board before becoming the career chief planner for the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management in Alaska, the State's largest land management agency.

The youngest son, Donald L. Dworsky, B.A, Cornell University, 1970; M.S., Natural Resources Administration, School of Natural Resources 1977; J.D., University of Wisconsin, 1974, was the policy, legislative, and budget examiner for the unquantifiable natural resources such as fish, wildlife, historic preservation, and parks and recreation, including wilderness, trails and wild and scenic rivers, at the Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, under Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter, before working as an environmental protection specialist in the Office of the Secretary of the Department of the Interior where he was a member of the National Response Team for environmental emergencies.