

THE TRASH COLLECTOR AND THE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE

By Fred Hobbs

Our oldest son, soon to turn 50 years old, is now a geologist with the Bureau of Land Management. Larry is involved in relationships between the Federal government and Indian tribes concerning land use in Arizona.

His career path was charted largely through his attendance at a unique boarding school for junior high and high school students. Originally called the Colorado Junior Republic, the school, located on former farm land between Lafayette and Longmont, was founded by Girard B. "Jerry" Henderson, the multi-millionaire major stockholder in the Avon Cosmetic Products empire. The name was subsequently re-named the Alexander Dawson School in honor of members of Henderson's family.

Henderson was a confirmed Libertarian who feared the encroachment of a stronger central government. He believed in a traditional approach to schooling young people, based on the "three R's", American history, and values emphasizing patriotism, strong work ethics and individual enterprise.

This pattern suited Larry well. When he was a teenager, the dynamics in our family and in the public school he attended at the time simply weren't working well for him. At Alexander Dawson, classes were small with a great deal of personal attention. Students were housed in brand new buildings. The faculty members were paid higher salaries than were offered for comparable positions at local public schools.

In addition to their academic studies, recreational opportunities and sports teams were available much as at any other school. Henderson also had purchased land in the mountains near the small town of Ward, Colorado, where a summer camp was provided with swimming, hiking, horseback riding and similar camp offerings.

What really made the Alexander Dawson School and the camp different, however, was the work program. Each student was required to perform an ongoing chore and to participate in some manner in the student government (in keeping with the original name of the school, Colorado Junior Republic.)

Larry had the distinction of handling the least glamorous job...emptying the trash cans into a dumpster every day, while serving also as the most prestigious student government representative ... Chief Justice of the Alexander Dawson Supreme Court.

The boys and girls learned the American system of economics. They were paid for their services in "funny money", specifically by ADs (from the initials of the school's name.) If a student stayed in the school until graduation, maintained a B average or above and proved to be a good citizen, he or she was given a check for half the amount of ADs earned in good, old American dollars.

In his three years at the school, Larry earned 15,000 ADs. With his \$7,500, he bought a used Ford Bronco to take with him to Fort Lewis College in Durango.

Larry's unusual school experience was a valuable first step in dealing successfully as he does today with an important, ongoing government-related issue.