

## Book Report: Water Literate Leaders Class

Title: WD Farr – Cowboy In The Boardroom

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*I highly recommend this book for anyone interested in the history of Colorado water projects and/or the cattle industry in Colorado. Cowboy In The Boardroom should be considered required reading for anyone studying the history of Greeley, Fort Collins and/or Northern Colorado. Also good for those interested in leadership and business.*

Cowboy In The Boardroom is the story of the Farr family. Most of the book is about WD Farr who lived from 1910 to 2007 but there is some detail about WD's grandfather "Billy" who first arrived in Greeley in 1877 and because of a large late snow storm in 1884 accidentally started the feedlot industry in Northern Colorado. What Billy discovered was that if you gave small grains and alfalfa grown in Weld County - basically worthless commodities at the time - to sheep, those grains turned into money by putting weight on the sheep. Farr family involvement in both Greeley water supplies and city government also started with WD's grandfather.

There is also a lot of detail about WD's father Harry. Harry ran the Farr companies all the time that WD grew up and was WD's primary mentor. It was Harry who was asked to sit on the Greeley Chamber of Commerce Grand Lake Committee. This committee was organized to answer the question of how best to spend \$200M approved for the Rocky Mountain Region for FDR's Public Works Administration. The Grand Lake Committee turned into the Northern Colorado Users Assoc in 1934 and elected Greeley Tribune Editor Charles Hansen as president. Hansen persuaded the Colorado State Legislature to pass a conservancy district law in 1937. The law allowed conservancy districts to be formed, sign contracts with federal agencies and impose taxes on residents to pay off a loan that would be used to build the Colorado-Big Thompson Water Project (C-BT). In 1938 the Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District was formed – today's Northern Water.

Take aways:

- Story shows how a local Chamber of Commerce can take action to facilitate big ideas.
- WD Farr embraced change. He always saw it as an opportunity.
- WD Farr understood the relationship between economic development and prosperous communities. (pg 78)
- Finding a better way to do things is a matter of persistence and common sense.
- In the struggle between water development and wilderness preservation, the need for moderation, patience, and compromise was paramount (pg 112)
- Always stay focused on the greater public good. (pg 117)
- WD Farr was straight-forward, wasn't trying to catch you on anything and just wanted to get things done. (pg 130)
- Volumetric water distribution – two great blocks of water City of Denver and Northern – They'll run the Front Range [in the future]. They will run it with tremendous efficiency. They'll be able to switch water back and forth between the two systems. It won't change the law but will give people only what they need. That is how it should be run.
- In the USA we need to face the uneven distribution of wealth in order to remain competitive and to avoid violent revolution. (pg 218)