

In Memoriam

Gary Abrams

November 2, 1952–November 8, 2023



The Colorado legal community mourns the loss of former CBA-CLE Executive Director Gary Abrams, who passed away on November 8, 2023, after a many years' battle with a physical heart that could not keep up with his emotional heart. Over his 22-year tenure, Gary built a CBA-CLE community of faculty and authors that continues to grow and thrive. CBA-CLE is beyond lucky to have inherited a well-oiled CBA-CLE machine from Gary.

Gary was born on November 2, 1952, in Chicago, Illinois. He was a proud graduate of Shorewood High School in Shorewood, Wisconsin, and moved on to graduate from the University of Wisconsin in Madison, a college town that soon became one of his great loves.

After working for the State Bar of Wisconsin CLE, Gary moved to Colorado, where he led CBA-CLE until 2018. During the organization's anniversary celebration in 2023, Gary was honored by state Supreme Court justices, colleagues, lawyers, and friends for helping to build one of the finest continuing legal education systems in the country.

A multidimensional man, he was also an athlete, family man, lawman, friend, adventurer, seeker, and so much more. Whether he was exploring Madison, Wisconsin, on his motorcycle or biking endless miles through his cherished Colorado mountains, Gary's athleticism, sense of wonder, and perseverance kept him challenged and endlessly engaged.

Gary did the things that he loved, in a profession he loved, within a family he loved. With a passion for golfing, biking, skiing, sailing, and fishing, Gary engaged vigorously in

these sports; exuberance for these activities was surpassed only by Gary's love for being with the family and friends he adored. Gary's laughter and compassion made all who knew him so easy to love him. He had a way about him—he just made everyone feel good. How can we go on without him? We can only look to our Jewish roots for an answer: "As long as we live, they too shall live; for they are now a part of us; as we remember them."

Larry Litvak

July 4, 1929–October 22, 2023



Larry Litvak, trailblazing family law attorney and devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, died on October 22, 2023, at the age of 94, surrounded by his loving family at home in Denver.

A Denver native, Larry was a leading trial attorney and legal practitioner across seven decades, building one of Denver's most respected law firms from scratch and playing a central role in the evolution and modernization of Colorado family law during the 1970s and 1980s. He was known for his commitment to legal justice, community, and family, as well as his quick wit and love of life. Larry died following a courageous battle with Parkinson's Disease.

Larry was born on July 4, 1929, the second youngest child of Isadore and Celia Litvak, Polish and Romanian immigrants respectively. He was raised on Denver's Jewish West Side during the Great Depression, working in his father's salvage yard, Ace Auto Wrecking. Larry attended North High School and the University of Denver. During high school, he was the conductor for his brother's band, the Jack Litvak Big Band, a group that played all

of the best events of the late 1940s. He did so while never knowing a note of music—he just looked too good in a tux.

Larry received a law degree from the Westminster School of Law in 1952. He was drafted and served in the US Army in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, and Fitzsimons Army Medical Center, Denver, from 1953 to 1955.

Following military service, Larry opened his own law office. In a 2011 interview, he explained, "I did anything and everything that came along—traffic cases, criminal appointments—because I didn't have a firm or any relatives or connections. I just stupidly threw out my shingle. That's the way it worked." During the next two decades, the firm grew substantially, taking on partners and high-profile cases, and Larry became a well-respected member of the Denver legal community. Larry was a past president of the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association, a past president of the Colorado Chapter of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, and a frequent lecturer on family law topics.

In the mid-1970s, Larry limited his practice to family law, a decision that coincided with the sweeping changes transforming divorce proceedings. He was at the vanguard of many cases that redefined and expanded the definition of "property," as centuries-old legal precedents that disadvantaged women were challenged. Over those years, case law came to define pensions as property, to define some trust interests as property, and to define employee stock options and other employment benefits as property. Larry's name still appears on many of the seminal cases in Colorado family law.

In 1985, Larry's son, Ron, joined the firm, and a few years later, Larry did what few fathers at the pinnacle of their legal career have done:

he chose to step out of the spotlight, giving Ron and his law school friend Tim Mehrstens the opportunity to lead the practice. Over the years, the firm evolved into Litvak Litvak Mehrstens and Carlton, P.C. Larry worked side by side with Ron for 35 years and, along with the firm's many talented lawyers, continuing to build what had become one of Colorado's preeminent family law firms. It was only during the pandemic that Larry stopped coming into the office.

At 90 years of age, Larry had a terrible fall, breaking many bones and staying overnight in the hospital for the very first time in his life. There, in the hospital, he continued to make even his caregivers laugh. When a nurse asked him "Are you comfortable, Mr. Litvak?", his immediate response was, "I make a good living."

Larry volunteered his time to numerous organizations, including the National Asthma Center in Denver, where he was a board member and officer for 25 years, and B'nai B'rith Denver Lodge #171, where he was a past president.

But nothing was more important to Larry than family. Together Larry and his beloved wife Joni raised four sons, Joseph, Daniel, Ron, and Edward. Along with Joni and their sons and daughters-in-law, his four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren were the joy of his life. Larry was water skiing into his 80s and delighted in leading family and friends on water skiing, snow skiing, and bicycling adventures across Colorado and beyond. Larry and Joni would have celebrated their 71st anniversary one month after Larry's death.

Gilbert "Gil" Martinez

May 19, 1951–October 30, 2023



Gilbert Anthony "Gil" Martinez, a remarkable family man and friend, a veteran judge, and a fixture in the El Paso County judicial community for more than four decades,

passed away on Monday, October 30, 2023, while on a hunting trip. He was a Colorado native and a Colorado Springs resident since 1978.

Gilbert was born on May 19, 1951, in Trinidad, to Eufemio E. Martinez and Crystella O. (Roybal) Martinez. He attended Northglenn

High School and went on to graduate from the University of Colorado Denver, earning a degree in political science. Gilbert received his law degree from the University of Colorado Boulder and was admitted to the bar in 1978. He was appointed district court judge of the 4th Judicial District by Governor Roy Romer on November 14, 1989.

Gil began his legal career at Pikes Peak Legal Services before joining the Colorado Springs Public Defender's Office, where he served as director during the final four years of his 11-year tenure there. During his almost three decades on the bench, Gil twice served as El Paso County chief judge and was instrumental in the effort to expand the El Paso County Courthouse to handle the increasing caseload from the county's growing population.

Gilbert developed a reputation for being dogged in his pursuit of justice. In 2017, he

shared with *The Gazette* as he was retiring that he loved being a judge and that it was a great career. Even though Gil retired as a full-time judge in 2017, he continued on with his passion to adjudicate cases across Colorado as a senior judge. Too numerous to note, over the years he served or supported myriad local organizations and boards and was an ardent advocate for education.

On June 17, 1972, Gil married the love of his life, Joanie, in Denver. They were married for more than 51 years. Gil and Joanie lovingly raised two children and became the proud grandparents of seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Gilbert loved hunting, fishing, and golf and was an avid historian. He was a fervent Denver Broncos fan and a fan of all Colorado sports teams. Mostly though, he enjoyed spending time with his family. Gil was a dedicated and loving

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husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, uncle, and friend. He appreciated a good joke and always had one on hand to bring smiles to all. He loved to dance and enjoyed a variety of music, especially from his favorite artist, Ruben Ramos.

Gilbert is survived by his wife, Joanie Martinez; his son, Carlos (Cheryl) Martinez; his daughter, Laura Martinez (and family), and special niece Angelic (Michael); seven grandchildren; and one great-grandson. He is also survived by two brothers, Dean (Alice) and Dwayne; two sisters, Edna and Frances (David); and numerous nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his brother, Ernest (Sandy); his sister, Roseann; and his parents, Eufemio and Crystella (Roybal) Martinez.

William Sims Nowland II

August 5, 1941–September 24, 2023



William “Bill” Nowland passed away on September 24, 2023, at the age of 82. Bill practiced law in Colorado Springs for more than 50 years and was a great believer in the

US Constitution and the freedoms it guarantees.

Before graduating from the University of Denver law school, Bill served as an Air Force Intelligence Officer at the Strategic Air Command headquarters, where he guarded some of the nation’s most sensitive secrets, rising to the rank of captain. Early in his career, he worked in water law and helped multiple entrepreneurs establish their businesses. Bill also believed in representing people who had been unjustly injured. He believed that the law had the ability to act as a great equalizer for those who had been wronged. He ran his law practice like he lived his life—with meticulous attention to detail, great honor, and a genuine desire to help people.

Bill cared deeply for each of his clients, no matter their circumstances. He worked exceptionally hard for them as well, often working over the weekend when the phones were quiet and he could concentrate on his cases. He mentored younger attorneys and gave back to the profession, presenting at

several conventions and continuing education sessions. He served as a part-time assistant municipal judge in Fountain, Colorado, from 1972 to 2021. Bill was a valued board member of the Colorado Trial Lawyers Association, speaking at summer conferences throughout the state. One of his proudest moments in the law was when he argued a case in front of the Colorado Supreme Court.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Debbie; sister, Nancy Nowland; son, Stephen Nowland; daughter, Kimberly Nowland; and granddaughter, Elsie Militti.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Old Mutt Hut, theoldmutthut.org, a state-licensed rest-of-their life sanctuary for dogs who become homeless in their elder years.

Raymond J. Ruth

September 6, 1944–November 10, 2023



Raymond J. “Ray” Ruth, a friend to *Colorado Lawyer* magazine, passed away peacefully at home on November 10, 2023. Ray was preceded in death by his parents,

James and Grace, and his brothers, Russell, Don, and twin Richie. He is survived by his wife, Carolyn; sons, Rick, John (Frances), and Sean (Teresa); and grandson, Kaden Ray.

Ray was born on September 6, 1944, in New York. His family then moved to Florida when he was 10 years old. He came to Colorado in 1978.

Ray and his wife Carolyn were married for 39 years and raised three sons. Ray worked at Larimer Press and Frederic Printing before opening his own business. He was the proud owner of R&M Colour Graphics, Copy Craft Printing, and his print brokerage ProGraphics. During his 60-year career in the print industry, Ray assisted numerous local legal organizations with their print needs, including the Colorado Bar Association and Holland and Hart.

Ray was also an avid golfer with four “hole in ones” in his golf career of 50 years. He had a generous spirit and a sweet soul. He loved and cherished his family and family of friends. Ray was a wonderful husband, father, and friend. 