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The Utton Center dedicates this issue of *Water Matters!* to the memory of Grover Xavier McSherry.

Dedication Grover Xavier McSherry

Grover Xavier McSherry was a New Mexican political giant and longtime Luna county farmer who had a lifelong passion for agriculture. McSherry dedicated most of his agricultural endeavors to improving the marketing of crops and livestock and advocating for sensible and balanced water use for all communities. “G.X.,” as many knew McSherry, was born on November 23, 1924, in Dwyer, New Mexico. The son of a Pennsylvania schoolteacher who came to New Mexico to visit and ended up staying, G.X. grew up in the Mimbres Valley during the great depression and experienced the devastating consequences of the dustbowl. The tough economic times shaped McSherry and his pride in the apples his family produced in the valley every year—a crop that has long roots on both sides of his family.

G.X. was a man who lacked the financial means to attend college; however, this did not deter him from becoming a staunch supporter and advocate for New Mexico State University, an agriculturally focused institution. During his tenure in the House of Representatives, McSherry would secure funding for the expansion of research, modernization of facilities, and the creation of new facilities at the University. As Chair of the Agricultural Committee, McSherry spearheaded the foundation of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum, which he felt would play an important role in educating people about the importance of water in producing our food and fiber.

As education was important to both G.X. and his wife, they were adamant that all of their children attain a post-secondary education—and all of them did. Moreover, four of their children went on to become Aggies and attained degrees from New Mexico State University. In a fitting and well-deserved tribute to recognize the incomparable contribution of McSherry, New Mexico State University awarded him an honorary doctorate in 2003.

During World War II McSherry met the love of his life and the mother of his children. A first-generation American, Clara Jo (Jody) was born to Italian immigrants who settled on a homestead seven miles east of Deming. In December of 1945, G.X. and Jody were married and chose to reside on the



homestead. The McSherry family grew as Jody gave birth to seven children. In the seven decades G.X. and his family have farmed in Luna County, their farming endeavor has expanded from a hundred acres to over six hundred and has incorporated high-tech methods. Reliant on groundwater, they remained constantly concerned about the water it took to support their livelihood and that of many others.

The passion for agriculture and commitment to public service, instilled in him by his parents, inspired G.X. to run for the New Mexico House of Representatives. He was elected to the House by the 32nd district in 1982. McSherry went on to serve an additional seven terms, leaving his office in 1998. During his time at the Roundhouse, McSherry focused his efforts on agriculture with keen advocacy for the beef industry and the protection of water rights. McSherry used his small business background and experience to become an effective leader on many issues concerning New Mexicans. One of McSherry's pivotal roles as a legislator originated from his service as a six-term Chairman of the Agriculture and Water Committee. McSherry's advice was so in demand and so respected that then New Mexico Governor Gary Johnson appointed McSherry to the state's Water Trust Board. In addition to his service on the Water Trust Board, McSherry managed to serve on the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Water and was regarded by many to be an expert in matters relating to the history of water rights and use in New Mexico.

After years of working to make New Mexico a little bit better than he had found it, the Honorable Grover Xavier "G.X." McSherry left New Mexico to the next generation of leaders, when he passed away on May 5, 2014, in Deming. He was with his family in the part of the state that he always called home. Before he died, McSherry described that he and his wife spent their lives on the farm "raising the three C's; cotton, cattle, and children." To this day, the McSherry family continues to be invested in New Mexico as they raise cattle, grow crops, and remain careful stewards of the New Mexico land and water their father cherished.

By Diego Urbina, University of New Mexico School of Law, Class of 2016