A Tribute to John W. (“Jack”) Barrett
by Janet Yerrington

Jack Barrett received his undergraduate and law degrees from the University of Idaho. He joined Moffatt Thomas upon graduation from law school in 1959 and became a partner in the firm in 1962.

Jack was universally recognized for his expertise in all things related to the Idaho workers’ compensation system. His longevity as an informed and active contributor to the development of this area of the law was remarkable. Jack made such a positive contribution to the Idaho workers’ compensation law and had a reputation as one of the state’s preeminent workers’ compensation experts.

Jack was a lawyer to whom professionalism, ethics, and doing the right thing were paramount. A corporate client of Jack’s referred to him as an exceptional attorney in the grandest of legal tradition – honest, fair, tough, thoroughly prepared and consummately skilled in his craft with a reputation for balance and fairness. They were captivated watching him do what he did best – defend a just cause.

Jack’s instantaneous recall of events and actions, his ability to communicate not only the details, but the meaning, of the cases, and his voluminous knowledge of the statutes and cases were impeccable.

Jack was very instrumental in the passage of the workers’ compensation farm workers’ bill. Jack lent his efforts to the cause and was asked to speak to the legislative committee about the bill. After Jack spoke to the committee, the committee sent the bill to the house floor with a do-pass recommendation, and the bill eventually became law. A partner of Jack’s wrote this about Jack’s presentation to the legislature: “In my legal career I have not seen a more moving or compelling statement than the speech given by Jack. It combined intellect
with heartfelt emotion. The arguments were forcefully delivered; the feelings were gracefully conveyed. The room was standing room only but you could have heard a pin drop.”

Jack was the recipient of the 2006 Idaho State Bar Professionalism Award. This award is reserved for those who for a lifetime have exemplified the highest and noblest characteristics of both competence and courtesy, of contending fiercely without being contentious. This award is given to attorneys who, by their professional and personal conduct, have exemplified for the members of the legal profession the epitome of what it means to be a lawyer and who, by doing so, have brought honor and distinction upon themselves and the profession as a whole. This award defined Jack perfectly in every sense of the word.

Jack formed a nonprofit organization entitled Kids’ Chance of Idaho to generate funds to provide educational opportunities for needy children of parents who were seriously injured or deceased as a result of work-related accidents or injuries. Jack was passionate about this organization, which is being carried on in his honor.

Jack was one of the founding officers of the Idaho Association of Defense Counsel, a member of the American Inn of Court No. 130 and a member of the American Academy of Appellate Lawyers.

Jack is one of the first recipients of a 2012 award created by the Workers’ Compensation Section of the Idaho State Bar for the Idaho lawyer who represents the best professional qualities in their specialized field of practice.

Jack Barrett died at his home in Boise, Idaho, on June 28, 2011, surrounded by his loving family. He was 79 years old. Jack was a cowboy at heart and often referred to himself as a “farm kid from North Dakota.” Jack’s wife, Marilyn, preceded him in death. He is survived
by his children Kim (Cedric) Minter, Laura (Clay) Shockley, Charlie (Deanna) Barrett and Jonna
(Jason) Brewer and ten grandchildren.

Jack was a very humble man who was true to his family, true to his faith and true
to his profession. He was an icon in the legal community and will truly be missed by those
whose lives he touched.