



## Former Idaho Power CEO James E. Bruce dies

Idaho Statesman.com: Feb. 22- John Sowell

Bruce joined the company as an attorney in 1951 and spent 34 years at Idaho's largest utility.

Idaho Power's board of directors elected Bruce president of the Boise-based utility in 1974, after he previously served as vice president and secretary. He became Idaho Power's CEO in 1976 and served in that position until his retirement in 1985. Bruce, 93, died Thursday at a Boise care center.

Arrangements are pending at Summers Funeral Homes, Boise Chapel.

"Our thoughts and prayers are with Jim's family," LaMont Keen, the president and CEO of IdaCorp, Idaho Power's parent company, said in a statement Saturday. "Jim was instrumental in helping shape our company. We have lost a true friend and we are all mourning his passing." Bruce and former Gov. Cecil Andrus clashed over Idaho Power's desire in the 1970s to build a coal-fired energy plant on the Snake River. Yet, they became close personal friends.

"We were adversaries back then but he was a good friend," said Andrus, 82.

"He was a strong individual in the business world, but he always had a sensitivity for people and for the environment." Bruce grew up in Boise and attended college at the College of Idaho, the University of Portland and Georgetown University, where he earned his law degree. He went to work for Idaho Power when the company was in the midst of acquiring land and going through epic legal fights to build three massive hydroelectric dams in Hells Canyon. The Hells Canyon dams tripled the utility's generating capacity, prompting the company to embark on an ambitious campaign to market the surplus energy by encouraging growth in business and agricultural irrigation. In 1977, a group of Idaho Power customers sued the company to stop new irrigation hookups. The company agreed to forfeit some of its water right but then counter-sued the plaintiffs, irrigators, the state of Idaho and the Idaho Public Utilities Commission. Bruce dubbed the case "Idaho Power against the world." A year before he retired, Bruce offered to settle the case. To the dismay of environmentalists, the Statesman reported in 1985, the deal allowed Idaho Power some new development. The agreement was approved by the Legislature. At the time, Pat Costello, chief legal advisor to then-Gov. John Evans, said Bruce was instrumental in keeping Idaho Power at the negotiating table during times in the process when it appeared no agreement could be reached. "Anytime you go into a lawsuit, you can lose," Bruce was quoted at the time of his retirement. "If you can make a compromise settlement, one that gives everybody an acceptable solution, that's the way to go." During a public television fundraiser shortly before he retired, Bruce personally answered pledge calls and encouraged employees to call and donate. The company raised more money than the other participating companies that night and Bruce impressed onlookers by knowing the names of employees' spouses and the number of children they had. Bruce served on the boards of directors for many area companies including Albertson's Inc., St. Alphonsus Regional Medical Center and First Security Bank, now Wells Fargo. He also served on foundations for the Treasure Valley Family YMCA, Bishop Kelly High School, the College of Idaho and Boise State University. After his retirement, he served on the board of the Ada County Highway District. Bruce suffered serious injuries in a 1976 plane crash while he was on company business in Philadelphia. He suffered a cracked vertebrae and head injuries and required the placement of a steel plate in his skull. "He had a full life, but I'll miss him," Andrus said.