

Growing Strength for Greater Challenges



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Sixteen years ago, in 1958, I came to Arizona to attend, for the first time, an annual meeting of the American Society of Range Management. At that time, we submitted the application to form the Mexico Section—a Section that began with 18 charter members, all ranchers from Chihuahua.

Now, 16 years later, I have the great honor to come back to this wonderful State as president of the Society for Range Management and accompanied by many of the 280 members that our Mexico Section has at the present time.

It is only fair to mention that the growth of the Mexico Section would have not been possible without the help, the sound advice, and the guidance of the Society officers through all these years. The names of Clouston, Campbell, Tisdale, Hervey, Kennedy, and many others are remembered with love and deep respect by all our members in Mexico.

How interesting, educational, and rewarding in many ways it has been to be closely associated with members of all of our Sections. It was impossible, unfortunately, to attend the meetings of all the Sections, but in traveling for over 51,000 km (32,000 miles for those not caught up with “progress”) from Canada to Mexico, from Oregon to Mississippi, from the national capital to California, and all over the western states, it was possible to sense the way our members are thinking and how they are working for the Society.

It has been, indeed, a wonderful year, and I want to express my sincere appreciation to all of you, friends, who made this possible. For your warm hospitality, for the sincere friendship shown to me and my family during all these trips and visits, thank you all very much.

You may remember that, when I became president of the Society exactly one year ago in Boise, I did not want to talk about promises but said that I would rather talk about results when my term expired. Well, this is the time now, and we have some results for you; not as many as we would like, but enough to let us see the progress of the Society, the potential of our organization, and the great challenge that we have to face right now and in the immediate future.

If we have not achieved all the results we wanted to, believe me, it is not because we have not tried. I feel very proud of all my committees, their chairmen, and particularly of all the members of the Board of Directors and our staff in Denver,

who have made such a tremendous effort to serve the Society.

During my visits with the Sections and with individual members, I could sense their “feelings” concerning the Society. Even though these “feelings” or attitudes were quite variable, there were some that were like a common denominator and were a guide for determining the course of action for myself and the Board of Directors during 1973.

Some of the issues most “talked about” by our membership were the following: (1) the role of the Society in defending our position in important public issues like, for example, grazing in public lands and the red meat crisis; (2) ways in which the Society has been or can be of better service to the livestock producer; (3) the role of the Society as a cause of inspiration to our young people, our students, those who will strengthen the organization in the future; (4) means to improve the relations among Sections and the parent Society, particularly among Section members and the international officers; (5) headquarters for the Society; and (6) the need for our Society to make the front pages when the time comes to speak out in defense of rangeland resources in different countries and to let our voice be heard with due authority in issues related to livestock production.

These are just *some* of the issues our members are discussing or at least have been thinking about for some time.

Now, I would like to comment on what we have tried to do and what we have accomplished during the few months we have been in office.

Public Affairs

In the first place, I believe that during 1973 the Society for Range Management has participated more actively than in any other year in some very important public issues.

We all have heard about the great debate on “to graze or not to graze” in public lands. Our Information and Education Committee prepared a white paper which, although it was not presented in its final form, expresses clearly the position of SRM on this issue. I had the opportunity to discuss statements from this document with the directors of the Utah Cattlemen’s Association, the Alberta Stockgrowers, and the Foot Hill Forage Association in Alberta; with individual ranchers in California, Texas, Oregon, Colorado, New Mexico, Canada, Wyoming, Oklahoma, and Montana; and with students and professors in several universities in the United States.

It was the general opinion that the position adopted by the

Address by the retiring president of the Society for Range Management at the 27th Annual Meeting, February 4-8, 1974, Tucson, Arizona.

Society in this "hot" issue was the one really needed and one which raised the enthusiasm of everybody, members and non-members, particularly of livestock producers directly involved in this controversy.

But that was not all. Recently, a task force composed of 16 of the most recognized personalities in the art and science of range management prepared a report on "Livestock Grazing on Federal Lands in the Eleven Western States." This report, prepared for the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) and aimed at reaching the highest authorities in the United States Government, is a magnificent document complete with statistics and information justifying the grazing of public lands. This document, I assure you, is going to make lots of noise; it will have tremendous impact on all political and public opinions concerning the issue.

This report and the task force itself are further indications that we have most capable people and most convincing, factually-supported arguments to strongly defend before any authority, before any public opinion, before any organization, the principles of proper management of our rangeland resources on which the Society for Range Management stands.

The polemics will still continue, both here in the United States and in Canada, but we know that we are thinking and acting with reason and common sense. Our Society has a moral responsibility to make a strong stand for the defense of an adequate, rational use of forage production on public lands which does not damage other economic and/or aesthetic values of these areas.

No strange group of extreme, false conservationists, of political opportunists, or of pseudo-environmentalists is going to tell us how to manage and take care of the resource that we love more than anybody else—that we know and understand better than anybody else!

The Society and the Livestock Producer

In connection with the interesting issue of grazing or not grazing in public lands, we must analyze the role of rangelands—public and private—in the present and the future of the production of red meat in the world. Here is where our ranchers play a very important part, and it is here that the Society really is being of service to those producers.

Again, all of us have heard the protests of housewives, butchers, feed lot operators, lawyers, economists (especially economists!) complaining about the high prices of red meat and the difficulties in buying as much as they used to. And, of course, the whole blame is placed on the rancher.

Do these people really know some of the main factors involved in range livestock production? Beef or lamb production is not just fattening animals in the feed lot or in irrigated pastures. Red meat production begins on the range where the "raw material" is produced and where this type of operation is the one best suited for over 40% of the land on our planet.

We know that the demand and the supply of animal products for mankind in the immediate future—and right now, actually—represents a very serious problem and that we are facing a challenge of an intensity never faced before. We are aware of the importance of rangelands in helping to solve this problem, and we are sure that with scientists, livestock producers and government authorities working together, the proper solutions will be obtained.

Internationalism of SRM

In the international field, the Society has had an outstanding year. Our membership in other countries has increased,

although still not at the rate we would like it to. Several factors have limited this expansion, but we can see with satisfaction that limitations are being overcome and foresee a very significant increase in international membership, particularly from South America. Giving the Society an international dimension has been one of my goals for some time, and we are achieving this, thanks to our key-rangemen in different countries: Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Bolivia, Australia, East Africa, and the Middle East.

We are aware that in many of the countries of the world the technical and scientific programs are dominated by political decisions. But the growing interest—and more than just interest—a *growing need* to use natural resources more efficiently is changing the panorama. Authorities are finally realizing that people cannot be fed with false promises and demagogic measures, and that our limited economic resources must be used in well-planned programs for the development, the management, and the preservation of our soil, our water, and our vegetation. We in the so-called developing countries cannot afford the luxury of wasting funds in ill-planned, strictly political programs made by persons who are not aware of the social and technological changes now taking place in many areas.

However, we do not see these problems as insurmountable obstacles; on the contrary, we accept them and approach them as a great challenge, with a confidence based on the principles on which our Society and our profession stand.

During 1973, the Society for Range Management participated in important symposia in Mexico City and Alberta, Canada. Unfortunately, our planned short course for South America has been postponed—again, for political reasons out of our control—but we have obtained the funds to do it, and we will try this year.

Youth Programs—Student Activities

We are very proud of our student membership and feel very happy to have present many students sharing an interest in range management. We have more plant judging teams participating each year, not only at the Annual Meeting, but also at the Section level, as in California.

I am particularly happy to have here, many for the first time, groups of students from different schools of agriculture and animal science in Mexico: Monterrey Tech, University of Chihuahua, University of Sonora, University of Sinaloa, who come to learn and communicate with their fellow students from the United States, Canada, and many other countries. Mexico will present several plant judging teams next year, and we hope this trend will continue for the following meetings.

This is the kind of interest and enthusiasm we need from young people to make our Society bigger and stronger every day.

One more year has passed by—a hectic, enjoyable, educational, rewarding year full of satisfaction for myself and my family. Undoubtedly, it was a most wonderful year for having the privilege of serving as president of the Society for Range Management. In this year I had the very distinguished honor of the custody of the gavel symbolic of the brotherhood of our Society and of the recognition of the importance of our profession—a gavel shaped by the hands and the hearts, by the wisdom and the dedication of those great men who founded our Society 28 years ago, those men whom we respectfully consider the fathers of the art and science of range management. To them, and to you, fellow members, my thanks.