

From Stone Age to Moon Shot Era

COUNTY AGENTS GO A-VISITING

James W. Little

Central Utah was being blessed with a gentle drizzle last June as 11 county agricultural agents, representing 11 western states, packed their bags for a 4,000 mile study tour. Most of the expenses of the trek were borne by the Dow Chemical Company. Agents' pockets and local interests met the rest of the tab.

From Salt Lake City the route lay southwest through Utah and touched the northwest corner of Arizona's "strip" on its way to Las Vegas, Nevada. The second leg of the trip was southeast to Casa Grande, Arizona. A week later the tour turned north from Roswell, New Mexico, toward Colorado Springs. The final stretch looped to the south and ended in Grand Junction, Colorado.

No Cow-Sheep War

Features along the way ranged from the antiquities at the Casa Grande and Ildefonso Pueblos to a Hawk firing at White Sands Proving Ground and artificial insemination and pregnancy testing of range cattle. An old myth was exploded when one rancher described his ranching operation of 15,000 sheep and 900 cows. All were getting along together happily — especially the rancher, who listened to the sweet sounds of coins clinking in his Levi's.

Wheat referendum results made strong conversation. One banker dismissed further farm loans to wheat farmers as an economic impossibility. Watershed development displayed a showpiece in the project recently completed on the Virgin River watering the Mesquite, Nevada, area. Some 1,600 acres are served with sand traps and concrete ditches.

R.A.D. and its companion, A.R.A., met mixed acceptance. Areas blighted with mining and industrial unemploy-

ment problems saw salvation in the programs. Areas of healthier agriculture were very scornful of "more government" and cheered the Congressional action nixing A.R.A. funds.

Water Is Top Topic

Water was a continuous war cry. The T O Ranch (Raton, New Mexico) foreman allowed "It rained on the just and the unjust alike — if you were in JUST THE RIGHT PLACE." Ranges of northwestern New Mexico and southeastern Colorado resembled the valley floor ranges in southern Arizona. Utah farmers explained their water allotment as "three acre feet of water per acre of irrigable land whether under pump or gravity flow." Roswell, New Mexico, civic leaders pointed to their "Aqualantes" with pride. These are men dedicated to conserving the state's vital water resources and insisting upon strict compliance with New Mexico's four foot allotment regulations.

North central New Mexico is looking forward to San Juan waters being raised and diverted into the Rio Grande Valley. It reminded one of the Central Arizona water plans.

At one stop in Utah a rancher explained the decline of his ranching operation at the hands of the U. S. Forest Service. He had purchased a ranching operation with allotments to allow a herd of 150 mother cows. Next year he would be allowed to graze 35 head. "Not worth fooling with," was his summary of the situation. Other

ranchers in Utah and New Mexico told of rushing to buy state and federal lands to ward off grazing fee increases and outside management.

Beets, Good or Bad

Sugar beets — pot of gold at rainbow's end, a steady resource or a curse — it depends on how you look at them. For small farms with poor rotation the beets apparently mean headaches, as we saw the operation near Salt Lake City. Some hope was held in the Roswell, New Mexico, area that beets would make a solid contribution as sheep feed, sheep harvested, whether the sugar processing plant came or not. The tour passed gigantic monuments to a defunct industry — abandoned sugar plants in Glendale, Arizona, and near Springer, New Mexico. The New Mexico venture folded when gravity-flow irrigation systems silted up.

The number one bargain for the participant? Close contact with members of the Extension Service from other states. How they met their problems, who their people are, how is the pay, what do they do with federal programs and how the fishing is.

It was a rich experience. If you can accept a man's story and listen you will both learn. Imagine a dairy herd that hasn't netted its owner a cent in years and yet has made him thousands (both dollars and friends). City kids bring their customer parents by the score to squeeze a few drops of milk or pat a calf. Milk orders rolled in. Meat conversion ratio of 1.2 lbs. of feed per pound of trout. A city bonding itself to induce a factory to move from Indiana.

All of these stories, and more, were told by people who made each of these ventures pay richly in money as well as satisfaction.

WESTERN COUNTY AGENTS studying stone hoe agriculture at the Casa Grande Ruins, in Pinal County, are (left to right) Vern Carter, Colorado; Bob Hassell, Utah; Gene Sears, Texas; Nels Anderson, Oregon; Jim Gilstrap, New Mexico; Rollie Weaver, Nevada; Joe Morris, Montana; Don Tippets, Wyoming; almost hidden is Jack Blalock, Hawaii; Bob McKay, Washington; Jim Little, Arizona, and at extreme right, David Hannah, National Park Service guide at the Casa Grande National Monument.

—Coolidge Examiner Photo.



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