

members in the Wyoming Section know better; they gave Marilyn their "Trail Boss Award" in 1980 in recognition of her services and accomplishments.

Marilyn is an excellent role model for young people with an interest in range or any other science. She helps guide the 300 to 400 grade and junior high school students who visit the High Plains Grasslands Research Station each year. She has been called on to teach biology classes in the Cheyenne school system, and has judged both Laramie County and District Science Fairs.

How does Marilyn deal with being a "woman in range"? Maybe Patty Smith, UW range student and Marilyn's summer aid, summed it up best by saying, "As far as work is concerned, Marilyn sees herself as no different from her male counterparts. The same 'rules' apply for scientists whether they are male or female." Marilyn Samuel's achievements testify to how well she understands those "rules". Her family understands too; daughter Sheri, an eighth grade gifted student, is thinking of a career in science. ●

Overseas: Women Are at Home on the Range

Linda Howell Hardesty

In the past decade, professional women have become fairly common in universities, government agencies, the Society for Range Management, and other places where range managers congregate. The degree to which we have been accepted and encouraged by male colleagues speaks to their credit. However, in overseas work, range management remains a predominantly male field. This is true even though women can make a unique contribution because of the more defined gender roles which exist in many countries.

Among the reasons why more women are not involved overseas is our recent entry into the field. Team leaders want experienced personnel and few women have been around long enough to have this experience. But this is a temporary situation which is rapidly resolving itself.

Assuming qualified women are available, a more difficult problem is that many men feel ill at ease traveling and working with a woman. When conditions are difficult, men may feel an exaggerated sense of responsibility for a woman's safety or comfort, and at the same time resent this self-imposed obligation. Host country nationals can make erroneous assumptions about a woman's relationship with team members which embarrass everyone. Living quarters lacking privacy, common or nonexistent bathrooms, plans for a dubious evening's entertainment, all can cause discomfort if a woman is part of the group. Some fear that women will lack credibility in cultures which still exclude women from traditionally male disciplines.

In my experience these "disadvantages" have never been a real handicap though they sometimes give us all a great laugh. Considering the possible advantages of having a qualified woman on the team it may be worth the effort to seek one out.

Women have different experience, points of view, and sensitivities. This can be invaluable in forming an accurate picture of an unfamiliar culture or production system. On a recent assignment, our team was debating why cattle weren't pastured on the uncultivated commons above the villages. Cattle are stabled at the house and fed cut forages or led to graze nearby roadsides and fallow fields. This is the woman's

job, as the men are often away working. Fixing an evening meal with local ingredients such as dried beans is time-consuming. There is too little daylight for the woman to lead her cows any distance, give them enough grazing time, and return home to make dinner. Changing this grazing system



Linda doing field work in Brazil

will require changes in household routines or labor distribution. Many men might have difficulty recognizing this as a factor in livestock production.

Most of the world's rangelands are used by subsistence-level producers. This differs from the market-based system which we usually work. A subsistence economy integrates the needs and resources of the family, the community, and the environment to minimize risk and dependency. Like it or not, most women have been raised with a home-centered bias which may make understanding and working within a family-based, subsistence economy easier.

A second advantage is that women professionals may not seem as intimidating and thus be able to win confidence more rapidly and have access to more reliable information. A man may be more willing to risk exposing his ignorance, errors, or uncertainties to a woman than to another man. We all had stunning proof of this on a farm visit where the team had closely questioned the producer on his feeding program. The reported reproductive performance of his cows, and their excellent condition just didn't add up against his forage base and lack of supplemental feeding. Later, I took him aside to try rephrasing the question. As it turned out, he did supplement—heavily. He even gave me a product label, along with an apology. He hadn't wanted to mention the supplement in front of the government veterinarians because they did not approve of the product. In a similar manner, women might be effective in range extension and other promotional work where success depends on being perceived as helpful and non-threatening as well as knowledgeable.

Concerning credibility, I have been better accepted by male colleagues overseas than by some in the U.S. I have found this even in countries where women's roles are still very restricted. The U.S. is known for the freedom and flexibility of its professional women and, approving or not, we are the subject of considerable curiosity. Having no culturally conditioned response to this situation, men are forced to improvise and respond to you as an individual. Perhaps it is due to my novelty, but I have been accepted, invited to meetings, given introductions, assistance, support, information, and confidence from foreign male colleagues well beyond the stated terms of any formal collaboration. I have

to conclude that credibility problems, if they exist, can be overcome.

Perhaps the most essential argument for including women in overseas projects is the number of countries in which women either control or have a major part in range livestock production. Often this is a hidden role, unnoticed, or reported by reference works or host country officials. Yet when you get to the field, there they are. Throughout much of Africa and the Middle East, small ruminants may be the woman's property, or if not, at least her daily responsibility. Yet men outside her own family may be forbidden any contact with her. One country in which I worked is striving to maintain and improve its native cattle breeds. Part of the program is to provide approved bulls to each village. We visited a farm where the woman led out the village bull and her own five cows. A government representative lectured us on the fine points of the bull's conformation, then proceeded to evaluate the cows using similar criteria. The woman tried unsuccessfully to interrupt and later showed which cow's calves she actually kept, revealing a selection system based on milk rather than meat production. And it is she who has actually been deciding which calves stay in the herd and which go to slaughter. It makes sense for women to work with production systems run by other women rather than having to rely on second-hand information relayed by men who may have more authority than knowledge.

Women have different insights, access to information, and credibility, all of which can enhance the range of intercultural exchange and add to our ability to understand and improve livestock production in less developed countries.

Returning briefly to the reasons more women aren't involved in overseas work, I would suggest that any competent professional woman has already dealt with these issues. Working overseas with a woman is less disconcerting than most men suspect. If she is a good scientist and works well with people, then encouraging her involvement overseas can result in a more complete and effective program.

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