

## Eighth in a Series: Insight From SRM's Charter Members

The Society for Range Management (SRM) History Committee has conducted interviews with many of the Society's charter members to capture their perspective of events leading to and subsequent to the formation of the American Society of Range Management in 1947–1948. Interviews from several of these individuals will be shared for today's SRM members to enjoy and learn from.

### SRM Charter Member – Max E. Robinson

*Editor's Note: Max Robinson was interviewed by Sam Rowley on January 6, 2003. Max can be reached at 570 W, 300 N, Richfield, UT 84701.*

*Max Edward Robinson, 84, was born January 10, 1919, in Kingsville, Wayne County, Utah, and grew up in Torrey, Utah, where he still owns the property of the family home and farm. His son, Douglas Max Robinson, recently retired from the Division of Wildlife Resources and will take over and manage the property. They have a few cattle there and he has some big ideas on how to handle it.*

In 1948, when the ASRM was formed, I was at the University of Arizona, Tucson, employed as an assistant professor, teaching half-time and doing research at the State Experiment Station half-time. Most of the research at the time was range research, and I was also on the Interagency Committee, which included people from New Mexico. Art Conley was chairman; Ken Parker and J. O. Bridges were on the committee. This was the beginning of the ASRM.

Earlier in my career as a student I worked on the Western Range Survey, which at that time was conducted by all the various agencies (US Department of the Interior Division of Grazing, Forest Service, and Soil Conservation Service). We worked in the Strawberry Valley the 1st year in 1937.

I started teaching at the University of Arizona in the fall of 1941, but I went into the service as an ensign in the Navy

in 1942. I married my wife during one of the leaves while in the service. After the war we had a daughter and son, Douglas. The University held the job open for me, so when I came back, I started work at the same institution. At that time, I had a lot of cooperative work with the Forest and Range Experiment Station people, including Ken Parker and Clark Martin. Clark at that time was working on a master's degree, and ended getting a PhD. I sat in on his master's exam, and in fact he took some classes from me. Both of these men were also charter members. I also worked with Harry Springfield, who was either a charter member, or joined shortly thereafter.

In addition to the Interagency Committee work, I did some range nutrition studies down in the Sonoita area. I had a pasture project, where we tested cattle on irrigated pasture when they came off the range. We measured utilization and gains. I later presented a paper up at Pullman on that pasture project.

The 1st time ASRM was discussed was in a meeting in Las Cruces, New Mexico, at the college there. Art Conley, who was chairman of the Interagency Committee, and Ken Parker and Dale Bridges and other interagency people discussed the possibility of the society to promote range management and present scientific papers. As I remember, Ken Parker was quite active in pushing the idea. That is where it really first started, in these meetings.

Sections were not proposed at the first. Joe Pechanec, Doc Stoddart, and Ken Parker were some of the original thinkers to establish the Society. They may have sent out inquiries to the various institutions. At the time I was teaching at the university, Dr Robert Darrow was teaching plant taxonomy and range ecology. I was in the Animal Husbandry Department and teaching straight range management, range survey methods, and range livestock production, and a general range management course similar to the one I took at

Utah State. As I recall, we didn't think about the sections until the later meetings.

The 1st section I belonged to was the Utah Section. It was later divided into chapters. Perry Plummer and I met with some other people in the Richfield forest office and it was decided that we should have a Southern Utah Chapter. The Utah Section was the only section I ever belonged to. While I was in Arizona, we didn't have a section.

I did attend that 1st meeting. I remember coming up from Tucson. That 1st organizational meeting was held in the Newhouse Hotel in December 1947, but it may have been January 1948. At the meeting I remember a discussion about restricting membership to professional range managers, that is, people involved in research and teaching, and possibly people in the agencies involved in range work. There was quite a difference of opinion. Some people that were of that opinion had belonged to the American Society of Foresters. At the time they were thinking of having a section in the Forestry Society for range people involved with research. The idea was to restrict membership to professionals. Some of us prevailed on the idea to be a little more inclusive and include people from the ranching communities who actually used the range. I remember the Boyce brothers in Arizona who I was acquainted with. Some of those people would benefit from the Society, but would also contribute considerably and strengthen the Range Society. I remember Henry and Frank Boyce and Harry Saxton, who were some of the big cattlemen down there, and some of their descendants have become quite active in the Society.

At the 1st meeting, we left the Forest and Range Experiment station with Ken Parker, Clark Martin, Fred Lebbins, George VanDane, and Hudson Reynolds; they were all working at the Forest and Range Experiment Station out of Tucson. They had an old Pontiac car and I joined them for a free ride. The University gave me \$6 a day per diem. It was the only per diem I ever received attending any meeting.

I always felt it was a privilege to belong to an organization that considered managing ranges and rangeland, watersheds and forests. If you go back even to my childhood, I grew up where the range had been abused. Some of the floods that washed away my birthplace could be attributed to mismanagement of the ranges and overgrazing of the east end of the Boulder and Thousand Lake mountains. As a student in grade school, I met the forest ranger, Mr Binkley, out of Teasdale, and he greatly influenced me. It was in my blood you might say, to contribute by publishing scientific papers and other means of promoting range management. I used to give talks on how much a ranch was worth over the radio down at the university.

My expectations have been fulfilled in many respects. One of the things that appeared to me over time has been the lack of interest of the professionals in joining. For instance, in the Forest Service, there were many range managers, but they never joined. I felt they were missing out on some

things. There is another thing that the agencies, for some reason or another, didn't have the excitement as when we first started. It seems like there has been a lack of interest for some reason.

I had some health problems in Arizona (hayfever real bad), so I had the opportunity to go to Utah State. I had done some teaching while at Oregon State where I got my master's degree. On January 21, 1951, I went to Utah State and I had about the same arrangement as far as teaching and research goes. Dr Stoddart, my main supervisor, encouraged us all to participate in the SRM meetings and I did while I was there. We went on one trip, along with Stoddart, Wayne Cook, and Dillard Gates, to San Jose, California.

I worked for Utah State and they promoted me and gave me a big raise of \$600 to go to Cedar City to work with the range sheep project, which was a cooperative project with the Animal Husbandry Department. I worked 6½ years there before I finally took a foreign assignment. While I was at Cedar City, they had me teach plant taxonomy, range forage plants and a regular agronomy class. In addition to that, I worked with the sheep group. I was a little bit frustrated, and at times felt a little bit unhappy with the situation. The Animal Husbandry people dominated the study by using different breeds of sheep on the range, while the range took 2nd fiddle to the animal husbandry aspects of it. I did do some range work when the Atomic Energy Commission put some money into my salary.

Getting on to my foreign assignment, I was a little bit disgruntled, so I took an assignment to Pakistan as a range management specialist working on a soil and water conservation project in the upper regions of the Punji. They also had a range study up in Boluchistan. Art Conley was in charge up there and I went up and helped him with water spreading and fencing. While I was in Pakistan, I talked with people about how to make broad-based terraces and plant trees, and had 5 demonstration areas. We also advised them on sheep farms. I had purebred Rambouillets brought in by a plane from the Sealy's in Mt Pleasant. I worked all the time in range projects within the soil and water conservation program.

After I came back from Pakistan, I worked for the Forest Service for 12 years here at Richfield on the Fishlake Forest. What encouraged me here was they had a watershed project (Sheep Creek water evaluation project) that was very similar in design to what I wanted to get started at Cedar City, but was unable to get funding for it, even though I had the support of Dr Stoddart and Wayne Cook. When I came back, the Forest Service had an opening and I took it as a project staff officer. We did many studies on range and watershed activities for the 12 years I was there.

I took a 14-month leave from the Forest Service down in Argentina (they encouraged me to take it). When I came back, I spent 2 years finishing up the Sheep Creek project and was able to publish some of it. I took another assignment to develop a resource appropriation in Iran and spent 18 months there. When I came back, the Forest Service didn't

honor their agreement to give me a job; therefore I took another assignment in Cameroon. I met some of the people in the BLM and told them I was looking for a job. When I got back from Cameroon, Neil Tumms called me one day while I was living at Torrey and said they had a range management position here in Richfield, so I worked 7 years for the BLM before I retired.

I have a BS degree from Utah State. Dr Stoddart was my major professor in the forest range option. I took mostly range work there. I did take meteorology, geology, and soil conservation and classes of that nature. I got a research fellowship at Oregon State, so we went up and spent 1 summer at the Eastern Oregon Livestock Experiment Station and collected data for my master's thesis. We then went down to Corvallis and finished up there in 1941 with a master's degree. After finishing up at Corvallis, I spent a summer at Squaw Butte, which at that time was run by the Grazing Service (which later became BLM) and the State of Oregon Experiment Station and each paid half my salary. We lived at the Squaw Butte Station and were able to do a little reseeding work.

My interest in range management dates back to when I was in grade school. My father was a teacher and was interested in conservation. The forest ranger, Willford Bently, came over to talk to us at Torrey. We kids used to take our horses out and camp out over on Pleasant Creek and fish and we would meet the ranger and visit with him. He was highly regarded in the community. When we got in high school, I entered a public-speaking contest in the Future Farmers of America and used forest conservation as my topic. I won the region and went on to the state contest where I won a \$25 scholarship to Utah State. That's how I finally got into it.

I was secretary-treasurer of the Utah Section while I was at the college at Cedar City. At that time Robert Albertson, who was Forest Supervisor on the Dixie Forest, and I went to all the summer and winter meetings. I was on some of the other committees. While with the Forest Service here at Richfield, I was editor of the newsletter. At one time, I was chairman of the history committee, which was followed up by Art Smith. I was president of the Southern Utah Section one summer.

Since I have retired, I have tried to keep up professionally, and have been president of the Historical Society for 7 years. At the same time I have tried to participate in the summer and winter meetings. One of the things that appears to me

that is happening, and I saw it while I was working with BLM, was that of adversarial relationship between disciplines. I thought range management was all-inclusive, including wildlife management and watershed management. When I got with BLM, and to some extent with the Forest Service, there was an adversarial relationship with the wildlife managers and recreation managers, and we got into some heated arguments. Some became very hostile and would come over to my desk to argue with me. I finally had to tell them to go away and leave me alone, because it was so distracting. I told them I wasn't against using range for wildlife. I took more classes in wildlife management than some of the guys advocating for it. One of the fellows in wildlife was from New Jersey. He was like a lot of other wildlifers, they wanted to get rid of all of the livestock. Before I was through with him (he transferred to Colorado) he said he never realized how little he knew, "You really enlightened me." When he was in Colorado, he called me every once in a while for advice on how these systems really work.

I am really puzzled in that most of the Forest Supervisor jobs and ranger jobs are being filled by general conservationists, which is fine, but maybe we should encourage them to be members and accept them in and educate them. The idea of range management, as I took it, is taking a back seat to some of the more recent conservation concepts. I hope that we don't say that we just don't want livestock grazing. I have been all over the world and livestock grazing has been going on. It is still one of the major uses of the land. We should be encouraging these so-called environmentalists, if they have a point, they need to join us and participate with us.

Following are some lasting impressions of SRM and what I would tell young people. Utah State and some other schools don't have range management departments anymore. They have consolidated forest, range, wildlife, and watershed in another department. Perhaps the things are still being taught at the university, but the emphasis is not on range as such. For young people going into the field (I have some grandsons at Utah State in fisheries and they did take some range courses), it is going to be difficult to encourage them to go into the field.

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*Tom Bedell is a member and former chairman of the SRM History Committee and a member of the Pacific Northwest Section living in Philomath, Oregon.*