

# Friday Evening

**Awards Banquet 6:30 pm** (doors open at 6:00 pm) SIERRA ROOM

## CLARENCE BURCH (1906-2000)

Rancher, teacher, conservationist, activist, international diplomat and public servant to five governors, Clarence Burch lived an enviable career full of innovation, dedication, curiosity and good humor. He was a man very much of his time, and yet miles ahead of it as well.

The eldest of nine children, Clarence was born in Bromide, Oklahoma, in what was then Indian Territory. Raised on various farms and ranches, he developed a love of the land that grew to become a passion for a lifetime. "My grandfather had an innate sense for natural forces," says Andy Dunigan. "Land was in his blood. Every discussion always started with a question about the weather."

One area to which Clarence applied his "can-do" attitude was water. While serving as director of the Division of Water Resources in the 1940s, he traveled to every seat of Oklahoma's 77 counties to assess municipal and rural water needs. Shortly thereafter, with Clarence's encouragement and over the objections of the oil companies, Governor Roy Turner signed the state's first groundwater restrictions into law.



Clarence was a careful steward of his own land as well. "He knew that all he had to sell on his ranch was grass," recalls his son Tom. "So, he took care to do the job right." His grandson agrees. "He understood that land has its limits," recalls Andy, "and he emphasized collaborative solutions to natural resource problems."

Clarence's people skills extended to his family. Andy remembers him as an "extremely warm, charismatic man who got along with people from all walks of life." A son-in-law, Jim Wilson, says Clarence could "carry on a conversation on any topic" and did so right up to the end of his life.

Perhaps Andy sums up his grandfather's qualities best: "Clarence embodied what we call today 'The Radical Center.' He was more than just a rancher. He was a public servant, an activist and a man very concerned about the land and sustainable practices. He was a remarkable man."

The Quivira Coalition is proud to honor Clarence Burch with an Annual Award presented in his name.

**THE \$20,000 CLARENCE BURCH AWARD** is given by Andrew Dunigan and the Dunigan Family to honor the memory of Andy Dunigan's grandfather, an innovative and enterprising rancher who courageously embraced new ideas and methods of doing business. The award recognizes individuals, organizations and others who have led by example in promoting and accomplishing outstanding stewardship of private and/or public lands. The goals of the Burch Award are consistent with the mission of the Quivira Coalition and its New Ranch paradigm, i.e., to explore innovative ideas in ranch management and build bridges between ranchers, environmentalists, public land managers, scientists and others with the goal of restoring western rangelands collaboratively.

## 2013 NOMINEE RECOGNITION

### Canadian River Riparian Restoration Project

Established in 2004, the Canadian River Riparian Restoration Project (C3RP) exemplifies leadership by implementing innovative and sustainable methods of watershed stewardship. C3RP is dedicated to restoring the health of the Canadian River's riparian corridors by controlling salt cedar, a high water-using plant infesting many western waterways. The project's outcome has also expanded native habitat for wildlife and returned a sustainable flow of water needed for communities, agriculture and recreation. In addition, C3RP provides educational opportunities to landowners, students and agency personnel through monitoring and grazing management workshops.

### Rio Grande Community Farm

Rio Grande Community Farm (RGCF) was founded 17 years ago in partnership with the city of Albuquerque's Open Space, prompted by local demand to sustainably address growing concerns with the health of our environment, communities and foodshed. RGCF upholds its mission of stewarding public lands, while enhancing urban wildlife habitat, producing organic food, establishing a community-oriented foodshed and offering education on these topics. The farm is located on the original site of Los Poblanos, one of the earliest Spanish Colonial settlements in the Rio Grande Valley and a living link in an agricultural heritage that extends over 1700 years, making it among the oldest parcels of continually farmed land in the United States.

## 2013 Clarence Burch Award Winner

# Malpai Borderlands Group

**The Quivira Coalition is honored to present its 2013 Burch Award to the Malpai Borderlands Group, a pioneering and inspirational rancher-led collaborative nonprofit located in the “bootheel” of New Mexico and southeastern Arizona.**

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Malpai Borderlands Group (MBG), the original source of the “radical center” approach to conservation and restoration of western ranching and rangelands.

The MBG was formed out of two pressing concerns: 1) that grasslands were being lost to shrub encroachment due to fire suppression; and 2) that ranches were succumbing to subdivision pressure. Deciding to act proactively, ranchers in the Malpai area reached out to scientists, environmental groups and state and federal agencies in the spring of 1993, seeking to build a consensus-based approach to land management in their area. Since that time, the MBG has pioneered a remarkable array of innovative and sustainable methods of land stewardship, promoted and implemented collaborative methods of resolving land stewardship conflicts and led the way in achieving ecological and economic health on working landscapes. They have also conducted extensive scientific research, education and outreach in support of their mission.

Some of the MBG’s notable accomplishments include:

**Conservation easements.** Today, MBG easements cover 85,252 acres of private land, linked by grazing permits to 139,879 acres of public lands. Combined with the Nature Conservancy’s easement on the large Gray Ranch, MGB’s easements protect nearly 70 percent of the private land in the area.

**Fire restoration and management.** Seven prescribed fires have been conducted on a total of roughly 80,000 acres, including the 46,458-acre Baker II fire in 2003, which was the largest successfully implemented prescribed fire in the history of the U.S. Forest Service. Additionally, more than 560,000 acres of prescribed and naturally occurring fires have occurred on the Gray Ranch under an agreement between the Animas Foundation and New Mexico State Forestry.

**Endangered species conservation.** The Malpai country lies in one of the most biodiverse regions in North America. Rather than resist or condemn the legal protection of endangered species, the MBG has taken a proactive approach on several fronts. For



Malpai Board. (Photo by Jay Dusard)

example, in 2008 the MBG completed a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan with the Fish and Wildlife Service, ensuring compliance of ranching activities and prescribed fires with ESA regulations pertaining to nineteen listed or rare species of fish, wildlife and plants.

**Scientific research.** The MBG has been a leader in promoting scientific research and science-based decision making for public and private land management in the Southwest. The MBG has investigated fire effects on vegetation and watershed conditions; grazing, climate, and fire interactions in communities of vegetation and small mammals; methods of shrub reduction and grass establishment; and effectiveness of low-tech erosion control measures (Bill Zeedyk’s methods).

**Education and outreach.** The MBG has actively promoted collaborative ranch and rangeland conservation through education and outreach activities on several fronts. For example, annual science conferences are held every January for scientists, agency employees, landowners and environmentalists to learn about research, both in the Malpai area and in rangelands more generally.

At the top of the list of the MBG’s accomplishments, however, is the inspiration it has provided for other groups seeking collaborative, innovative solutions to stewardship problems, not only in rangelands but also in other landscapes, including the Quivira Coalition.

Today, the MBG faces important and difficult transitions as it moves into its third decade of activities. A new generation of leadership is needed and a new strategic plan is under formulation. The Clarence Burch Award will help launch this new phase of Malpai’s continuing efforts to preserve ranching and the landscapes it both supports and depends upon.