



Those of us who knew Clarence were aware that, if you want action, you got Clarence involved. When he started on a project, things were going to happen. He had the will to win as an athlete, and he made things happen throughout life.—

“Clarence Burch, Diversified Activist,” in *Courageous Cattlemen*,
by Robert C. de Baca

The First Annual
Clarence Burch Award
January 19, 2002
La Posada de Albuquerque

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**Southwestern Willow
Flycatcher Project**

Ty Bays, Phelps Dodge Corp.;
Paul Boucher, Gila National Forest;
Deborah Finch, U.S. Forest Service Rocky Mountain
Research Station;
David Ogilvie, U Bar Ranch;
Ralph Pope, Gila National Forest;
Roland Shook, Western New Mexico University; and
Scott Stoleson, Rocky Mountain Research Station

Keynote Address

“The Valles Caldera and the Road
Ahead”

William deBuys, Chair of the
Valles Caldera National Preserve

By all accounts, Clarence Burch was a remarkable man.

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."

In high school, Clarence set records in track before working his way through Oklahoma A&M. Upon graduation he worked for a while as a teacher, coach, and county

extension agent before scraping together enough money to buy a small ranch near Mill Creek. He settled into the ranching life with his wife, Frances, and together they raised their children, Tom and Anne.

For a rancher, however, he had one unusual, and illuminating, weakness. "He was not mechanically inclined," says his son, Tom. "He couldn't fix the lawnmower. But he knew how to get you the right tool." His main talent, in other words, was working with people. "He was an educator all his life," says Tom, "and a problem-solver. He used to say 'there isn't a problem out there that can't be fixed.' And if he couldn't do it, he knew who could."

One area that Clarence applied his "can-do" attitude to 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.

"I made the statement then and still do that water is more important than oil," Clarence said in an interview. "I think time will show me to be right in that."

He was a careful steward of his own land as well. "He knew that all he had to sell on his ranch was grass," recalls 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."

In addition to conservation activism, Clarence was deeply involved in reforming the beef industry. Declaring that "we got a world to feed!" Clarence steered his fellow ranchers away from a professional infatuation at the time with winning "blue ribbons" at county fairs, says his son, and toward the question of animal production and performance. He became the first president of the Beef Improvement

Federation and helped found the Performance Registry International.

With typical zeal, he insisted that ranchers become note-takers too. "Records make history," he says in *Courageous Cattlemen*. "Records direct the present. Records foresee the future. Records are the working man's tools that have practical application. . .and add to the economics of the beef industry."

This attitude, considered radical in its day, today dominates the industry, observes Tom.

For his energy and leadership, Clarence was honored in 1955 with inclusion in a group of American farmers and ranchers that conducted a ground-breaking tour of the Soviet Union during the depths of the Cold War.

Later, his advice was sought by his son-in-law, Pat Dunigan, who had recently purchased the 110,000-acre Baca Ranch, located in the mountains high above Los Alamos, New Mexico. Observing that the ranch had been used pretty hard by its previous owners, Clarence's advice was twofold: quit the logging; and cross-fence the property

so that the cattle wouldn't overgraze any longer—advice that his son-in-law followed.

Clarence's people skills extended to his family as well. Andy remembers him as an "extremely warm, charismatic man who got along with people from all walks of life." Another 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.

Both Anne and Tom agree that family was their parents' highest priority. "The whole family went to everything," she recalls, "and he was always there for us as kids"—a point echoed by Tom who says he father "never missed one my track meets." He had a wonderful sense of humor too, says Anne, "and an immense curiosity about the world." She also describes her parents' fifty-year marriage as a "real partnership."

Clarence's warmth and vitality were evident throughout his life. A few years before his death, his family brought him into the sale barn on his favorite chair and placed him in the center of the action, so he could inspect the animals and talk

"shop" with the participants.

Tom remembers with wry amazement that his father's failing eyesight always managed to get better when they drove around the ranch. "He'd see a loose wire in a fence or ask about the condition of a cow at a distance," he says. "It was pretty incredible."

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."

We at the Quivira Coalition are proud to honor Clarence Burch with an Annual Award.



The Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Project

The Burch Award

The Quivira Coalition is pleased to announce that its First Annual Clarence Burch Award is being given to the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Project, located on the Gila River, near Cliff, NM.

This award honors a partnership between scientists, ranchers, private land owners, and public land managers in a project whose goal is to gain a better understanding of the complex ecological

issues involving the critically endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher.

The U Bar Ranch, home to the largest population of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers in the United States (240 breeding pairs out of a total of 450--500 for the entire subspecies), has important lessons to teach about the positive relationship between scientific research, habitat restoration, progressive ranch and farm manage-

ment, and private and public land owner support.

The honorees have demonstrated an eagerness to share the lessons they have learned from their work on the U Bar. For this eagerness, and for their integrity, dedication, and unflinching good humor, sometimes in the face of adversity, the Quivira Coalition wishes to honor the following individuals:

Ty Bays, Phelps Dodge Corp.;

Paul Boucher, Gila National Forest;

Deborah Finch, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station;

David Ogilvie, U Bar Ranch;

Ralph Pope, Gila National Forest;

Roland Shook, Western New Mexico University; and

Scott Stoleson, USFS Rocky Mountain Research Station.

A stipulation of the Burch Award, named in honor of a pioneering rancher and conservationist from Oklahoma, is that the \$15,000 cash award be invested back into the project, either in the form of continued research

or another on-the-ground activity.

Congratulations to the winners!

Background

The Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Project was initiated in 1994 by the Rocky Mountain Research Station, located in Albuquerque, in consultation with the Gila National Forest, Phelps Dodge Corp., and rancher David Ogilvie of the U Bar.

Under the leadership of Deborah Finch, the research mission at the Research Station expanded beyond a rangeland focus to include new research on endangered species, riparian ecosystems, and fire-related topics. Deborah identified the habitat needs of the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher as a top priority because the largest population of the subspecies had been recently discovered to reside in the Cliff-Gila valley of southwestern New Mexico.

Since the flycatcher's population spilled onto the Gila National Forest, Deborah contacted Gila National Forest biologist Paul Boucher

in 1995 with a request that the forest facilitate communication between the ranch, Phelps Dodge, and the Research Station. Several meetings were held in 1996 with the cooperators to determine priorities for research, including identifying study sites, determining flycatcher numbers, nesting success, and cowbird parasitism.

An overarching priority, however, was to gain and report information about flycatcher habitat use at the site that was unbiased and that could be used to guide management. The cooperators were interested in dispelling controversy over this particular population by having a credible study conducted.

An advertisement for a postdoctoral scientist to collect the data and supervise the field crews was posted, and in May, 1997, Dr. Scott Stoleson was hired by the Research Station. He began field work in the Cliff-Gila valley immediately. He has been ably assisted by Dr. Roland Shook, professor of biology at Western New Mexico University, in Silver City, who has been conducting his own

research project in the Forest Service's "Gila Bird Area," located downriver of the Research Station project site.

Other key players include: U Bar ranch manager David Ogilvie, whose progressive management has significantly contributed to the continued success of the flycatcher's population; Ty Bays, who directs the Land and Water Office for the Tyrone office of Phelps Dodge, and has courageously supported the goals of the project from the start; and Ralph Pope, range specialist for the Gila National Forest and a strong champion within the agency for the project.

Research data has now been collected for five field seasons, and numerous reports and publications have been produced from the study. Research data from the study have been used in multiple ways to help draft the recovery plan for the flycatcher, including: 1) in the population viability analysis used to set recovery population goals; 2) in grazing and cowbird management guidelines; 3) in restoration project

recommendations; and 4) in discussion groups of implementation subgroup members of the recovery team. According to Recovery Team leader Deborah Finch, the draft recovery plan for the flycatcher would be much weaker if the valuable information from this study had not been available.

The cooperation of the numerous stakeholders involved in the project has been widely praised and hailed as a model for the study and recovery of our nation's threatened and endangered species.

Summary

The role of livestock grazing in the recovery of endangered species in the Southwest has been the sub-

ject of intense public debate, too often conducted in the vacuum of sound science. By implementing a scientifically rigorous study, with the model cooperation between private, public, and research entities, the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Project illustrates the benefits of working in the "radical center" with positive lessons for anyone interested in maintaining, and restoring, sustainable communities of people and wildlife.



The Quivira Coalition is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization incorporated in New Mexico on June 11, 1997 by two conservationists and a rancher. Our purpose is to teach ranchers, environmentalists, public land managers, and other members of the public that ecologically healthy rangeland and economically robust ranches can be compatible. Our mission is to define the core issues of the grazing conflict and to articulate a new position based on common interests and common sense. We call this position the New Ranch.

We pursue our educational mission through a regular newsletter, workshops, conferences, lectures, site tours, a Web page, seminars, outdoor classrooms, publications, videos, collaborative management demonstration projects, monitoring, and scientific research.

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