

Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees Newsletter

October 2013

On October 25, 2013, the Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees met at the Golden Corral Buffet Restaurant in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Forty five people were in attendance. They were: **David Ankle, Don and Darlene Bartolina, Steve Chessmore, Everett and Helen Cole, Duane Crider, Bob and Betty Day, Wayne Fjeseth, Fred and Gayle Fortney, Randy Freeland, Jim and Roberta Frie, Lloyd Garrison, Gayle and Mary Goforth, Sandra and Terry Hough, Otho Lamar, Nick Lambeth, Jim McCampbell, Lowell and Minnie McMasters, Gordon and Minnie Carol Moebius, Nelson and Mary Mueller, Glen and Eunice Mullen, Gary O'Neill, John and Joy Pewthers, Dan Runnels, Gayland Sandy, Jim and Terry Smith, J. C. and Shirley Spitzer, Betty Todd, Keith and Phyllis Vaughan, and Carolyn and Bob Webb.**

President **Dan Runnels** called the meeting to order. He reported that **Jo Ann Leaverton**, widow of **Erwin Leaverton**, had fallen recently and hurt her leg. She had called to say she was unable to attend. **Tom Perryman**, retired AC from Woodward, recently had surgery in Norman. He is currently recuperating there. **Randy Freeland** provided the blessing for the meal. Everyone enjoyed the buffet meal.

Secretary/Treasurer **Sandra Hough** said there were 322 notices mailed announcing our meeting, 7 returned, and 4 were re-mailed. A current address is needed for **Ken Taylor, McAlester**.

The Oklahoma SCS/NRCS retiree website (www.cyber-shack.net/nrcs/) has been helpful in our effort to keep retirees informed. This website also has a posting of the attendees, minutes and pictures from each of the meetings.

Fred Fortney read a list of recent retiree deaths: **JoAnn Keltch**, retired clerk, Woodward TSO, 5/8/13; **James Ludwick**, retired Hydrologist, Chickasha WPS, 6/10/13, retired in 1990 was 82 yrs. old; **Eden (Buzz) Matheny**, retired DC from Madill & Marietta, residing in Ardmore, 6/25/13; **Joe Stinchcomb**, father of **Ed Stinchcomb**, DC at Chandler, August 2013; **Carl Marvin Williams**, worked in Clinton, Wewoka and OKC, 9/9/13, retired in 1974, was residing in the Leedey area. A moment of silence was observed and Fred offered a prayer.

Recent retirees from the Oklahoma Conservation Commission, Conservation Districts and NRCS include: **Jack Hudman**, Cotton County Conservation District Director, 52 years of service; **Fredia Rice**, Cotton County District Secretary, 23 years of service and wife of **Stan Rice**, retired RC&D Coordinator; **Mark Harrison**, Information Officer for OCC; **Tom Wilson**, SC at Hobart, with 41+ years of service; and **Chris Shepherd**, DC at El Reno in June.

President Runnels introduced a special guest, **Gary O'Neill**, NRCS State Conservationist for Oklahoma. **Gary** is a native Oklahoman from Osage County and started his SCS career in Oklahoma. **Dwaine Gelnar**, current State Resource Conservationist in Missouri and former Soil Scientist in Oklahoma, encouraged **Gary** to apply for a job with SCS. His career took him and his family to several other states before returning to Oklahoma. **Gary** was the Assistant State Conservationist for Operations and State Administrative Officer prior to becoming the State Conservationist. It is rare that an employee within a state be selected as State Conservationist. He provided the group with an overview of the activities happening within the state. Contract management continues to be a major workload for field offices. As an example, Leflore County alone has over 500 contracts. He reported that the Watershed program has not been funded for several years; however, rehabilitation of watershed structures has helped provide technical assistance funds to keep our expertise in watersheds operating for now. There are 2110 watershed structures in Oklahoma many of which have reached their designed life span. Many are in need of rehab. In 2005 Oklahoma had 350 FTE's (full-time equivalent employees) and currently only have 295 FTE's. Most of the retirees remember upward of 500 FTE's as the norm at one time. NRCS is doing more with less these days. **Gary** noted that NRCS has been able to maintain a presence in each of the 77 counties. He emphasized the importance of conservation districts in the relationship with conservation producers.



Fred Fortney visiting with State Conservationist Gary O'Neill and Oklahoma SCS/NRCS Retirees President Dan Runnels.

Randy Freeland is the Oklahoma representative to ARCSE and uses information gathered at the meeting to provide news articles for the newsletters sent to members of the organization every other month. Dues are \$18 per year and he has membership applications for anyone interested in joining. For those who retired after January 1, 2003, a one year membership is “free” by just filling out the form. He asked those in attendance to ‘jot down’ on an information sheet something he could include in the newsletter.

Here are a few of the comments he received:

Otho Lamar commented that, “All his former AC’s (but one) are gone so he doesn’t play much golf anymore. It isn’t as much fun if you can’t sneak off from work”.

Carolyn Webb said she volunteers at the hospital and substitute teaches. She is active in her church and a member of a garden club. She was in charge of the Red Cross Blood drive this year. She stays pretty current on NRCS activities as her husband, **Bob**, is the Chairman of the Creek County Conservation District Board.



Carolyn and Bob Webb

Wilma Fraley wrote that she was helping out at their insurance agency a little and spending a lot of time with three grandchildren. They are now going into a busy time of year for the Fraleys. They are preparing for pecan harvest-and the actual harvesting and sales-is a family affair.

I am currently volunteering for several entities in Stillwater including Countryside Baptist Church, OSU Botanical Garden, Stillwater Public library, and Stillwater Hospital

wrote **Les Conner**. They have seven grandchildren and enjoy being involved in their activities.

Geri Cutler wrote: “Randy, just to say how much I appreciate getting your emails and hearing the news. As for me, I’m just sort of hanging in there. I describe it as ‘treading water’. I am still able to care for my needs by real careful planning. No excitement to report but looking forward to your newsletter”.

And **Shelley Hungerford** informed us that she and **David** are currently on vacation to the Grand Canyon. They look forward to attending our next meeting in the spring.

Everyone in attendance was challenged to personally contact retirees who have not been attending and invite them to attend our next meeting or even better yet, bring one or more with them to the next meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, **April 25, 2014**, at the Golden Corral, 520 South MacArthur Blvd. in Oklahoma City. It is located between I-40 & Reno behind the Shell Station. Take Exit #144 off I-40. Go north on MacArthur Blvd.