

A CONDENSED "HISTORY OF ARSCSE"

Retirees Organize

"So, ARSCSE was born", as pronounced by Don Williams on December 4, 1973 in his final report to SCS retirees about establishing the Association Of Retired Soil Conservation Service Employees (ARSCSE).

Don Williams, SCS Administrator 1953 until his retirement in 1969, was its Founder. As an excellent Administrator in all respects, he looked at SCS personnel as a closely knit family of employees. He saw a need for an organization to perpetuate personal friendships and a means to keep retirees abreast of natural resources conservation developments, including affairs of SCS. Repeatedly, questions to Don as he traveled throughout the country, had led him to believe such an organization would be helpful and appreciated by SCS retirees.

Don's first step toward organizing ARSCSE was on June 1, 1973, with a letter to 1000 SCS retirees. He proposed the organization and asked if they would be interested in belonging and supporting it. He received just over 200 definitely favorable responses, including around 30 from within the immediate Washington, D.C. area.

His second step taken, with help from his close assisting SCS retiree, Minot (June) Silliman, was to call a meeting of those retirees in the Wash., D.C. area on August 23, 1973. He designated them to constitute an interim committee that would appraise the situation, "organize" if considered wise and seek a manager-editor for a publication of ARSCSE. Don and June presented a proposed Charter for the organization, including the name finally selected from several alternatives. Those in attendance, in the apartment of June Silliman, were: Ogden Greene, Hal Jenkins, Joy Hopkins, Charlie Koch, Charlie Koechley, Paul Lemmon, Ben Osborn, Pete Peterson, Joe Rogers, June Silliman and Don Williams. Three others, much interested but unable to attend, were also considered on this committee: Wally Anderson, Kling Klingebiel and Roy Hockensmith. The proposed Charter was approved and sanctions offered for further organizational pursuits. This was followed by Don's second letter, of September 10, 1973, to those 200 retirees who had earlier made a favorable reply. In this letter he enclosed a copy of the Charter, asked for its approval and for remittance of a \$6.00 membership fee.

The third step, following most satisfactory responses to Don's September letter, was for another meeting of the interim committee, held in Don's apartment on December 4, 1973. Those attending were: Greene, Peterson, Koechley, Hopkins, Hockensmith, Jenkins, Rogers, Anderson, Lemmon, plus another coming for the first time, Harold Tower, and Williams. Absent was June Silliman who had been the primary writer of important, early drafts of the many documents so germane progressively to organize, and was the "co-thinker" for Don Williams. In effect, Silliman was the operative Co-Founder of ARSCSE. He had moved from his apartment in the same complex as Williams resided to his farm in Illinois.

At this December 4 meeting, officers were selected to serve during the interim period until an election, as covered in the Charter, could take place in January, 1974. These first officers were: Roy D. Hockensmith, President; Wallace Anderson, Vice President; and Joseph B. Rogers, Sec.-Treas. Also, an arrangement was made with Harold L. (Hal) Jenkins to serve as Manager-Editor of the ARSCSE publication, News Letter.

In a report written by Don Williams, in mid-December 1973, addressed to retirees, he declared "establishment of the Association of Retired Soil Conservation Service Employees, on Dec. 4, 1973". His added statement said the ARSCSE was born.

Formation of the ARSCSE has its legacy in the USDA Soil Conservation Service (SCS) with its employee retirements. A large number of SCS retirees existed when ARSCSE was started in 1973. SCS became a permanent agency under Public No. 46, 74th Congress of April 27, 1935, following its predecessor Soil Erosion Service (SES) formed on August 25, 1933, under Public Works Administration laws. This was a part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's massive program to help our country out of its deep economic depression. Dr. Hugh

Hammond Bennett was the Director of SES and Chief of SCS, previously having met with Pres. Roosevelt in July, 1933, asking for agency and funds to combat soil erosion and floods, the start was with five million dollars. Bennett retired on August 10, 1952, from head of SCS. By June, 1934, SES had 2200 professional employees; in March, 1935, it had 6000; in June, 1936, they numbered 10,394 and 19 years later, 1955, there were 14,492 employees including 12,492 professionals; in 1990 SCS had 14,765 persons on its staff. Axomatically, there could be no ARSCSE without the SCS and its large reservoir of retirees.

Operations Started in 1974

The first Manager-Editor, Hal Jenkins, as planned came out with the first ARSCSE News Letter, Vol. 1, No. 1, January, 1974. It reported the first election of the seven ARSCSE officers: Roy D. Hockensmith, President; A. A. Klingebiel, Vice President; Joseph B. Rogers, Secretary-Treasurer; and Regional Representatives (now called Regional Vice-President): NE, S. L. Tinsley; South, J. V. (Joe) Martin; Midwest, William Russell; and West, Paul McGrew. Also, it is no longer Vice President but is President Elect; and, now it is "Editor" without the Manager part.

The ARSCSE Charter from inception to present times is the main basic guiding influence of the association. The few amendments to the original charter do not alter its essential provisions. It has six major parts, captioned; Name, Purpose, Objectives, Membership, Governing Body and Dues. One of its main objectives "to help its members keep in touch with each other" has been expedited through the News Letter. Personal notes from members, as presented by states, has from the beginning of News Letter consumed more space than any other featured part. Broadly termed, the News Letter has three major parts: Notes From the Potomac (mainly legislative happenings and SCS affairs), personal notes from members, and (since 1986, but retitled in Jan. 1993), Chronicler For Conservation Statesman. Also, it carries ARSCSE business news such as: annual meetings, changes in the Charter, notices for dues collections, election results and other.

The News Letter or Newsletter has been and is truly the life stream blood of the ARSCSE. At its beginning, in 1974-1976, it had four to seven pages, which have of necessity been increased to 11 to 12 pages. The general type of contents has remained the same. There have been three Editors, Hal Jenkins 1974-1977, Robert Fox 1978-1990, and Robert Francis 1991-present. Each has done a remarkable job that continually has brought improvements in the Newsletter.

Many Different Officers

Fourty-four different persons have served as officers, starting with the first three in December, 1973, to present time. The Governing Body of ARSCSE has been enlarged by four positions, from its original seven. They are: Past President, Editor, Historian and Membership Records. Encumbants of these last three named positions are by appointment of the governing body, all others are from elections for a two-year term. There have been only three Secretary-Treasurers: Joseph B. Rogers 1974-77, J. Gordon Steele 1978-83, and Lincoln F. Gallacher 1984-present. By two year intervals the following men consecutively have served as President: starting in 1974, Roy Hockensmith, A. A. Klingebiel, B. D. Blakely, Joe R. Rogers, William Moore, William Davey, Neil Bogner, Robert Williams, Clete Gillman and J. Vernon Martin. There have been 26 men serving as Regional Vice Presidents. From its beginning, 1974, the Regional Vice Presidents have appointed persons to be a State Representative (SR); all states have an SR.

Business Affairs

The first Annual Meeting of ARSCSE was on August 12, 1974, Syracuse, NY. For each succeeding year there has been such "Annual Banquet Meeting". Reports for ARSCSE affairs are given at these annual meetings. Attendance has been from 105 to 140 people.

By end of first year of ARSCSE operations, 1974, there were 703 members. The ninth year, 1982, showed 1,104 members, and since then level of membership numbers has generally been in the eleven hundreds, in 1992 it was 1,159 members. Membership dues started at \$6, then raised to \$8 and now it is \$10 as necessary to meet ever-increasing costs for operations. The dues are the only source of initial funds for the association. It pays minimal wages only to three officers: the Editor, the Sec.-Treas. and the Membership Records director. Also, some expense money is reimbursed to its officers including for attendance when the Governing Body convenes at its annual Meeting.

Membership records are handled by computer, starting in 1983. Its program is used to maintain records, print mailing labels and to provide listings of the membership. Current mailings of Newsletter are from these labels. Also, as from the beginning, 1974, the Sec.-Treas. maintains cards for each member showing name, address, spouse name and dues payment date. Almost each year, starting in 1974, a membership directory is made and distributed to members, now it usually goes out with the May issue of Newsletter. Furthermore, this ARSCSE data base on membership and the computer program allows provisions of special services to state and local sections of the association, which has happened.

From its beginning the association always tried to have a financial surplus at year-end. It took seven years to build such balance to \$10,000. It took six more years to double this amount to \$20,000. Except for one year in the last six years, the \$20,000 balance has been held. Expenses keep going up and membership does not, therefore, to have such balance of reserves is fortunate if needed for current years ahead.

Some Concluding Overviews

There are historical conclusions stemming from the 28 pages of detailed accounting for "History Of ARSCSE", completed in 1993. One, obtaining and serving membership, and the Newsletter preparations and distribution are its two foremost prominent functions. Impacts of these two functions are interwoven. Another, that in all respects the ARSCSE has so far met the objectives envisioned by its Founder, Don Williams, and early forefathers, with ample serving of the purposes laid out for it. Leadership has always been capable and strong, with favorable membership responses. Spirit of the association, although varying a little in different years, has always come back high, as for today. ARSCSE is financially solid.

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