A HOMECOMING TO NEBRASKA

The Daily Gazette of McCook, in an editorial last October commenting on my appointment as Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, said that the fine people of southwest Nebraska and northwest Kansas considered me a Nebraskan, even though my native state is Utah.

He was and am flattered -- because I do indeed have a strong attachment to this fine state, whose people have been both generous and inspiring.

Yes, it was my good fortune to have the assignment of designing Trenton Dam on the Republican River
As for myself, I really am glad to be here. I have been in Washington D.C. 10905, Assistant in the West for about one month, these have been numerous problems. I have been deeply involved in San Joaquin Valley problems, Delta water quality problems, drainage problems, recordable contract problems, 160-acre land limitation problems, flood management and damage problems, water augmentation problems, project authorization problems, to name a few, but never have had the opportunity to meet with this organization. So you glad to be here, even though I am here tonight, however, to deliver Commissioner Armstrong's message to you.

But never had the privilege of meeting with this group.

Here today to deliver Commissioner Armstrong's message to you.

When I do come, I always bring mountains - grass - thunder - wind - rain -
President: Art
M.C. → By: Chairman Ralph Nissin

Chairman & Dept Chairman SDA
Distinguished members & delegates

Ladies & Gentlemen


A number things in life are difficult.
For example: 1) to climb a fence leaning toward you
2) to toss a tall blade leaning away from you
3) Substitute for a brand new Commissioner
of Reclamation before an audience which has
had high hopes of hearing from the Canner
at this time to hear from the Commissioner & no one else.

I saw B.W. Murphy's telegram to Seve Peck
and I am aware of your feelings.

So I apologize for the necessity for this last minute.

However, if you haven't heard, Mr. Armstrong
would have been here if he had not suddenly
become incapacitated in Arizona yesterday.

Tues. evening he became ill, taken to Hosp.

Telephone report this morning says he is
much better today & they still hope to see.
while in the Chief Engineer's Office in Denver and then serving as construction engineer at the site from 1948 to 1954. It was a richly rewarding experience to a farm boy from southern Utah. Those youthful days instilled an early love and respect for the soil.

It is also my conviction that the happiest people in the world are those who have useful work to do. The greatest reward comes from efforts directed toward the welfare and happiness of others.

I am honored that I have been labeled a Cornhusker and am especially
He was pleased to have been extended the invitation to participate with old friends in this annual meeting of the Nebraska Reclamation Association and the Nebraska Irrigation Association.

It seems fitting that we meet here today in the North Platte Valley, which was one of the early beneficiaries of the Reclamation program. The North Platte Project, authorized in 1903 -- was one of the first under the Reclamation Act.

That project today provides irrigation service to more than 350,000 acres in eastern Wyoming and western Nebraska. During periods of
economic depression and crop failure, this irrigated area has maintained an impressively stable production.

In the way of painful review, Nebraska in the drought and depression year of 1936 dropped from third to 18th place in the production of corn, from second to fifth place in wheat, and from second to seventh place in alfalfa. By January 1937 one of every six Nebraska farm families was receiving grants for relief.

In contrast with this record of distress, only one in 25 farm families received aid in nearby Scotts Bluff County, where stabilized
irrigation from the North Platte Project reduced the relief load by more than three-fourths.

During the unstable decade from 1930 to 1940, the national population increased about 10 percent, while Nebraska lost 4.5 percent. Dryland counties adjacent to Scotts Bluff lost 12 percent of their population. Yet Scotts Bluff County recorded a gain of 18.4 percent.

Why do I cite these statistics? To emphasize again that Reclamation means more than the construction of dams and canals, that the emphasis must relate directly to people. When
we engineers are designing and building dams and canals, we are working to benefit people.

We must continue to develop our water resources for the production of food and for municipal and industrial use, but it is becoming increasingly apparent that our decisions must be based on a broader concept of service to all mankind.

Yours is a state of great agricultural abundance. Figures compiled by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture show that crops harvested from more than 26.5 million acres last year carried a gross value
of over $740 million. Contributing to the total were more than 423,000 acres irrigated by the Bureau of Reclamation facilities. The value of this harvest approached $53 million. Thus, one-sixtieth of the land contributed one-fourteenth of the total income. Similarly, privately developed irrigated land also contributed a top-heavy slice of farm income.

The sum of $53 million is impressive, but it is only one link in a significant economic chain. A recent study by the University of Nebraska, Bureau of Business Research,
shows that in 1963 for each $1 in net increase in crop production due to irrigation, a total of $6.68 in new business activity was generated throughout Nebraska.

This makes it clear, then, that numerous individuals -- in addition to the farmers -- are benefiting enormously from irrigation, which is creating new industries, new jobs, and even new communities.

Thus, your state reaps big dividends by applying water to the land. Reclamation, however, has become a multi-handed benefactor and demands on our talents and services are mushrooming.
Without adequate water supplies, cities cannot attract needed industries to support their increasing population and provide the required economic growth, nor will the area be considered an attractive place to live and rear families.

The role of the Bureau in helping solve the complex water problems associated with municipal, industrial and other nonagricultural growth is constantly expanding.

Each year a new record is established for the amount of water delivered and the population served by Bureau projects. In 1968 more
than 585.8 billion gallons of water were delivered to more than 14 million people for a per capita daily use of about 115 gallons.

During the past decade, municipal, industrial and other nonagricultural water service has increased from 257.4 to 618.8 billion gallons. By the year 2020 the Bureau could be expected to supply 2.8 trillion gallons, or roughly four and one-half times the 1968 total.

The challenges, you see, are great—and Reclamation must enlarge its thinking to accommodate new millions of water users who have no direct ties to food production.
Mr. Armstrong's thoughts seem to be saying that water resource development looks good from all angles. This reminds me of a story about our minister of a small church in Virginia.

He went home one afternoon to find his wife had bought a new dress. Style, color, fit — all good price — shocking.

'Twas the devil — 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' It looks good from back here too.
Cg. Shannasg
The fisherman, for instance, is a water user in the sense that he uses the reservoirs and the regulated river downstream. He often is more vocal and influential than the irrigator, but we must strive for acceptance and support from both.

We are determined to get a national understanding of our program and don't intend to overlook either the urban housewife or the preservationist. The complexion of society is changing and we must change with it.

One of your fellow Nebraskans -- State Senator Maurice Kremer of Aurora -- recognized one aspect of
this change at the annual meeting of the Four-States Irrigation Council in Denver last January.

Senator Kremer pointed out that up to now much of Nebraska's water development has stemmed from specific projects for a limited number of purposes. He then focused on a factor which is often overlooked by the average dirt farmer -- that Nebraska is rapidly changing from an agrarian to an urban state.

He noted that 16 of the 49 Nebraska legislators now are from Lincoln and Omaha and that these two cities will gain additional
representation through another reapportionment before the 1971 session of the legislature.

With this shift of population, the senator said, we will note greater emphasis on such urban related programs as water quality, recreation, water supply, flood control and water transportation.

I agree with the good Senator that this doesn't mean the farmer is on a collision course with the urban dweller. What it does mean is that the farmer must help broaden his thinking in support of activities which are of value not only to his
own area but also to the entire state and nation.

A good case in point, it seems to me, is the Nebraska Mid-State Project, which was conceived more than 25 years ago but which gained Congressional authorization only two years ago. I want to compliment those persevering souls/whose tireless efforts/and expenditure of almost $2 million of non-Federal funds/have brought Mid-State to the doorway of success.

Mid-State is more than an irrigation project, it is a people project. Not only will it provide
flood protection for a vast section of central Nebraska but it will stabilize agriculture and greatly enhance the quality of the environment for an increasing number of people who have found both farm and non-farm employment in pleasant and familiar surroundings.

Many in the construction field like to deal with huge dimensions such as the height of a dam, the number of yards of concrete and so forth. Such considerations are essential in civil engineering but as already mentioned, we like to think of them in terms of benefits to people.
Equally important is fitting necessary development into the natural environment.

Man cannot be very proud nor happy over the way he has polluted the air and water and ravaged the lands and forests. Similarly the squalor and infirmity of the big cities are a part of the environment man has made for himself and is finally taking steps to correct.

I believe, and say with pride and conviction, that the Bureau, in balance, has not degraded the natural environment to the disadvantage of man in its decades of operation. I
say, in balance, because we have changed the environment considerably. We have done much to improve nature through the nourishment of arid and semi-arid land, the clearing up of silted streams, the creation of beautiful lakes and providing a stabilized economy which has meant new communities, some large and some small, in many areas of the West. Surely no one would trade the man-made environment of Scotts Bluff County or of the Republican Valley for that natural environment before the coming of man.

As our world becomes smaller and our population larger and our social
relationships more closely entwined, the work to be done becomes increasingly complex, greater in magnitude, more necessary for man's survival, and most important, it becomes more effective in service. But certain principles are changeless.

In our engineering profession, technology without intellectual honesty is valueless. Designs based on unsound principles can be evil. Construction without integrity and responsibility soon crumbles.

So it is also with the real values of life. In these troublous days of protest against the established
order and uncertainty as to the future, honesty, integrity and responsibility are keystones for all stable men to adhere to. They will guide me in my administration of the Bureau of Reclamation as they have guided me all of my life.

These principles...