

Anecdotes From Early Beef Cattle Short Courses

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In the earlier years, the beef short course was held in the Webb Livestock Pavilion, which was built in 1951 and was held there through 1984. Some years we had up to 1,000 people register, which included people from Texas, Louisiana, Alabama, Georgia and Latin America. There were several hazards in that open, exposed structure. There were sparrows, rain, cold, wind and no opportunity to project slides, due to no light control.

Dr. Tony J. Cunha always assigned duties to faculty members months and weeks before May. The sparrow eradication and sound system were assigned to Phillip Loggins, along with Jack Stokes. They tried to destroy the bird nests in advance but during the short course, birds were still noisy and a nuisance. The sound equipment was a problem but Loggins did well to provide satisfactory sound. Just remember, our department members did everything. There were no professional sound engineers or professionals to prepare the several meals.

One landmark sound was Dr. Cunha with his cow bell. There was a very full program, including night meetings, so Cunha wanted to “stay on time” for all speakers. At the breaks he would always start ringing the bell five minutes early, both outside and in the halls. As you can imagine, all ranchers liked to visit so that was a problem as well as a happy time for the cattlemen. We do not know the whereabouts of the “Cunha” bell but it was effective.

Dr. Cunha was also very insistent and precise that the hand-out materials be given immediately after the speaker finished. Dr. Bob Reddish, was usually in charge, plus other Extension workers

i.e., Jim Pace, Ken Durrance and Bob Sand; plus graduate students.

Since slide projections were difficult, Don Hargrove and others tried to build and operate the “Black Box” in front, to darken a large area in which to project visual aids. This was in the mid 1970's. It was a valiant effort but not really successful. We usually made up large posters with data and diagrams. Mrs. Mary Wakeman did good work in preparing illustrated materials that could be seen, from a distance, by the audience. When we moved, in 1985, to the Hilton Hotel on SW 13th Street, facilities were much better, especially to show visual aids.

We should give much credit to the Block and Bridle Club members and advisors Zane Palmer, Don Wakeman, Jim “Pete” Carpenter and Roger West, for preparation and serving meals, drinks, snacks and general clean up. They even prepared the meat and food for the Thursday “Steak-out”. I recall they served as many as seven meals on site. This kept the audience together.

Also, the live animal demonstrations and exhibits were featured by bringing cattle from various units and from nearby ranchers. This was a combined effort of unit managers as well as Don Wakeman, Marvin Koger, Don Hargrove, Zane Palmer, James Hentges, Joe Crockett and Roger West. One of our famous speakers and demonstrators was Professor Jan Bonsma from Pretoria, South Africa. He was able to observe a cow and indicate the level of fertility. He was a keen observer and related phenotype with Endocrinology. No one slept during his presentations!

We also visited several off-campus units for hands-on views of cattle, pastures and equipment, such as at the Beef Research unit on the Monteochoa Road, which is now in its 50th year of research.

I would like to give special credit to Dr. Tony J. Cunha for starting the short course and planning it from 1951 to 1974. There are two similar beef short course programs that adopted ideas from Cunha. The Latin and International programs in Spanish, held here, which started in 1968 and the Annual Beef Cattle Short Course in Maracay, Venezuela, sponsored by the Genetics Department of the Veterinary School in Maracay. This program is now in its 17th year, primarily organized by Dr. Dieter Plasse, a former graduate

student in our department.

We should also recognize all the faculty members and staff who participated on an annual basis and those from the other departments of Agronomy, Soils, Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Engineering and Veterinary Medicine. Many good ranchers and producers from Florida and adjoining states made good presentations. Each year, outstanding beef researchers and leaders from Universities and Industry across the nation were featured speakers. The programs varied each year to feature needs of cattlemen and present current research information.

NOTES: