

Forage Reflections



**American Forage
and
Grassland Council**

Introduction

The American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) is dedicated to advancing the use of forage as a sustainable feed resource. Our members represent the academic community, producers, commercial industry, institutes and foundations. Together, they unite in a common cause to promote and develop the forage industry.

This document portrays the experiences of three long-time members, each representing the sectors of the academic community, producers and commercial industry.

Special recognition to Dr. Garry Lacefield, Mr. John Rodgers, and Dr. Clive Holland for their dedication to the forage industry and to the American Forage and Grassland Council.

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Grasslands and My Life Clive Holland, Ph.D. 2014

Growing up in the temperate climate of New Zealand where grasses and clovers blanket every vista, it is commonplace to see cattle or sheep dotting most pastures, year round. My earliest memories are of green grass stains on knees and clothing from those school-yard tussles and rugby games. All played without footwear because schools didn't require such. Schools with thrifty management would generally keep lawns and ball fields neatly trimmed with a flock of sheep. This was rather evident from the darker stains every school boy took home at the end of the day from the 'processed' grass covering much of the playing areas.

From a dairy-farming family where pastures were the only feedstuff provided cows, grasslands were studied and talked about as reverently as grandparents and



New Zealand hill-land grazers and occasional lawnmowers.

as often as the weather. A Mediterranean climate typically produced adequate moisture year round for pastures to thrive and produce well. It was those species which beguiled a young mind, hearing the old timers speak of Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and Paspalum (*Paspalum*

vaginatum) as not being good tucker (feed) to milk cows on.

Much more in retrospect did I realize, I was nudged, cajoled and mentored in my youthful years by a crusty old retired farmer who knew much about grasses, their names and growth habits. Old Bill, kindly but firmly questioned regularly my agricultural heritage, adeptness, intelligence and farming potential if I couldn't learn the names of grasses that had so much importance for New Zealand agriculture. It was this spark that created a life-long desire in me for greater awareness of cause and effect factors in the complex world of production agriculture. Old Bill spent many hours pointing out growth habits of numerous grasses, pulling apart leaves from stems, crushing seed heads and pronouncing various species as the best for top milk production. It was those teenage years where I first gained a hankering and real appreciation for grasses and how they could be used best.

We are products of our environment and I was decidedly so. Looking back, younger years were a rather singular life of school and dairy cows, followed by more dairy cows and school. Rising to help with chores before the school bus stopped at the roadside was the beginning of every day. However, it was in those years where my teenage mind was expected to determine if the next allocated pasture was advanced enough in growth for the cows to milk well. From this developed a natural understanding of seasonal differences, along with the significant impact of rainfall on how grasses grew and produced. Hearing old timers talk about the poor grasses or those which never grew well in combination with others, all became as natural as learning words and math.

It was the clovers, in combination with grasses, the older generation could never agree on. Too little clover component and

pastures were mediocre at best. Too much clover was deadly and only Old Bill, from his generation, thought this was a good thing. In his mind he was able to see greater productivity trumping the challenge of keeping cows from dying of bloat. In this we worked together for a good number of years, first spraying vegetable oil on pastures once every 24 hours. This worked to perfection in preventing bloat of dairy cows on high clover-content pastures. That is until it rained, washing off the foliage the prescribed half ounce of oil required by each animal to survive bloating. Next came a milking parlor exit lane mounting of a mechanical arm, spring loaded and attached to a small pump. Each depression of this arm squirted a half ounce of vegetable oil onto the flank of every cow as she exited the parlor. Mixed with linseed oil guaranteed each would turn and lick this on the return amble to the pasture. However in every population there are some who are just different. This was truly a demonstration of survival-of-the-fittest, as none of the non-lickers survived long.

Other non-bloating trials were tried, with oil on water troughs, chemical company implants and various applications of the now commercially available anti-foaming agents. None were as successful or as certain as the drenching of each cow



Dairy cow grazing pastures in New Zealand which is generally used as a complete ration.

every 24 hours with the prescribed amount of bloat prevention formula.

My early life spans a period in pasture farming where clovers were undesirable, to a transition of this pasture component being considered absolutely essential, especially for high productivity. Dairying on pasture alone, in New Zealand, is evaluated on carrying capacity and any farmer who can maintain a herd which averaged one cow to less than one acre certainly is doing this on highly fertilized clover and ryegrass pastures.

It is from this background in the mid-1970s I realized a life-long desire to see and learn about American agriculture. I came to this country for a few months, got hooked on how much more I could learn, and signed up for graduate studies at Michigan State University. But what to



Ryegrass clover pastures typically a potent mix for cattle bloat.

study? Dairying or pastures?

Pastures won, with the next few years dedicated to agrostology studies and research with all manner of pasture legumes and species interactions of inter-seeding legumes into established pastures, determining species cold tolerances, disease susceptibility, palatability and digestibilities. Regularly I considered my teen years as field work invaluable in this quest.

I left Michigan State University with a freshly minted license authenticating expertise in all things to do with forages and pastures, with euphoria which lasted for almost a week. I began post-doctoral studies with renowned Gerald Mott at the University of Florida in Gainesville. His specialty was in tropical pasture species and their utilization, of which I knew little. Humbling, yes. Challenging, absolutely.

It was South Dakota that beckoned next with employment as state Forage Specialist at South Dakota State University in Brookings. This was to the unfamiliar eye, a state rivaling the bald-headed prairies of Canada in its starkness and horizon vistas. To this transplant, it was a warm embrace by real farmers and solid people of the land. This sojourn became a springboard for two significant focuses during the rest of my professional life. First was an invitation from the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) to take South Dakota forage expertise to mainland China and the equally bald prairies of Mongolia. This US government association continues today in various forms of consulting globally under the USAID (US Agency for International Development) program.

Secondly, while in South Dakota I was thrust into familiarity with a research funding donor, who generously supported various evaluations of forage legumes, seed treatments and anti-fungal enhancements in seed coatings. Reports were made, associations developed and eventually an invitation to join Pioneer Hi-Bred International as their resident alfalfa and forage expert.

Prior to departing South Dakota relationships across the world of forages had been developing. One important early association was with Neal Martin, Forage Extension Specialist at the University of Minnesota. Also with his colleague Craig Sheaffer, at the same university, who was

focused entirely on alfalfa and forage research. Don Barnes, or 'Dr. Alfalfa,' employed by the USDA-ARS and stationed at the University of Minnesota, had a strong influence on all US alfalfa research and in particular myself. Dan Putnam and Larry Teubur, both from the University of California, Davis and icons in western forages and alfalfa evaluations were further associations of like professionals.

It is these individuals and others, who were magnets for my joining forces with the larger group of US forage enthusiasts and researchers. Attempts to initiate producer involvement in the American Forage & Grassland Council with farmers in South Dakota faltered in the early 1980s, but this was successfully picked up by others in subsequent years. Instead, interested groups participated in Minnesota forage group activities.

After settling into Des Moines, Iowa in 1985, I joined forces with the state affiliate forage council there. This was under the tutelage of Steve Barnhart, Iowa State University Extension Forage Specialist, who continued support beyond my 25-years in Iowa. I joined the affiliate board in 1986 and served for many more years, along with a year as president in 1991. Through the affiliate council and annual meetings of the parent organization I became aware of a wide diversity of individuals involved in the world of US forages, both producers and researchers alike. Many of these associations continue today, with great camaraderie and friendship in a common cause. Sadly, a good number of stalwarts of yesteryear's forage research have passed on, but are remembered fondly. The list is long and best recalled by viewing the AFGC tabulation of award winners. This is a veritable 'who's who' in forages over the past 60 years here in the US.

My work with Pioneer spanned 25 years, with multiple responsibilities during

this time. However this always was with management oversight of the company's forages. This extended to research and commercial activities in Europe, India, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, South American countries and the US. This period in the forage industry was one that transitioned the singular company and exclusive handling of proprietary products, with closely guarded protocols and numbers, to one of open collaborations. These collaborations strengthened some and amalgamated others. The commercial world of US forages, primarily alfalfa varietal breeding, has undergone a significant metamorphosis over the last 30 years. Public university breeding efforts have all disappeared, many commercial company breeding activities have also declined or closed, with a small handful of very successful breeding programs remaining.

I had the interesting challenge of helping shepherd the introduction and recall of the first forage biotech product to ever be released. In 2005 the first Roundup resistant alfalfa was released to US growers. Through pressure from certain interest groups and a subsequent court case a legal technicality in the initial environmental studies was cause enough for a 2007 court halt to continuing sales of Roundup Ready (RR) seed. This was upheld on appeal and then presented to the Supreme Court where, in 2010, approval for continued planting was granted, provided the new environmental study was completed. This situation is still in limbo awaiting completion of the detailed environmental study by the USDA.

What is not generally known as a requirement of that first cease-and-desist court case in 2007, it was also ruled every field of already planted RR alfalfa was to be located and identified by GPS coordinates. This information was to be provided to

the Northern District Court of California. Most farmers were willing to comply, if they chose to remember which field was planted with RR seed. Many feared government intrusion into their affairs and acknowledged deliberately misleading in designating the true RR alfalfa fields. Several rationalized if they were forced to remove a field of alfalfa they certainly were not willing to give up the RR one. A significant number became hostile and would not cooperate in any way. Apparently the Northern District Court's authority could not override privacy laws and GPS coordinates of farm mailboxes were eventually accepted.

It was in 1989 when I became a board member of AFGC (American Forage & Grassland Council) and was voted to serve as president in 1995. While serving as president, the organization presented me with the AFGC Merit award. This was followed in 1998 by the AFGC Medallion award. My involvement in AFGC committees and the Foundation Board spanned many years. These were the venues where warm associations and camaraderie flourished between dedicated foragers of several generations.

In 1981 I attended my first International Grassland Congress (IGC) in Lexington, Kentucky, to an overwhelming array of faces and people I'd never met previously. Many of these strangers have become great colleagues and very warm and endearing friends over the intervening years. The 1985 IGC in Kyoto, Japan was a particular highlight in the diversity encountered and the increasing familiarity with global grasslanders. In 1993 it was my honor & privilege to host 16 American grassland colleagues to a mini-tour of North New Zealand agriculture, immediately preceding the 17th IGC Congress in that country. This was continued with a similar viewing of the landscape for the second

half of the Congress in Australia. Memories and friendships were cemented during this time in awareness of other-world grassland farming.

In 2010 I took the opportunity to retire from regular work hours with Pioneer Hi-Bred. In the time since my life has been extremely busy with agricultural consulting. Both with the federal government and various commercial entities. Some of my domestic work has been with forages, with nearly all in growing plants of some type. With the government consulting I've been engaged almost exclusively in dispensing recommendations in how best to grow and utilize forages in a number of countries in Africa and Eastern Europe.

Life has been good, with the special bonus of being peppered and colored by AFGC associations, events and people. Through this I have been enriched and truly blessed. I can only hope and wish for the current cadre of today's AFGC, the same exhilaration in celebrating 100 years of the organization, as was gained in 1994 in our half century recognition and celebration.

American Forage & Grassland Council: A Personal Perspective



Dr. Garry Lacefield
Professor of Plant &
Soil Science Extension
University of Kentucky

I grew up on a small crop-livestock farm in Ohio County, Kentucky. I did not grow up with an appreciation for forage crops as tobacco was the #1 crop and corn was #2 on our farm. If convenient and time permitted, we would get our first hay cutting by July 4. We did not fertilize pastures, and only used manure if there was some leftover after we had finished applying it to corn. Our pastures were overgrazed and usually quite weedy. I do not recall ever reseeding a pasture, but I do recall my granddad overseeding a few pastures with clover using a "horn seeder". In high school, I learned about soil testing and as a project sampled all the fields on our farm. The tobacco patches were all very high in soil nutrient levels as expected since purchased fertilizer went mainly to tobacco. Nutrient levels in corn fields were somewhat less than tobacco fields. However, our pasture and hay fields had low pH, phosphorus, and potassium levels.

After high school, I served three years in the U.S. Army (2.5 in Germany). While in Germany, I had the opportunity to visit many countries in Europe and experience a wide array of differences in farming and culture as compared to McHenry, Kentucky. Following discharge, I returned to Kentucky for a brief time and then took a job with U.S. Powder Company in Southern Illinois making dynamite for Vietnam. A major explosion that closed

the entire factory left me without a job. I learned that as a Veteran I was eligible for the G.I. Bill which would assist with college. I enrolled at Western Kentucky University on probation, as a result of my low GPA in high school. My G.I. Bill paid \$100.00 per month and I also worked at a local laundry. My plan was to attend college for one semester before I flunked out, and in the meantime find a job in Bowling Green where my longtime girlfriend (and future wife) was going to school. Following the first series of exams, I realized I didn't have to be "smart" to make it in college if I was willing to work hard, so I did. I received a B.S. in three years and an M.S. in one year, both at WKU. Following graduating with my Master's, I received a teaching fellowship at the University of Missouri, and finished my Ph.D. in 1974. Two weeks after graduation, I joined the faculty at the University of Kentucky as Extension Forage Specialist and have spent the last 40+ years working in Forages.

AFGC Involvement

My Ph.D. research at the University of Missouri was with Alfalfa. This was my first real association with this remarkable plant that I have worked with throughout my career and continue to gain a greater appreciation for each year. At the time, there were several University of Missouri Agriculture faculty who were involved in AFGC. Dr. Gerry Matches was on my committee and was on the board of AFGC, and served as President in 1977-78. He invited me to attend the AFGC Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, February 12-14, 1973. At that meeting, I met some of my Forage Heroes (Warren Thompson, Dr. John Baylor, Dr. Roy Blazer, Dr. Bill Templeton, Dr. Tim Taylor, Dr. Carl Hoveland, and many more). I remember specifically both Warren and John took the

time to talk to me about forage extension work. Later that year an Extension position opened in Kentucky and I am sure Warren submitted my name. I have attended every AFGC meeting since 1973. Although I have been/am involved in many different forage-related organizations, none have been as important to me as AFGC.

My first official involvement in AFGC was in 1977 when President-elect Dr. Gerry Matches asked me to serve as Chairman of a committee to organize and develop an official link between the state forage councils and AFGC. At that time, there were thirteen state forage councils, today there are twenty-two. Each of the thirteen councils were asked to send two delegates to the AFGC Conference in Raleigh, N.C., February 1978. I asked Dr. Jim Green, Extension Forage Specialist in North Carolina to serve as secretary of the committee. The meeting was productive with representatives from most councils. Dr. Green and I presented our report to the AFGC Board, and the Affiliate Council organization was formed and has served as an effective link between AFGC and state councils. Since that initial involvement, I have had the pleasure of serving on the AFGC Board, the AFGC Executive Committee, and as President in 1988-89 when the Conference was in Guelph, Ontario, Canada.

The Guelph meeting was very special and the only one held outside the USA. Two special memories stand out from that meeting. A unique memory was just prior to the Awards banquet, a friend from Canada came to me and asked if I wanted to be "piped in." As a redneck country boy from McHenry, we didn't do a lot of "piping in" except when running water was piped into the local school. Embarrassingly I asked what that meant and he smiled and said they wanted to lead the head table in playing a "bagpipe". The second, following



**AFGC Executive Committee being
"Piped into banquet in Canada".**

the first board meeting when the newly elected board members were approved I was asked to contact each of them on their willingness to serve. Since all were at the meeting, I intended to finish that assignment before the end of the day. The first contact was during break. It was Dr. Vivien Allen from Virginia. I told her during break I would like to visit so we stepped away from others in the break area. I shared with her the board election results and asked if she would be willing to serve. She was shocked, but said YES. From that point, Dr. Allen went on to become AFGC President, was the driving force that brought AFGC & SRM together on two conferences, served on the International Grassland Council Continuing Committee and as President of the Committee. She had a distinguished career serving on the faculties at Virginia and Texas Tech (where she held an endowed Professorship), and has now retired to her family farm in Tennessee. She is co-author of the new book "Forage Quotes & Concepts".

During the past 40+ years I have served on many committees, task forces and special assignments within AFGC. I received the Merit Award in 1982, Medallion 1992 and Presidential Citation in 2007. During my tenure as President, it was suggested that AFGC consider a new award to recognize

Affiliate Councils. The Award was approved by the board and I had the pleasure of presenting the very first one at the meeting in Canada, 1989. I was not on the selection committee, so I can proudly say that award went to the Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council and I was honored that Dr. John Baylor featured the picture of that presentation in the AFGC History "The First Fifty Years". That award and picture was so special because I presented it to a dear farmer friend Charlie Schnitzler who was the KFGC President at the time. Charlie lost his life in a tragic farming accident a short time afterwards.

International Grassland Congress

My first involvement with the International Grassland Congress was in 1980 after an invitation from AFGC, USDA and the University of Kentucky had been accepted to host the XIV International Grassland Congress. Dr. John Baylor was granted a sabbatical leave from Pennsylvania State University and came to Kentucky to serve as Chairman of the IGC which was held on the University of Kentucky Campus June 15-24, 1981. I served as Chairman of the Mid- Congress Tour Committee. Dr. Baylor and his committee worked hard to secure funding for a most successful meeting with participants from fifty-nine countries, forty-seven states, and over 400 residents of Kentucky involved. A total of 1200 people attended. Following the conference and after all bills were paid, \$100,000 remained. A decision by the entire committee along with approval of AFGC, USDA, U.K., and the Organizing Committee of IGC, the Forage & Grassland Foundation was formed, bylaws written, and a board elected with an initial endowment



Garry, Cheryl, Brian and Brad receive 1989 AFGC Medallion Award from President Ken Smith. (John Rodgers is at the podium)

of \$100,000. Only interest following a specified annual growth of the endowment would be used for projects and international grassland activities. Many projects, travel grants and support of International Grassland activities have been supported while increasing the endowment to over \$350,000. Dr. John Baylor served as the Foundation's first President, and was a driving force in the organization throughout his life and was on the Foundation Board at the time of his death. I have served as the University of Kentucky Representative on the Foundation since its formation. I have served as secretary/treasurer and for the last decade as secretary. I have attended each IGC since 1981 with the most recent in Sydney, Australia, 2013. For twenty years, I served as Chairman of the North American delegation to IGC.

I was recently asked a tough question during an interview. The interviewer asked, "Dr. Lacefield you have been involved in Forages for over forty years, received virtually every award in forages, traveled to dozens of countries, been involved in countless meetings, publications and are co-author of a forage book that has been

translated into several languages. What has been the most important?" I found this to be a very challenging question and one I hadn't had before. My response was: I am very proud of all the things you mentioned and have been fortunate to have worked in the greatest country in the world and naturally with all my bias the best University in the USA, I have had the pleasure of traveling to many other countries and all states and received recognition personally because of work of others; however, as I look back and as important of all the things you mention are, the most important are the PEOPLE I have been blessed to work with. I have been surrounded by a wonderful team of folks in Kentucky with the same secretary (Christi Forsythe) for my entire career. In addition, I have gotten to know and worked with dedicated professionals in Universities, Industry, Commodity Organizations, County Agents and certainly the farmers in Kentucky, USA and abroad. Although I am reluctant to single out any individuals, two certainly stand out Dr. Carl Hoveland and Dr. Don Ball. They have been friends, colleagues, co-authors, traveling partners and fellow speakers at many meetings in the USA and abroad. Dr. Ball and I are native Kentuckians, grew up in adjacent counties, both attend Western Kentucky University and both married WKU Home Economics



Foundation Receives AFGC Illumination Award (L to R: Dr. Vivien Allen, Dr. John Baylor and Dr. Garry Lacefield).

majors. We both served in the Army in Germany and have worked as Extension Forage Specialists for the past 40 years. We have traveled to and lectured in most states in the U.S. and many foreign countries. We have published many articles, publications and books together and made one trip "Around the World". That was my answer then, but after thinking about it since, if asked again, I would add another sentence. Most important of all the people in my life is my lovely wife Cheryl who I fell in love with when she was in the 8th grade. She was my only girlfriend and has been my wife for 46 years and is the mother of my two sons Brian and Brad, a beloved mother-in-law to their wives, and a wonderful grandmother to our grandchildren Brianne, Bradford, Braden, and Harper.

The Future

AFGC has played a critical role in my life and career. My closest friends have been/are AFGC members. AFGC has played a critical role in U.S. Forage-Animal Agriculture in the PAST, is playing an expanded role at PRESENT with greater involvement/association with other groups on areas of common interest such as National Alfalfa and Forage Alliance, but it is my opinion AFGC's greatest role still lies in our FUTURE. I am confident AFGC will rise to the occasion and meet that challenge, not necessarily because of its many programs, events and initiatives, but because of YOU and your dedicated unselfish passion for forage, animals, land and the U.S.A. Best Wishes.

One AFGC Producer Involvement and Some Results



**John Rodgers
Pennsylvania
Producer**

My parents told me that for Christmas when I was 4 years old I only wanted a pair of red boots so I could wade in the manure on my uncle's farm. Our family lived in a small rural town, Reedsville, as I was growing up. My uncle had a small farm with the most beautiful cows with horns, Ayrshires, which captured my young imagination. After the Second World War my uncle returned from having served in the Pacific with the Marine Corps and began managing his farm with serious goals. My parents renovated the farm house built by my fourth great grandfather in the 1860s. The farm was on land warranted to my seventh great grandfather by William Penn's family in 1755. This farm was across the road from my uncle. Thusly as a young teenager I really began to milk cows and understand a little of farming particularly throwing hay bales from the new machine a hay baler.

After attending Indian Mountain School and Taft School in New England and one year at Penn State studying Dairy Science I began farming on my own. The first year 1955 I found myself milking 13 Ayrshire cows and farming 50 acres with the rotation of corn, oats, wheat and clover. During the next couple years I took some very pointed short courses at Penn State. One in particular really got my attention. It was a grassland short course taught by professors' Doctors John Washko and John Baylor. From then on my farming life was different! I learned about the crop Alfalfa and I began to understand farming, using a totally different crop rotation using corn and Alfalfa and as well through the use of strip cropping to help conserve the soil. These new concepts were so exciting, still are,

and I began to believe I would be able to leave the land in better condition than when I began.

About this time Dr. Washko who was chairman of the board of the American Grassland Council and Dr. John Baylor were endeavoring to start a state Grassland Council in Pennsylvania. I joined and was a charter member, that was in 1960. A year or two later I went with both of those two men to an American Grassland Council Annual meeting held in a hotel room in Washington DC. The hotel room was big enough for the 15 or 20 people in attendance back then but I was impressed. This Grassland Concept was right and good, it affected me right down in my gut. In 1963 I entered a Farmer Grassland program put on by The American Grassland Council. I was one of the 5 winners selected by a panel of judges who visited my farm and looked at all aspects of our farming operation. I still have the award in my farm office signed by Dr. John Washko chairman of the board of the American Grassland Council and Dr. Robert E. Wagner who was then president of the council. Dr. Wagner was also the President of the American Potash Institute at the time.



Outstanding Farmer Award presented to John Rodgers in 1963 from the American Grassland Council.

My farming operation had and was growing. Now we were farming 200 acres and had a herd of 40 milking Ayrshires the highest testing herd in Pennsylvania, the second highest herd in the United States for our size herd. Alfalfa and corn were doing it. I wanted to learn more and participate in this grassland movement. I continue to attend the annual meetings of this organization and along with one or two other farmers we began to encourage the organization to include farmers on the board of directors. In due time this took place and myself along with

a dairy farmer of Kentucky, Charlie Schnitzler, were elected to the board. A few years later the board expanded in size to give equal representation to the three groups, Educators, Industry, and Producers. Another large event of this period was that the Council was to be now known as the American Forage and Grassland Council as the organization had gone through the name change to add "Forage".

My farm had expanded to 2000 acres and 600 cows. This allowed me to be involved more with other organizations and for sure AFGC. In 1986 I received the Merit Award which was very gratifying to me. Unfortunately, my compatriot on the board, Charlie Schnitzler had a very bad tractor accident and was killed. I lost a very good friend as did AFGC. In the mid-1980s AFGC was in need of someone to look after day to day activities on a part-time basis. As a result of the growth of our farm operation, I served in this capacity and was elected to a three year term as Executive Vice President of AFGC. My eldest unmarried daughter Audrey Gay who was just developing her own farm with a summer camp for 8-14 years old girls and a small herd of Ayrshires did most of AFGC work but I had the title and I guess the "buck" stop at me.

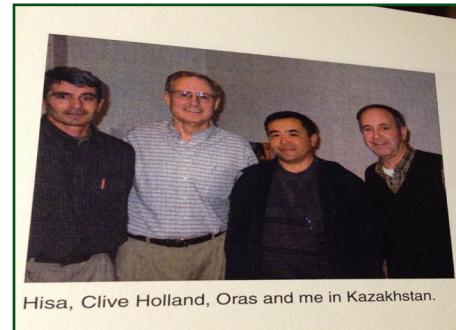
A few years later the AFGC board decided producers should be included in the chairs of leadership and since I had been on the board originally and had served as Executive Vice president I was so elected to begin the rise through the chairs of leadership which eventually led to me being elected president of AFGC in 1993-1994. Through the various positions of leadership in AFGC I had the opportunity to travel to two International Grassland Congresses in one in New Zealand and the other in Canada. I believe I visited each of the affiliate councils



John Rodgers accepting gavel as first AFGC Producer President.

which by now were upwards of 20. What a privilege it was to serve AFGC I met so many wonderful people, friends then and now. One part of the annual meeting I helped to develop is the "Forage Spokesperson Contest". The concept was and is to give producers, representing the various councils, an opportunity to contribute to the overall vitality of the conference through hearing what producers are doing on their farms, in a competitive format, with a panel of judges selecting the three top presenters.

In 1993 I was invited to be a farmer to farmer exchange to the new Republic of Kazakhstan. Since the Soviet Union had collapsed the US government wanted to help many including farmers in this new Republic. At the time I had no idea where Kazakhstan was but being told I would be the first American farmer to visit there I agreed to go. Thirty days later, I was there been there 24 time since and figured I spent three and



John Rodgers with Hisa, Clive Holland, and Oras in Kazakhstan.

half years of my life there. Another privilege I feel as a partial result of my AFGC involvement and having milked my own cows.

In 2007 I came home with my new friend Kanat Ismailov who is the director of a Research Institute in Kazakhstan and received the AFGC medallion award. What a thrill to be recognized when I had no idea I was being considered for the award; then to realize all those who had received this award in the past. Wow! Then, in 2010 I had driven to the state of Tennessee to the annual Ayrshire meeting and then onto the AFGC annual meeting and received the distinguished grass lander award. It's enough, right---well, not enough. I was encouraged to attend the 2014 AFGC annual

meeting and as a 100% complete surprise I was awarded the AFGC presidential citation.

If I could somehow communicate what a privilege it has been to give service I would be satisfied, Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get but we make a life by what we give". I am very appreciative of these awards; however, it has been a priceless trip to give as much as I could all through these years here on Earth to the American Forage Grassland Council.

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