

“From the Mouths of Children”

On Thursday September 29, 2011, TCID Board Members Ernie Schank, Eric Olsen, and I participated in “Ag Day”, sponsored by the Farm Bureau, at E.C. Best Elementary School. Passersby may have noticed, among other things, the presence of a cow on school grounds as both an invited and welcomed guest! Inquisitive young minds were introduced to a host of agriculture related topics, most especially the value of agriculture to us all in this –our valley, as well as the science which our agriculture constantly demands.

Ernie and I “manned” TCID’s mobile museum –a tribute to the Newlands Federal Reclamation Project. Students filed in the open door to see photographs depicting the early days of our project, the “how” and the “why” we came to be. They saw depictions of horse teams pulling Fresno scrapers, men pushing ore cars filled with rock, and workers laying down as much as 800 tons of material each day as Lahontan Dam grew from the river floor starting in 1911. They were told of the creation of a federal law, the Reclamation Act of 1902, signed into law by one of our most memorable presidents, Theodore Roosevelt. Action by President Roosevelt made it happen. And what did that act mean, in 1902? Now? It meant the possibility of attaining the “American Dream”, a place for people from all parts and walks of life to start homes, families, to attain a way of life, and to attain a way of living!

The price paid by this valley’s early residents, to reclaim the arid lands, may never be fully appreciated nor understood. Imagine the toil! With nothing more than a team of horses and primitive implements, they grubbed and leveled. They endured floods and drought. Fire and Ice. Many did not make it. Broken financially, perhaps more so emotionally, many of these early residents simply walked away abandoning their toil. But those who stayed became tough and did not let go. It is upon that legacy, a legacy woven with the threads of tenacity, a legacy that we now enjoy in the Lahontan Valley, its fields under production, its livestock pushing at its fences, its F-18s overhead, and all the people that make it all happen.

Our students asked us again and again: “What is TCID?” We told them that it is a subdivision of government within our state. “Who directs it?” We told them that it is directed by elected officers; that each such officer has a stake in its success – each is engaged in agricultural production. “Why are you here?” We told them that we are part of the reason people came here in the first place –to help make things grow; and, we further explained that an important reason for being, by TCID, is to keep people here growing things in the future, through the fullest use and enjoyment of their properties, including their right to the use of Project water.

To all of you engaged in agricultural production, thank you! You remain the hardest of workers in our society. I have seen you in action. I have stood in your dairies and walked with you in your fields. I know that few could keep pace with

you. I know that few understand or do they appreciate the demands placed upon you, physical, economic, and regulatory. I admire your effort, planning, wisdom, and tenacity. I listen to you; and, governments everywhere would do well to listen to you! I here assume the duty, whether authorized or not, invited or not, for the whole of our society, to think and to say that which ought to be thought and said by every right thinking person everywhere found: On behalf of a grateful nation, THANK YOU!

Mothers and Fathers, I, too, asked questions during "Ag Day." I was educated by your children. The responses to my questions were honest and forthcoming. Among other things, I asked, by a show of hands, of those future community leaders, many whom we trust will engage in the practice of agriculture some day: "How many of you swim in Project canals?" Many came clean! I became the recipient of many confessions! These confessions were energetically given! Please-please remind those who are the ultimately the reason for all us being here, the most precious of all human capital, our children, to keep safe! Please-please remind them not to swim in Project waterways. Please-please remind them not to play upon Project works. Let us preserve to our Project a legacy safe for those who will next command it.

Rusty.