

## AgriLife Research Station at Sonora Celebrated 100-Year Birthday in Style

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SONORA – Mild temperatures and azure blue skies over recently rain-kissed green pastures all came together April 23 to greet the almost 400 supporters of the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Station who helped celebrate the facilities' 100-year anniversary.

“It was a great day,” said Dr. John Walker, AgriLife Research resident director at San Angelo. “From what I’m told by old-timers familiar with the station, this celebration was very reminiscent of early day field days when folks would come for a bit of education, plenty of visiting and eating topped off with a big helping of entertainment. And that pretty well describes the 100th anniversary celebration.”

The day opened with Dr. Charles “Butch” Taylor, station superintendent, giving a history of the facility, originally known as Substation 14, that came into being through support of area ranchers and the newly formed Texas Sheep and Goat Raisers’ Association.



*Benny Cox, American Sheep Industry Association secretary/treasurer from San Angelo, fields bids as auctioneer for the first sale of Super Juniper Eating Goats held in conjunction with the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Station at Sonora's 100-year celebration. (Texas A&M AgriLife Communications photo by Steve Byrns)*

Taylor was honored during the evening events for his 32 years as station superintendent and more than 40 years with AgriLife Research.

Taylor was followed by remarks from four men with a long association with the station: Dr. Mort Kothmann and Dr. Fred Smeins, both in the Texas A&M University ecosystem science and management department, College Station; Dr. Sam Fuhlendorf, Oklahoma State University natural resource ecology and management regents professor, Stillwater, Oklahoma; and Dr. William Edmiston, veterinarian, Eldorado.

The speakers related their personal experiences with the station as well as their perceptions of how the station has evolved and grown over the years. Walker rounded out the discussion with his view of the future, which he perceives will grow toward increased use of technology coupled with ever expanding range ecology endeavors.

Special guests included Texas A&M University System Chancellor John Sharp, Dr. Mark Hussey, vice-chancellor and dean of agriculture for the Texas A&M University System, and Dr. Craig Nessler, director, AgriLife Research.

Albert Ward, a Sonora rancher, then recognized families of station founders B.M. Halbert, Sonora; R.E. Taylor, Sonora; V.A. Brown, Rocksprings; and J.B. Murrah, Del Rio.

During the lunch break, U.S. Rep. Will Hurd of Helotes presented the station with a Certificate of Special Congressional Appreciation. Hurd's remarks and the citation credited the station with a century of accomplishments and contributions that have made the region's rangelands and livestock healthier and more productive.

"A century of accomplishments portends a bright future for this station that was born of a belief by area ranchers that science and the land grant tradition can provide solutions for a sustainable future," Hurd read.

The first sale of 10 head of meat goats from the station's Super Juniper Eating Goat project was history in the making, Walker said. The goat sale and sale of historic AgriLife Research station and range station signs also made history as all proceeds went toward the new Sonora Research Station Endowment Fund, created to help support the station's future work.

The goats, part of a long-term project aimed at breeding goats with a genetic propensity for eating juniper, commonly called cedar, saw sales receipts totalling \$9,200. The old station highway sign brought \$2,500 and the sign from the former Barnhart Range Station brought \$1,500. This provided the endowment with \$13,200 from the day's sales.

The day continued with fun events including wool and mohair and grass judging contests, field tours of the station, a ranchers' panel, lamb cooking demonstration and tasting, evening meal and dance.

"All in all, I think this celebration and the enthusiasm I saw generated here have solidly set the tone for the theme of this event, which was 'The Next 100 Years-YOU Be Involved,'" Walker said.

Complete results of the endowment sale and pictures of the day's events should soon be available at <http://sonora.tamu.edu/> .

For more information, contact Walker at 325-653-4576 or [jwalker@tamu.edu](mailto:jwalker@tamu.edu) .

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