

community. I remember a water person from Rancho Cucamonga who had made a pelton wheel from a split cased water pump. He was generating power for less than \$10,000.00 in cost and I still think we could do the same today.

Roger believes that it will happen eventually, but potable water must come first and power generation come second as far as he is concerned. He points to the radio towers that are on the school theater now. These would have paid the taxes to the County of San Bernardino each year (a goodly amount of money we should have acquired).

For those of you who have never met Roger, he is up in years and getting ready to retire. He has an agile mind and is fun to talk to. From England originally, he and his family have been here many decades. He has put together the Water Company history as well as he could. I consider him a good friend and he has been a great help in my writing of the story.

Some of this interview, as in all stories, are deleted simply because we got in to personalities of people in the community that are better not written about.

He knows that the Sheep Creek Water Company must tighten its spending ability and avoid projects that grow in size as you get into them. Time to have a conservative board that follows a good agenda.

SHEEP CREEK WATER COMPANY: PAST DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Clarence Carter

Clarence Carter is from Southern Illinois originally. Has been a local citizen for many years. He became a director in the 1980 election and has been a steady board member since that time. He has his own agenda about where the Sheep Creek Water Company should go and works toward getting there. I have enjoyed his friendship for many years and always look forward to his comments.

The company has re-drilled well #3. Carter is a "dowser." That is a person who can determine where water streams and pipelines run underground by using a tool to start and stop where water runs. He and manager Chaplin had picked a site about 20' away from the original well site that had been damaged by a earthquake. The metal piping had collapsed and required a new well. He noted that the local Business Bank in Phelan had agreed to finance the repair work. They do not have a new pump in it yet, but it will soon be installed.

Clarence believes the company needs two more wells as soon as possible. He points to the continuous drought we now have as the reason why. He expects the water rates to be reduced this year. As far as he is concerned, the first thing all board members must do is keep all users in water.

You know that Clarence resigned from the Board of Directors in 2002. He did agree to pay off the state loan, but he did not agree to build the new office building and other objects that have been recently purchased. He says the company is practically out of financial funds that other boards worked so hard to create.

He did note that this board had redone all of the pressure valves and had two cla-valves on each one with safety metal lids covering the vaults. The system is the best we have ever had. The funding difficulties still remind him of the "DeBoer days" when cheap water was the only way to go.

We talked about the tunnel now being on the Historical Society State Roles. He says they never were informed that it was to be done. He notes that the slide area is gradually filling in, but the current amount of water is about 250 gallons per minute. He believes they are creating a lake back there.

The weather, the weather. He wonders why the shareholders do not follow it closer. I guess most of it just comes and goes each year and then the water precipitation becomes less and we start to worry about the drought times. We are in the middle of a drought period now and both Clarence and I worry about the water supply.

We both fret about the \$500,000.00 dollars spent in the past five years for loans and the tunnel out-fall pipeline and the new office/shop building and know that these items could have been handled in a different way, so that wells and tanks and larger pipelines could have been constructed.

Manager Chaplin notes that the wells are getting lower in the water level and the tunnel is down about one hundred gallons less than normal, so this may be the year to watch carefully. A new well would make us all feel better if it was in place and pumping.

Clarence says the schools are using Sheep Creek Water because it is much cheaper than the Zone L water. This is understandable because they must move water by the acre foot from the El Mirage basin south to the foothills by pumps and tanks. Costs much money.

Clarence also worries about a new well site to the north in the El Mirage Basin. Where, when, and how will Sheep Creek Water Company decide to make its first move north. They could be part of the group who go to the state aqueduct, put in a water treatment plant and move it south. Or, put in sounding wells and spread aqueduct water into a well field, then pump up the water and ship it south. Costs much money for such a system.

Maybe look to the east or west of the El Mirage basin at a higher level. Drill wells and pump the water south. Still costs money, but not as much. Clarence believes the Board of Directors should be setting the agenda now for this future program. Start putting the pieces together now, not later. My friend, Bill Smillie, bought land in Los Angeles County years ago for future San Bernardino wells. He knows what it is about.

We talked about shares vs meters systems, about changing to a community service district and including other services. It may happen one of these years. Time changes things, even mutual water companies.

Clarence and I talked about the summer of 1990 when the Board of Directors had reduced the shares to 500 cubic feet of water to each share. He had some time to sit with Sue Thompson in the Sheep Creek office and answer the shareholder complaints about the reduced water shares. He made them sit down and listen as he explained why the reduced shares were the only way everyone could have water all the time.

He noted that Sue finally gave in and quit the position. Just too much for her to cope with. That opened the door for Carol Beck, whom Clarence had worked with before, to take over Sue's job and was there for seven years. I told the shareholders the day I was elected on August 25, 1990 that they were to call me if they had to speak to someone, but to leave the office for business only.

Carol was smart enough to keep everything under control and learn it all while doing the daily business. A top notch gal she was. I reminded Clarence about Mrs. Joan Parsons who came on the Board of Directors with some ideas about dealing with the county. Then Clarence gave her the Sheep Creek tour and at the next meeting, she had some other ideas and became an excellent board member.

Clarence talked about a joint venture with Baldy Mesa Water District, County Zone L and Sheep Creek Water Company going together on a pumping turnout at the aqueduct to provide water to a treatment plant. It is his opinion that the Baldy Mesa Water District and the CSA 70-L will not combine into one district. Time will tell on that one also.

We finished our conversation of the morning talking about the Phelan community in general, the new homes being built in CSA Zone L and Sheep Creeks area. We talked about a developer coming in to build homes and what he must do with Sheep Creek Water to achieve a potable water system. There is much to consider in this century.

SHEEP CREEK WATER COMPANY

Leonard Valdepena, President

Leonard Valdepena came on the Board of Directors in the middle of the 1980's. I liked his approach to problems simply because he took a look at both sides before making up his mind. I think he continues on the Board of Directors with his even-handed concern about all projects he faces.

He admits to having his doubts about the water company at times, but is not about to give in yet. Leonard is a good, determined man.

The first question is the same, what is the Sheep Creek Water Company going to do in the future? Leonard fully expects a substantial growth in water users in the next ten to twenty years. Just the continuing expansion is going to tax the company.

The possibility of a builder putting up a small residential tract will cause well and tank problems that will have to be taken care of. The builder will have to develop the water necessary to supply his tract. If the tract is in an outlying area, the extra piping and appurtenances would be a major problem.

Leonard would not reduce the lot sizing in Phelan. He believes we should have a horse corral or a barn. Keep it rural above all. The other communities are always reducing the lot sizes. The tract in Baldy Mesa with 2 ½ acre lots sold quickly and they should sell here.

Talking about the micro-hydropower electrical generators was interesting to Leonard, but the grant money programs are a possible solution to the future expansion. It takes a good writer to bring them home though.

The 10" main that we use from the Sheep Creek well field needs to be enlarged. Leonard wants to leave the 10" main in place and parallel it with a twelve or fifteen inch main to handle the maximum water flow. This, of course, is an engineering problem and must be part of the next Master Plan.

The Mountain Top Café at Highway 138 and Highway 2 has had a spaghetti line from Pipeline Road to the café for fifty years; originally from wells on the Lovett property and then from Sheep Creek Water Company after they put the line up the Pipeline Road.

Now the Cal-Trans Department wants to develop a full freeway through this pass. They talk about putting a full 8" water line from Pipeline Road to Mountain Top Café. Is this going to happen? Leonard believes a full pipe system can be installed if Mr. Lee,

who owns the cafe, Cal-Trans and Sheep Creek Water Company, all work together on this project. Cal-Trans needs fill dirt to finish Highway 138 and if Mr. Lee trades dirt for pipe line, Mountain Top Café would have an 8" pipeline. This would put Sheep Creek Water Company in a position to serve the Country Side Estates south of Phelan.

We talked about the Wrightwood water system and their hauling of trucks loads of water last year. Why we have so much water on our side of the San Andreas Fault and they have so little?

Then Leonard spoke about the Sheep Creek Water Company as he sees it, from the Johnson family who started the orchards and the water company. All of the men and women who have given of their time and money to keep this "Our water company." Even when many of our shareholders were ready to sell it to the county, we seemed to find men and women ready to come up with answers to the problems when we needed them.

We have had engineers, attorneys, miners and well drillers who, when we needed them, have stood with us in our battles; shareholders who have come to us and pleaded for our knowledge to obtain more water and build more tanks and construct more pipelines and we have done it. Leonard believes we will continue to do it. In his eyes, "we built this water company from day one. We will build it for the next hundred years too. "This is my water company, I own it and I am proud of it." What better words to say.

Listed below are contributors to this story.

Henry A. Johnson **

John L. Lovett **

C. W. "Bud" Howard **

John Store

Roger Chaplin, Manager

April Chaplin, Secretary

Sandi Moseley, Secretary

And all the many people who have sat on the Board of Directors, the engineers, the attorneys, the accountants, above all, the shareholders of the Sheep Creek Water Company. In the words of President Leonard Valdepena, "this is my water company and I own it!"

Jody Lovett, who gave me the miles of transportation to make this story happen.

**Deceased