

A WOMAN'S VOICE

BY BARBARA LABARBARA

A woman's voice is soft, gentle and compassionate. Traditionally it has shown a mother's love, a wife's devotion and daughter's respect. Today that voice is growing stronger. It has gone into the fields and felt the heartbeat of America — agriculture.

Here is a panel of women who have gone beyond home but have not left it behind. Their voices may not always be soft and gentle, but their compassion and strengths is evident as they fight for the survival of agriculture and rural America.

TRENNA GRABOWSKI

President, American Agri-Women
Mt. Vernon, Ill.

"We make policy, not coffee," Grabowski proudly says of the 50,000 Agri-Women she will lead for the next two years.

"However, if coffee needs to be made, we make it. We do what has to be done."

Trenna and her husband, Ron, raise corn and soybeans. She is a CPA specializing in farm taxes and has her own accounting firm. She has been the tax editor for *Farm Progress* publications since 1987. She is also involved in the Farm Financial Standards Task Force which is working on uniform reporting of financial information for agriculture.

"When I joined AAW, I wanted to make a difference," she says. "I believe you have to act on the philosophies you believe in. If you believe you are a good steward of the soil, you are not mistreating your animals, and you are not poisoning your neighbors, you have to speak out."

AAW is an all volunteer organization interested in the future of agriculture and a better world for our children.

Its most vital activity is monitoring legislation that affects agriculture. Their fax machines hum with communications to AAW members, organization affiliates and members of Congress.

AAW is involved with the issues of animal rights, food safety, private property, health care and income taxes.

Grabowski says they are successful in making contacts on Capitol Hill and providing people with facts to combat the misinformation they receive from other areas.

"Going to Washington is very important," says Grabowski. "However, having an impact on our children and our neighbors is important too. I think women 'working-the-room' are making a difference."

SHEILA MASSEY

*Director of Regulatory Affairs
California Cattlemen's Association
Sacramento*

"Women are important in the ag industry," says Massey. "They are recognized as a force in the lobbying arena."

In 1977 Massey was hired as an administrative assistant for CCA and worked her way through the ranks to her current position. She has been a registered lobbyist for six years. Massey is the first woman lobbyist in CCA's history.

"I love it," she says. "I'm happy that I've been able to retain a credibility that has helped make CCA one of the most respected lobbying organizations in the legislative sphere."

CCA has traditionally held the lead when it comes to animal welfare issues. Wetlands and endangered species are destined to be the two hot issues for California cattle producers through the year 2000.

Staff members spend much of their time putting out political "fires" set by animal rights activists and environmentalists who introduce legislation detrimental to livestock producers.

However, Massey feels she is making a difference. CCA's track record shows a list of legislative bills it has helped defeat and bills it has succeeded in getting passed.

She finds people are surprised to see a woman representing a cattlemen's association. Even though men still outnumber women in lobbying, in the past five years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of women working in the area of natural resources.

"To me there is nothing better than seeing a bill I support go through the legislature and be signed by the Governor," says Massey. "I'm very proud to be part of making law for an industry that feeds the world."

ANN SORENSEN

*Assistant Director, Natural and Environmental Resources, American Farm Bureau Federation
Park Ridge, Ill.*

"When I came out of Berkeley in the '70s, farmers were suspicious of anyone who came from Berkeley," Sorensen says. "Especially a woman who was doing research in the fields."

She did her graduate work in entomology at the University of California, Berkeley. Her thesis project was research in integrated nest management in the San Joaquin Valley.

Sorensen's post-doctoral research was done at Texas A&M University. Later she worked with the Texas Department of Agriculture. Six years ago Farm Bureau recruited her.

Today Sorensen acts as a resource person for all State Farm Bureaus and the Washington, DC. staff.



TREANNA
GRABOWSKI



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She specializes in integrated pest management and biotechnology which deals with pesticide use. Drafting testimony and providing background information from scientific facts is a major part of her job. Her work in research is well known in the scientific community.

"I'm a generalist who interprets things," Sorensen says. "My job is a nice mixture of speaking engagements, writing, involvement in national committees, and working with universities. I interact with farmers, which is the most enjoyable part."

Sorensen's unique background and degree add to her credibility with Congress and has helped the Farm Bureau.

She says the beauty of Farm Bureau is that everything it does at the national level is determined by its members. More small and organic farmers are speaking out. Women are becoming more involved. It is affecting Farm Bureau policy.

"I would have never guessed I would have wound up here," says Sorensen. "When I was at Berkeley I envisioned myself as a researcher, but in essence became a teacher."

SHERI SPADER

*President, Missouri Cattlemen's Association
Rosendale*

"Being in the beef industry is our way of life. With a husband and three kids I don't have a lot of time to devote to outside interests," says Spader. "One of the best things I can give my family is an achieving mother."

Spader grew up in Illinois and is a fifth generation cattle producer. Her family showed Angus cattle at the local, state and national levels and were active in the Central Illinois Angus Association. Sheri was involved in 4-H and the Illinois Junior Angus Association. Their Angus herd put her, a sister and two brothers through college. She attended Illinois State University, where she majored in elementary education with a minor in agriculture.

After teaching for five years, Spader got involved in county cattle organizations and has been active in American National CattleWomen, American Angus Auxiliary and Agri-Women. There has been a natural procession into leadership roles from county to state to national levels.

After choosing not to go up the executive ladder of the American National CattleWomen she became active in the Missouri Cattlemen's Association (MCA). Spader is the first woman to become president of a state cattlemen's association.

At MCA she started a VIP membership program. VIP stands for Visibility of the organization, Importance of what you are doing, and Person to person involvement.

When Spader participated in the National Young Cattlemen's Conference, she brought the experience

home and organized a state level leadership conference. The National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) has a Myth Buster Program which she also initiated at MCA. She has been through NCA's media spokesperson training on animal welfare.

Spader is a member of the Beef Quality Assurance Task Force which sponsored a satellite video program promoting the Beef Quality Assurance Program. It was broadcast on 52 stations in Missouri in 1991 and served as a conduit for reaching producers.

One of the primary functions of Missouri Cattlemen is lobbying. Currently, Spader is serving on Congressman Tom Coleman's Agriculture Round Table. He is the chairman of the House Ag Committee. Spader was also appointed to the Missouri Governor's Advisory Council on Agriculture.

"The activists' issues have the potential of being economic issues," says Spader. "That is a viable force to keep agriculture together. Truth and science are on our side. It is up to us to show the public we are dedicated by the quality of product we produce."

Spader says there are issues where women are more effective than men, such as food safety. Women are more persuasive because they are the ones who buy the food, have the children and care for the family. The time is right for them to stretch into leadership roles.

"My plate is full," she says. "I've been able to grow, develop qualities and skills. You have to grow, but it takes a supportive husband and family."

KATHLEEN MARQUARDT

*Director/Founder, Putting People First
Washington, D.C.*

"When my daughter had a PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) teacher in her classroom for three days," says Marquardt, "she was taught that I am a murderer because I hunt."

Marquardt, who grew up on a ranch in Montana, was angry and knew something had to be done. There was no organization fighting animal rights activists from a citizen's standpoint so she started one in March 1990.

It was hard to get involved. A designer and fiber artist, she was a very private person.

"I do this because people are trying to destroy our way of life," she says. "That is unacceptable."

Putting People First is a nationwide volunteer organization. Its purpose is to put themselves out of business, to put animal rightists out of business, and to educate the public.

Marquardt has a column, "From the Trenches," that appears in 200 magazines and newsletters. They have a monthly newsletter, as well as a school program that will be in place this fall.

In 18 states they have a Hunters for the Hungry Program which donates excess game to food kitchens.



SHERI
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SUSAN
PARNELL

Putting People First lobbies at local, state and national levels. Its activities have included battling an anti-trapping proposition, which would eliminate hunting and fishing in Arizona and stopping a ban on carriage horses in Washington, D.C.

Currently, they are actively supporting the Stenholm Bill (H.R. 2407) which gives federal protection to farmers, cattle producers, ranchers and every place live animals are housed, bred, exhibited or sold. It would make it a federal crime to break in, vandalize, release animals, or steal materials. It sets stiff criminal penalties with fines and time in jail.

"It is great to see the numbers of women who are speaking out because animal rights is thought to be a feminists movement," says Marquardt. "Women in agriculture can be effective by explaining how they nurture their animals. Other women will listen."

She believes animal rights is like a worm, once it is exposed to the light, it will die.

SUSAN PARNELL

*Board of Directors, Agriculture in the Classroom
Foundation, Auburn, Calif.*

Susan and her husband, Jack, raise Angus cattle and Clydesdale horses. Fifteen acres of their ranch is devoted to pumpkins, Indian corn and gourds. During harvest time teams of draft horses are hooked to hay wagons to take school children through the ranch to learn about agriculture.

Ag in the Classroom is a not-for-profit organization established in 1986. It is dedicated to informing students, educators and the general public about agriculture's important role in the economy and society.

The program, initiated by the CattleWomen organization and now sponsored by the USDA, is nationwide.

In California this year \$300,000 was raised to promote its programs. One such program has trained more than 300 teachers to use agriculture in their classrooms. There are ambassadors to 2,000 of the 10,000 school districts in California. These people distribute information and help teachers integrate agriculture into their classroom.

Schools can also adopt a farm. Children can visit the farm or farmers can communicate with them through letters and videos.

Through Ag in the Classroom, Parnell recently led a group of 20 women to South America, Brazil and Argentina. The group was a representation of agriculture leaders throughout the United States.

"As we flew over these countries, we saw big agriculture that you could relate to the Midwest," says Parnell. "The difference was in the Midwest there are farm houses, silos, corrals and small communities. In Argentina none of that was present."

"A man from Argentina told us people came to the United States to settle their families and found a new

government with freedom. They went to Argentina to conquer, plunder, exploit. The farm owners live in big cities or in foreign countries. There is no community spirit."

They visited the Secretary of Agriculture in each country. The Secretaries could not believe women were there to talk about agriculture.

"When we saw the 'macho' men of the foreign countries, we realized how fortunate we are," says Parnell. "Not only with how our agriculture relates to theirs, but with the respect American women in agriculture have gained."

BECKY DOYLE

*Director of Illinois Department of Agriculture
Springfield*

"If we are looking for people who can strengthen an organization," says Doyle, "we must not look past the young people and the women."

Doyle grew up on a diversified farm in western Illinois. She was active in 4-H and graduated from the University of Illinois.

Her husband, Ken, is a pork producer. Over the years she helped with the farm, did freelance work, started a gift basket business which featured Illinois food, and had a farm marketing consultation business.

Through the Illinois Agriculture leadership program, Doyle gained an interest in government policy and international trade.

Governor Edgar appointed her Director of Agriculture in January 1991.

Her department is a regulatory agency that inspects and promotes all realms of agriculture in the state and is responsible for the state fairs. It administers horse racing programs and a natural resources division as well.

Doyle is the administrator of a staff that handles all of the above. She is on the governor's staff and works with the legislature and other state agencies.

"Basically, I sit through a lot of meetings," says Doyle. "This is totally different from farming, but I feel my background in farming and my education are valuable to my position."

Doyle says the issue of the '90s will be regulation. Farmers are independent, property rights oriented, and responsible stewards of the soil, water and land. Any type of regulation is frustrating to them.

"When my husband and I join an organization I have always taken the approach that I was a member too," she says. "I had talents to give to the organization. Women need to have more self-confidence. It frustrates me that women are not pushing themselves forward at the same time they are pushing their spouse forward."



BECKY
DOYLE



PAMELA
NEAL

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*Executive Director, Public Lands Council
Washington, D.C.*

Neal was a rancher in Arizona for 20 years. She lived without electricity for eight years and hauled water 40 miles.

"That is what gave me the background I need to understand and fight for the rights of farmers and ranchers," she says.

As a rancher Neal involved herself in local civic leadership and among other things served on the school board for 10 years. As president of the Arizona School Boards Association, she represented school board members at the legislature. Her political experience derived from involvement in political campaigns.

When her marriage of 20 years ended, she became a professional lobbyist in Arizona. Three years later she moved to Alaska and started her own lobbying firm.

In 1985 Neal returned to Phoenix to finish college.

Within three months she was selected executive vice president of the newly formed Arizona Cattlemen's Association, a position she held for four years. That led to her current position as executive director of the Public Lands Council.

The Public Lands Council represents the public land interests of the American Sheep Industry Association, Association of National Grasslands and the National Cattlemen's Association.

"One of the mainstays of our battle over grazing fees has been agriculture women groups," says Neal. "They are the ones who are on the phone, writing letters, making sure we get help when we need it."

Neal says the key thing for the whole ranching community, not just the women, is getting involved in local politics. Run for school board, county commissioner, state legislature. That is the power base in this nation.

"If the local political unit has ranching representation and private property free enterprise thinking," says Neal, "it will be the force to vanquish those who would turn this into a socialistic society."

STRENGTHEN YOUR VOICE — JOIN AN ORGANIZATION

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