



Hall of Fame Induction

By Den Gardner, Executive Director

Wednesday night found the induction of Bodensteiner, the first woman in the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Agricultural Relations Council and *Agri Marketing* magazine. The Hall of Fame was started six years ago by ARC. She joins Lyle Orwig, 2012; John Harvey and Paul S. Weller, Jr., 2013; Richard Howell and Gary Myers, 2014; and Steve Drake, 2015, as a member of this group.

LtoR: Lynn Henderson, Carol Bodensteiner, Daren Williams

Her long career in ag PR culminated in her role as president of CMF&Z Public Relations. She served business-to-business clients locally, regionally and nationally.

“The Ag Relations Council was critical to how I advanced my career,” Carol noted at the induction ceremony. “ARC provided an environment for me to learn from and build a network with other ag communicators. Without a degree in public relations or marketing, I was learning everything on the job, and ARC accelerated my learning curve. At ARC meetings, I never felt any male/female distinction. I was accepted and treated as an ag communicator. And that’s all I wanted. A chance to be the best ag communicator I could.

“The fact that I’m standing here is a credit not only to my own hard work, but also to the men who broke with traditions and hired me, as well as to the talented women and men who worked with me. I must also give credit to my husband. He has always supported my career wholeheartedly, a fact for which I’m forever grateful. The honor I receive tonight as the newest member of the Ag Relations Council Hall of Fame belongs to me and everyone who worked with me along the way.

“Thank you again to ARC for supporting me and all women and men communicators. Thank you for this honor of joining the ARC Hall of Fame. I am the first woman, and I trust I won’t be the last.”

Carol was active for many years in many ag communications organizations besides ARC, including NAMA, PRSA and AAEA.

Since retiring, Carol has written two books: a memoir, *Growing Up Country: Memories of an Iowa Farm Girl*, in 2008 and a novel, *Go Away Home*, in 2014.



Following are the full remarks by Carol Bodensteiner, newest inductee into the Agricultural Public Relations Hall of Fame, sponsored by the Agricultural Relations Council and Agri Marketing magazine

Thank you ---- It's a pleasure to be here tonight and to reconnect with an organization so important to me during my career in public relations. Thank to Darin Williams for nominating me. Thank you to the Ag Relations Council for creating this Hall of Fame and adding my name to the roster.

I am truly honored in to join the people already inducted into the ARC Hall of Fame. The men on the list are a who's who of ag communications and I count them as colleagues and friends.

It is fitting, I suppose - if that's not too presumptuous to say - that I'm the first woman on the ARC Hall of Fame list, since my career in ag communications often involved firsts. Back in the 1960s and 70s, it was a different world for women in agriculture - for women and men in general. As I look over this audience and see so many women, I know how dramatically the world has changed.

Recently I read a Smithsonian magazine article about Star Trek - a show that premiered 50 years ago in September. The show was going where no (man) had gone before and it wasn't always a smooth trip. Gene Roddenberry's original script included a woman as first officer. NBC put its corporate foot down - a woman could be a secretary or a housewife, but even on a 23rd century spaceship, a woman couldn't be in a position of command over men.

It took both women and men of strong will and great talent to change those attitudes. I'd like to share a couple of examples from my own career to show how far we've come.

Back in 1973 when I joined the Soybean Digest staff as editorial assistant, I didn't recognize what a major step Jim Yancey - my boss at the Association - took when he named me Editor. I was the first female editor of a national ag magazine. There were female home page and recipe editors, but no women editors of ag topics.

Yet, Jim's willingness to push the boundaries only went so far. Each year when Secretary's Day came around, the men took the secretaries to lunch, and they invited me, too. Each year, I argued to Jim that I wasn't a secretary so I shouldn't be included. Each year he said I needed to go. Each year, I went along and enjoyed lunch with the other women. Then after lunch, I went back to the office and reimbursed Jim.

Every job I had in my career trajectory showed the challenge to shifting attitudes and acceptance of women.

As a member of AAEA - the American Ag Editor's Association, I participated one year in a panel of ag editors, including Rich Krumme from Successful Farming. During the panel discussion, Rich commented that SF would never hire a woman in an editorial position because a woman could never know enough about agriculture. At that moment I THOUGHT - hey – I'm sitting right here, you know? In that moment, I was embarrassed, but also silent. Rich's was completely comfortable saying what he did, and neither I nor anyone else challenged him. That was the times.

The upshot of this story is that nearly 10 years later, Rich called to talk with me about interviewing for one of the positions he'd said would never go to a woman at SF.

One more example. When I joined CMF&Z, where I spent 20 years in a very good career, there were no women in advertising or public relations account management positions. Women were secretaries - as Gary Myers mentioned in the slide show. I give huge kudos to my boss Rick Mayes who was gender blind. If you could do the job, it didn't matter to him whether you were male or female.

In my early years at CMF&Z, we had a chance to pitch for the Ralston Purina advertising business. I was sitting in Dick Meyocks' office as the agency heads discussed the pitch team. Dick commented that because Ralston Purina would have a woman at the table, the agency needed one, too. And they wanted me to be that woman. Cool. Right? But I had specific instructions: Do not say anything.

I must say, I played my role perfectly. When I returned from that pitch, though, I vowed that I would never let myself be put in a position like that again. Nor would anyone who worked with me.

Over time, the attitudes of men at CMF&Z changed. Capable women were hired in account management positions, they led major accounts- even ag accounts, they were successful. I didn't consider myself as breaking ground at the time, though I see now that I was.

Men had to change their attitudes, but women did, too. Some women at CMF&Z felt that if one woman held an account management position, that was all there could be. Because I was there, they considered the path closed to them. That wasn't true, of course, but only time could prove that.

The ability for women to advance was only partially about gender. The key to success then as now is about doing good work, taking advantage of opportunities, stepping up, networking, learning all you can and bringing it to the strategic planning table.

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