

GENERAL SESSION

WELCOME ADDRESS

by

*Andrew H. Hulsey, Director
Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission*

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 27th Annual Conference of the Southeastern Association of Game and Fish Commissioners is now declared to be in session!

Arkansas is proud to be your host this year. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Arkansas and to the famous spa city of Hot Springs. The employees of the Commission, the Arlington Hotel staff and the Hot Springs Convention Bureau have been working for several months to make your stay here both pleasant and productive. At this time I want to especially give credit to Jack Dyer, General Program Chairman. If you have any problems or need transportation, see Mr. Dyer; he will direct you to the right people.

You may or may not know that you are now in the heart of the Ouachita Mountain Range, a very unique area. These mountains are some of the oldest mountains on earth, much older than the famous Ozark Mountains and entirely different. The ridges of the mountains run in an east-west direction and were formed when the earth's crust shifted northward wrinkling the horizontally stratified shale and sandstone deposits like you can wrinkle the skin on the back of your hand by pushing from the wrist towards the knuckles.

When the early explorers paddled up the Ouachita River and inspected this land, they reported back that the area was no good for settlement, the soil was too thin, and the country did not contain any valuable minerals in sufficient quantity or grade to warrant mining.

However, about a hundred years ago, the nation needed lumber. Settlers poured in and homesteaded the land. As soon as they proved their claims, many sold out to the timber companies. The timber companies cut out, burnt out and moved out! A lot of the land was sold for taxes.

You might say I have a psychic attachment to these mountains. My great, great grandfather Hulsey settled in these mountains over near what is now the Oklahoma line in 1830. I was raised at Mount Ida, just 30 miles west of here. When I was a boy all of this country was "free range"; there were thousands of free roaming horses, hogs and cattle. You talk about a browse line - we had one then! This was also the period when the deer and the turkey reached their lowest numbers.

During the depression years of the 1930's, the U. S. Forest Service purchased a lot of this land for 3 to 5 dollars per acre. In those days, there was still a cotton gin at every crossroads.

Today, the economy of this area is based primarily on three things, i.e., the scientific production of timber and livestock and the recreation or tourist industry.

In the future, I foresee that the abundant supply of high quality water will be this area's biggest asset. The lack of economically mineable minerals, the infertility of the soil, the change from row crops to pasture, and the use of the rough and rugged hills for timber production assures a continuous yield of some of the highest quality water to be found anywhere in the nation.

Again, I want to welcome you to Arkansas and wish you a most successful convention.