

## Presidential Address—Past and Future

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Several years ago, when I first became an official part of a natural resource agency, I had no idea what the future would be or should be. However, over the years, I have observed how the trends and habits of agencies, as well as of the sportsman himself, have developed. I quickly saw a lack of innovation. For example, we were doing a good job of managing the resource, but completely ignoring the sportsman (the public). I also saw a sense of complacency among all involved.

I saw an era of dedication dying out. I saw the people responsible for our success retiring and a new generation coming on that lacked that same kind of dedication. And that is not a specific reflection on this generation; it's just a sign of the times. People have changed, things aren't the same today as they were 20 years ago. Also dedication isn't taught in a classroom. We need to set our sights on making our mark on the future. And when I say this, let me relate personally to what I'm saying.

My father died when I was 12 years old, a crucial age for a young boy; a time in life when direction is so critical. Well, I was fortunate I received the direction needed—although I probably didn't realize it at the time—from, of all people, a game warden by the name of Jim Bryant. To me and everyone else, he was "Mr. Jim." With the loss of my father, I had withdrawn from the world. I was completely lost. I guess Mr. Jim knew this because he made every effort to keep me involved in hunting and fishing activities and taught me the love of the outdoors that I know today. He personally made sure that I kept attending the Department's conservation camp. He made sure I had the opportunity to go fishing or hunting and would go out of his way to take me either fishing or hunting as he made his rounds. That's the kind of dedication I'm talking about. It wasn't just a job to Mr. Jim. He made his mark on the future.

You see, he made enough of an impression on me that I went on to work for the Department at that same camp as a summer counselor. I've often wondered—have I made any kind of impression on anyone like Mr. Jim did? We had better hope we all leave a good impression on the younger generation of today. We should all approach our work as Mr. Jim did. This type of dedication and concern will solve many of today's problems before they occur.

Most of the problems we have today are socio-economic, and we can't regulate social issues. Also, better biology is not the only answer. Biological approaches to political and socio-economic problems are no longer adequate. Social research has found limited acceptance in the actual practice of fish and wildlife management. To quote from an article I read not long ago: "Social research in fish and wildlife has largely failed to bridge the gaps between academic institutions and the agency manager/administrator." Never has a truer statement been made. We as managers have considered ourselves unaffected and untouchable by any competition from the business sector and customer relations. Our word and actions were gospel, what we said and did were accepted and no questions were asked. That no longer is the case. We now have tremendous competition and we had better learn to compete in the recreational market. Hunting and fishing is a big business according to the national surveys. In Kentucky alone, fishing and hunting contributed \$600 million to our economy. In this day and age, we will have to defend hunting and fishing through economics. You can't hang your hat on "it's a God given right" anymore.

To me, the direction is clear, promote and market fish and wildlife. We have done a good job in managing the resource, now let's include the public. We can require the purchase of a license to hunt or fish, but we can't require people to make hunting and fishing their recreational choice. We must adopt approaches of meeting customer needs, in advertising and doing market research to hold our market share while we continue to meet our statutory obligations. We deal with the greatest segment of people—the sportsman. But, hunting and fishing groups, sportsmen clubs, federations, or whatever, are becoming very fragmented. They have little or no regard for each other's desires, much less what we need to do from the resource aspect. Sportsmen need to be included in your planning. Keep something in front of him all the time. Concentrate more on what is visible, such as boat ramp projects, because so much of what we do is usually not always visible. Let him see what he's getting for his money. Keep your sportsman involved from the beginning input to the final result through communication. You will find that by keeping the sportsman informed, you will have support like we had in the past. If you don't include the sportsman, you will probably meet with opposition.

Hire dedicated people like Mr. Jim. When you interview people, they say the same thing, "I've always wanted to work for fish and wildlife; I've fished and hunted all my life; I just love the outdoors;" and these should be our primary requirements. Also, promote what you are doing and build on it; make your mark, the future depends on it.

Finally—don't forget about that sportsman, don't take him for granted, include him in your planning. Your failures as well as your successes will be shared together. You won't be standing alone and that my friends, is a great feeling, I know, we have experienced it in Kentucky!