End of An Era in Nevada

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When you are starting your career, and projecting 30 years down the road to retirement, or you are in mid-career and decide your target date is going to be 30 years of service—would you consider 34 years? Sure, you probably started young, or feel young—how about 34 years in one job? “Never,” you say. But what if that job is State Soil Scientist, impossible, you think. No, it is not! Ed Naphan led the soil survey program in Nevada from 1950 to Apr. 3, 1984 when he retired.

Mr. Naphan started his career with the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) as a junior soil surveyor in 1941 at Berkeley, CA. After serving in the Army from 1942 to 1946, he returned to SCS as a soil scientist in LaMesa, CA. Later that year, he was transferred to Elko, NV, where he was promoted to supervisory soil scientist in 1949. He was transferred to the Reno State Office as state soil scientist, where he has led the Nevada Soils Program since 1950.

In the early days, with a small staff of soil scientists, and a large State to map (70 million acres), progress was slow, and the soil survey publications were few and far between. However, there was a constant increase in the recognition of Mr. Naphan’s technical competence and ability to run the soil survey program. This recognition had a snowballing effect on the soil survey program in Nevada. Leaders of federal and state agencies, cities and counties and private individuals, put their faith in Mr. Naphan and requested priorities be set in the soil survey program to cover their needs. Under Mr. Naphan’s leadership the soil survey program was accelerated and proceeded to map soils at about a rate of 3.5 million acres a year, and about two soil survey manuscripts per year were prepared for publication.

In addition, Mr. Naphan has been active professionally and co-authored several technical papers that have been published in professional journals, and many soil-related articles published by the Nevada Agricultural Experiment Station. He served as president of the Western Society of Soil Science which is now affiliated with the Soil Science Society of America (SSSA).

He has received many awards during his distinguished career with the SCS. He was nominated for, and was granted the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Secretary’s Honor Award for Superior Service, for

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