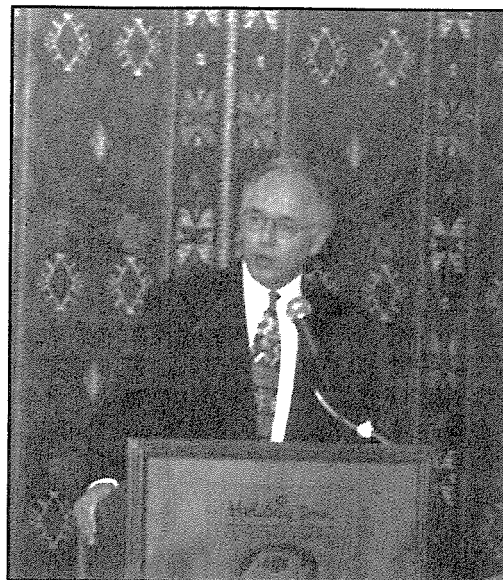


Rubén A. Smith is now serving his second term as Las Cruces' first mayor elected at large. Rubén previously served nine years in the state legislature where he sponsored key legislation pertaining to youth. He continues to focus on youth issues now at the local level where he worked to establish the City's first teen club and the first youth center which is run by a nonprofit board. The youth board is the first of its kind in the state that incorporates the arts and physical education. Speaking of arts, the Mayor has been an avid musician for most of his life. After resigning from the El Paso Symphony Orchestra, having been the principal bassoonist for 24 years, he bought a saxophone, the instrument he left behind in the 7th grade, and performs the music that got him started by playing with the Big Band on the Rio Grande.



Welcoming Remarks

It is a pleasure to be here to welcome you to Las Cruces. Giving thanks is what mayors should do because that is one of the things we were elected to do. But I was hoping to be given a bit more credit for my expertise in water.

From the city's standpoint, we have many dignitaries here today. Anytime you get the caliber of Messrs. Simpson, Hammond and Turney from three different states in one room in this community, especially on an overcast day like we have today, it is a very important time for water.

As Tom Bahr alluded to, the only way I could be doing what I am doing, and I do not consider myself a politician but rather an elected official, is that I am a musician. I accept that title and I will wear it very proudly. Sometimes the political/politician sign does not hang very well.

I was unaware that Al Utton had passed away and I apologize for not knowing. When I was a state legislator many things happened, but one of the key things that happened back in 1983 was the water suit between Texas and New Mexico. I will never forget that I was still trying to figure out where the restrooms were in the Roundhouse when then Governor Anaya called us into executive session to brief the Doña Ana delegation on the severity of the

problem and the special request for appropriations to go to court. During that process, many of us had to get up to speed quickly and that is not easy to do. I met Al Utton back then and I will never forget that wonderful person. Unbeknownst to me, at that same time I was going to meet a lady who happened to be his wife, who like me, was very involved with youth issues.

We are a proud community but the demographics indicate we are not a very rich community. We cannot compare to Albuquerque and Rio Rancho, but we remain a very proud community culturally. We invite you back next year when we will begin celebrating our 150th Birthday. We are going to have a wonderful celebration.

I would like to tell you a bit about what we have been doing. Since this second term of mayorship, I have felt very strongly that we must take a very active role in water issues. Consequently, we organized the Lower Rio Grande Water Users Organization. We have joined hands with people who we never thought of joining hands with—we have become very close water-wise with Gary Esslinger of the Elephant Butte Irrigation District and with other entities in the Lower Rio Grande.

I try to explain to people here, particularly within the city of Las Cruces, that conservatively speaking we have about three years left of water. If you couple that with the reality that we are the fastest growing Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) in the state, and the seventh fastest growing MSA in the nation, we have some real problems. This is not news to Tom Turney and the Governor. I visited

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with them recently and impressed upon them the urgency of the situation. We realize the implications of what we have been doing for years—pumping groundwater. We have been pumping groundwater since day one and we recognize we can no longer continue to do so. We must take off our blinders and understand that we are going to have to use both surface and groundwater. We cannot change

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Rubén Smith

independently of Elephant Butte Irrigation District and we cannot do it independently of El Paso, nor of Juárez. These last years have been a real education, but it has given me a personal sense—not only as mayor but as someone very involved with the situation—that there is hope and light at the end of the tunnel. But it is not going to be an easy problem to solve.

Eluid Martinez has been very gracious to meet with us in our city. We had never had someone in his capacity from Washington come visit us on water issues. So it is an exciting time, a challenging time, and a frustrating time. I think the participants here today from different agencies and areas, and particularly the dignitaries we have here, would indicate to you that we are on the right track concerning solving our water problems.. Thank you very much.