

Ben Plastino

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Cy Young still in step at 81



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Grizzled Cy Young, known widely as "Mr. Democrat" in Fremont County, likes to often sit on the front porch of his home and watch the scenic and placid Henry Fork River flow by some 200 feet away.

Even more, he enjoys going frequently to the river in his boat where he nearly always catches a fine string of trout. Furthermore, he notes gleefully, it's open fishing season the year around.

He and his wife, the former Vera Broadbent, have lived on the family farm at Twin Groves, two miles northeast of St. Anthony, all of their married life. Their farm stretches westward from the river in pastoral beauty.

They have four sons, one living nearby, and a daughter.

"I was born and lived here all of my life," he said with a fond glance at the attractive front yard. "I intend to stay here the rest of my life."

He and his wife are enthusiastic when they say they have often seen moose, swans, wild geese, and even otters traveling in and along the river. Their comfortable white brick home was built in 1969.

Young said he has parceled out his farm to his children, preferring to live a less active, but more comfortable life.

Young is the only legislator still living in Fremont County who repre-

sented the county before it was joined with neighboring Madison County under legislative reapportionment 20 years ago.

He turned 81 in December, but is spry and keenly alert. He still takes intensive interest in public, political and agricultural topics.

His political influence is still so vast that nearly all top Democrats seek his counsel and help, especially during a campaign.

"I like to help good Democrats," he said, leaving little doubt that he believes nearly all members of the party are good citizens.

Young served in the Senate two terms, 1958-62, and could have extended it much longer. But, he decided to resume his duties with the old Production Marketing Agency to qualify for pension. He had served the agency 10 years previous to his legislative tenure and then added 7½ years after. The agency was abruptly closed when the national administration turned from Democratic to Republican.

While in the Senate he filled positions on the agriculture, reclamation and finance committees.

"I especially enjoyed irrigation and reclamation matters," he said.

He did well because his influence had brought about considerable water development in eastern Idaho.

He recalls that at the time he served in the Idaho Senate, one of the hottest issues was the so-called WICHE program in which the state paid for Idaho students studying for medical degrees at institutions outside the state.

"You know," he said with a wry

grin, "I don't know to this day of a single Fremont student who has been helped by this program."

Young recalls another hot topic in the Legislature was known as establishing a "Stream Bank Protection" system. This was for farmers living along Henry's Fork to give them credit for storage of winter water savings.

He noted it was not enacted for the Henry's Fork farmers, but it had been done for the people living along the South Fork.

"To this day we haven't got it for the Henry's Fork," said Young.

Young proudly shows a bronze plaque, Water Guardian, he received from the Water Users Association in 1980. It was given to him for, among other things, being director of the North Fork Water Association for 35 years, on the Committee of Nine water advisory board six years, and serving 10 years as director of the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District. This district, among other things, sponsored building of the ill-fated Teton Dam.

He recalls he was one of five Idaho water leaders to testify before the House Insular Affairs Committee at Washington for funding the Teton Dam.

He has filled many public positions, including Fremont County Democratic party chairman.

The Teton Dam was one of his favorite projects, saying he "must have visited it some 50 times while it was under construction."

"I couldn't image it ever breaking," he said sadly.

"The Teton Dam flood came

within one and a half miles of my place, but I never was worried it would reach us since we are on higher ground. However, I was concerned about the other people who were flooded."

Young said he held hopes for a time the dam would be rebuilt.

"I am not so confident now because it would require far more money than originally, and it needs to meet strict environmental statements and other requirements," he said.

He noted the Fremont-Madison Irrigation District would have to furnish more money, which would be difficult under the present economically depressed agricultural conditions.

"We can get along without the water," he said, "and in fact, we have proved that."

He said, however, a Teton Dam reservoir would help farmers downstream. This would enable them to avoid expensive well pump drilling and irrigation which is also lowering the water table.

Young feels strongly that the drinking age should be raised, "even to 100 years as far as I'm concerned."

He said some seven years ago a drunken driver slammed into his car in St. Anthony, knocking it 53 feet. He suffered extensive head and face cuts, even losing the top part of his right ear, and was hospitalized 27 days.

He recalls, among his legislative experiences, of talking at Boise for about 30 minutes with John Kennedy who was then a U.S. senator and seeking the presidency. He highly lauded Kennedy, along with Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower.

However, he said he "didn't care" for President Lyndon Johnson and thinks President Reagan "is a showoff."

He also highly lauded Sen. Frank Church, adding "I admired him. He was excellent."

About the Hamer-Egin Road, he said, "it has been blown out of all proportion. The road would not affect the elk herd. I ran sheep there many years and it didn't bother the elk."

(Ben Plastino is a Post-Register columnist.)