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Author

Madon, Minoo B.

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Opening Remarks – Twenty-Third Vertebrate Pest Conference

Minoo B. Madon, *Chairperson*

Greater Los Angeles County Vector Control District, Santa Fe Springs, California

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Good Morning, I consider it an honor that the Vertebrate Pest Council members selected me to be the Chairperson of this 23rd conference. I hope that those of you who signed-up for the field trip yesterday had a great time. The first field trip was initiated in 1984. Since then, this has become a popular event, and most of them have been attended by a maximum number of participants.

As of now, a total of 260 participants have registered for this conference, and I believe that several more will be registering at the door. I would like to welcome you all and especially those of you from foreign countries: we have participants with us from Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Will our overseas guests please stand up so we can acknowledge your presence?

As most of you may know, the first conference was held 46 years ago, on February 6-7, 1962, with 300+ participants from the USA and one from Korea. Dr. Walter Howard (popularly known as “Howdy”) was the General Chairman of the conference. Howdy’s *brief* Opening Remarks were 7 typed pages long! (and there were no computers during those primitive times). I promise you mine will be considerably shorter.

I would like to quote a few interesting remarks made by Howdy: He stated that “...*we are not out to eradicate or exterminate all pest species, we are just attempting to reducing populations to tolerable densities...*” Later on, he emphasized on the “*safety to man, animals and the environment, and the interrelationships of man and animals have become increasingly complex as human populations have increased...*” Little did Howdy realize that the world population has presently reached 6.6 billion (as of July 2007) and USA’s population as of January 2008, is 303.3 million! International travel and commodities have also drastically increased. These factors simply contribute to the “complexities” that Howdy was referring to 46 years ago.

At the 21st conference in 2004, Conference Chairperson Paul Gorenzel presented an interesting synopsis on the number of conference attendees, participation from foreign countries, and the number of years each Council member had served. Dr. Howard has now served for 46 years, and Rex Marsh has served for 44 years. Dr. Terry Salmon (who has also been serving as the Business Manager for the past 2 decades) and I are next in line, with each of us serving on the Council for 30 years. Dr. Robert Timm has been a Council member since 1989 and has served as the Proceedings Editor since 2002; we also need to thank Dr. Timm and his staff for taking on the laborious task of conference registration. Currently, there

are 18 active council members and 8 lifetime members, ranging in service from 2 to 46 years.

Our Program Chairperson, Dr. Kathleen Fagerstone, has worked exceedingly hard to assemble an excellent program. We have a total of 66 submitted papers, 2 special symposia— one this afternoon on Marine Mammals, and the other on Wildlife and Food Safety on Thursday morning. The concurrent sessions include a wide variety of topics, with a concluding session on Public Health. In addition, 11 poster papers are on display. Unfortunately, due to prior commitments, Dr. Fagerstone could not attend this conference. Dr. Ray Sterner, from the National Wildlife Research Center, is filling in as Program Chairperson in Kathy’s absence.

I would be remiss in my duties if I did not acknowledge the hard work performed by all the Council members. They are truly a dedicated lot and believe in the professional and educational services they provide. All Council members present here today, please stand up. They truly deserve recognition for their spirit of volunteerism.

My sincere thanks to all the conference participants, attendees, and commercial exhibitors, as you all play an integral role in continuing your support. I hope you have a great time at this conference and take advantage of the attractions this beautiful city of San Diego has to offer (in your spare time of course).

It is a great pleasure to inform you that the Vertebrate Pest Council has decided to award special plaques of recognition to the 2 longest-serving members of the Council, Dr. Walter Howard and Rex Marsh, both of whom have significantly contributed their valuable time and services to making the Vertebrate Pest Conference a resounding success.

Do we have any announcements to make? Thank you all for being here.

I will now turn it over to the Keynote Speaker, Dr. Gary Beauchamp.