



## HONORING THE LEGACY BUILDING THE FUTURE

a campaign for the National Western Center



STORIES AND IMPRESSIONS FROM LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL WESTERN CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

### July 2019

*Editor's Note:* [The Honoring the Legacy...Building the Future](#) campaign for the new National Western Center boasts a [leadership team](#) with some of the West's most prominent business leaders and philanthropists. This occasional note shares their insights and experiences as Stock Show and National Western insiders. Featured in this installment is Pat Grant, a campaign vice chair and immediate past chair of the Western Stock Show Association Board of Directors.

**Pat Grant:** *Honoring the Legacy Vice Chair  
Immediate Past Chair, Western Stock Show Association Board of Directors*

### How I got here; how we got here



There's a short story and a long story for everything. The short story of how I got involved in National Western leadership is that, in 1985, Nick Petry, the Western Stock Show Association's President, called me to ask if I'd join the Executive Committee – what we call the WSSA Board of Directors today.

I was busy with my law practice and had just won a seat in the Colorado House of Representatives, not to mention helping raise a family and all the rest.

"Nick, I'm awfully busy," I told him.

Nick had heard that before.

"Pat, this won't take much of your time," he said.

Thirty-four years later, I can say with some authority that Nick was taking liberties with the qualifier "much of my time."

The long story starts 41 years before that call, when my father, Edwin H. Grant, was elected to the WSSA Executive Committee. My three sisters, my brothers and I grew up on Grant Farm in Southwest Denver – and, for 10 days each January (the Stock Show extended to today's 16 days later) – we grew up at the Stock Show, too. As second vice president in charge of the horse show, dad oversaw the horse show judges, and we would sit in the box and eat cotton candy and were in seventh heaven. Sometimes we sat in the timer's box with the timers of the rodeo. The best seat in the house was on the lap of timer Pinky Flood, a man as kind and gentle as he was big and bald. I'm not exaggerating about the best seat in the house: the timer's box is the President's Box now.

To close the loop on the ancient history, in May 1966, my dad, as second Vice President, presided over the WSSA meeting at which Nick Petry was elected President. Suffice it to say that I had a serious emotional attachment to the National Western by the time I picked up that phone to hear Nick at the opposite end.

Nick was a wonderful mentor and supporter from that day forward and well into my 19-year tenure as the WSSA's President and CEO, which I began in 1990. That brings us to how we got here.

By "here," I mean to the point at which the National Western Center redevelopment has broken ground and this [capital campaign](#) is well on its way to supporting [four spectacular facilities](#) at the heart of it all. That story really has no short version, but I'll give it my best shot.

The 1990's-era upgrades that created the Expo Hall, the Stadium Hall, and the Events Center – thanks to \$30 million from a \$242 million general-obligation bond Denver voters approved in 1989 – still seemed fresh to me when I got a call from the head of the Colorado Department of Transportation in the early 2000's. He told me they would be announcing publicly how a proposed realignment of Interstate 70 would plow right through Stock Show grounds. I became a bit "heated" as they say, but I calmed down.

It was a wake-up call, and it led the WSSA Board to think seriously about how to improve the National Western Complex – or perhaps move it – so it could continue to thrive. Ben Houston, Jerry McMorris, the Board, and I had serious discussions on both fronts. Comprehensive redevelopment in a landlocked spot laced with train tracks and split by an interstate would be a challenge. But so would moving the Complex to near what's now the new Gaylord Rockies Hotel and Convention Center or elsewhere.

Many people with great passion became involved. But I'd say that, looking back, several key factors led us to where we are today. After many meetings with newly elected Denver Mayor Michael Hancock, it became clear that redeveloping the existing National Western site was the best way forward. WSSA Board Chairman Ron Williams assembled Denver business leaders who were unanimous in wanting Stock Show to stay in Denver. Colorado State University President and Chancellor, Tony Frank, saw a great opportunity to build on CSU's presence in Denver by enhancing its partnership with WSSA. And Paul Andrews had come on board as the new CEO and brought fresh business perspectives to the planning process.

A vision began to emerge that the National Western could, if done right, become a top-drawer, year-round event center and global hub for agricultural research and education – and so that became the message to Denver voters who, in November 2015, passed ballot measure 2C. This cemented the redevelopment. In addition to directing \$473 million to the creating of the National Western Center and helped by \$121 million in future funding from the state, the vote demonstrated that Denver's century-long commitment to the National Western remained firm. And our lobbyist, Maria Garcia Berry, played no small role in this strenuous effort.

There's much work to be done and much money to be raised to make it all a reality. Thank heavens Pete Coors is spearheading our capital campaign which is on the road to success – he is perfect for the job. He is ably assisted by Angela Lieurance, executive director of the campaign. But here I am, and here we are, and I couldn't be more pleased with how things have turned out – even if it did take just a bit more of my time than Nick Petry intimated it would. And now, as we turn the page to a new chapter, may our aspirational vision and mission come to fruition under WSSA Board Chairman Doug Jones, Vice Chairman Barth Whitham, and a great Board of Directors.



For news, updates and more on the Honoring the Legacy campaign for the National Western, visit

[honoringthelegacycampaign.com](http://honoringthelegacycampaign.com)

For questions or more information, please contact Angela S. Lieurance,  
Director of the Capital Campaign  
303-919-5214  
[alieurance@nationalwestern.com](mailto:alieurance@nationalwestern.com)