Dr. Clenton Owensby, ’64

Dr. Clenton Owensby, now celebrating 55 years as a Professor of Range Management at Kansas State University, came from humble beginnings. He was born in a shack on a shortgrass prairie farm and ranch near Clovis, NM, and his earliest academic days took place in a two-room schoolhouse with no running water and four grades in each room.

At NMSU, Dr. Owensby earned a BS in Range Science, and credits several faculty members with laying a strong foundation for his future in research, demonstrating excellent teaching and providing personal support. His experience at NMSU propelled him to pursue graduate studies at KSU, where he earned a PhD in Range Management.

Since becoming a faculty member at KSU, Dr. Owensby’s contributions as a range ecologist and research scientist specializing primarily in tall grass prairie ecosystems have been significant and far-reaching. He developed grazing systems that transformed Kansas’ Flint Hills region, and he is also a pioneer in research on global climate change impacts on grass ecosystems. Dr. Owensby even extended his expertise to the silver screen: he consulted on several films for grassland burning scenes, including the Academy Award winning Days of Heaven (1978).

Dr. Owensby is also a dedicated educator and the recent recipient of the Society for Range Management’s Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award. His impact on education extends to NMSU through the Owensby Family Scholarship, which supports undergraduate students in the College of ACES.

Dr. Owensby is the son of Herb and Nettie Owensby. He is married to Juanita Owensby, who he describes as a true partner in the enterprises of his academic pursuits and raising their three children, Ronnie, Sherry and James.