

The FARM WEEKLY

Monday, June 23, 1980

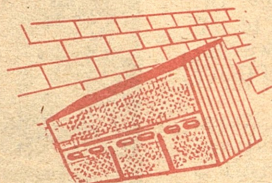
The **Sioux City Journal**

Saving the land

Ernie Behn (right), farmer and author, speaks on minimum tillage farming at an agricultural field day at the Cherokee airport. Audience members are not men of the soil, however, but men of the cloth. Their story is on page 2.



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Pastors view conservation on the land

By Tim Connolly
Journal staff writer

CHEROKEE, Iowa — Tom Kenny pushed the throttle ahead, and the small plane's momentum pressed us back in our seats. The aircraft bobbed a bit on takeoff — as if we were hitting waves of water instead of air — and then rose smoothly over the picturesque town and rolling green fields.

Kenny, who farms near Akron, Iowa, eased the two-engine craft into a slow turn and headed south. Straight ahead were blue skies spotted with pale gray clouds. Below us Cherokee County's verdant croplands lay in neat order.

From the back seat, soil conservation technician Monas Nixon, Cherokee, pointed out the circular ridges of terraced fields, the stubbornly horizontal rows of crops planted along the contours, the ponds and dams of small, efficient watersheds.

Soil conservation was subject for the day, and Cherokee County was the classroom.

The students were a group of men concerned about the land, its continuing ability to produce crops and to support its families and communities.

But these weren't farmers or politicians or people widely associated with land use issues — the students were Lutheran ministers.

They had come from their parishes throughout northwest Iowa for an agricultural field day Thursday at the Cherokee airport.



In the photo above, northwest Iowa Pastors Roger Peterson (left), Holstein, and Kermit Roisen (right), Milford, confer with soil conservation technician Monas Nixon, Cherokee. From the air, the ministers viewed conservation practices such as terracing (photo at right). On the ground they heard that minimum tillage planting (lower right), despite its "trashy" appearance, conserves soil and water.



Ernie Behn
advocates less tillage

They heard officials from the Soil Conservation Service describe conservation techniques, and they had a chance to view them in practice from the air. They heard farmer and author Ernie Behn expound the conservation benefits of minimum tillage, which he uses successfully on his farm near Boone, Iowa. They discussed with a panel problems of economics and attitude that modern farmers are facing.

And, like the attendants at any good agricultural field day, they told jokes, talked plenty, drank a lot of coffee, and ate well. Pork burgers, beans and salad were compliments of local pork producers.

But the tone of the day was entirely serious.

"For every bushel of corn we raise, we lose two

bushels of topsoil...forever," a film instructed. Produced by the Soil Conservation Service and Iowa State University, the film said we have exhausted half our topsoil during the past 100 years, and at that rate will use up the other half within the next 100 years.

Despite those statistics, conservation measures have been implemented on only 30 to 40 percent of the land where they are needed, the pastors were told.

Organizers said the purpose of the field day was not to make pastors authorities on conservation. It was to acquaint them with issues and problems associated with land management, so they will better be able to counsel their farmer parishioners.

"This whole thing is concerned with stewardship of God's gifts, one of which is soil," explained Elvie Dreeszen, Cushing farmer and one of the organizers. "We have tended to destroy that gift. The evidence is too abundant that we have not been doing a good job of stewardship."

One speaker said the church's role is not to tell farmers *how* to be good stewards of the soil. That is the role of soil technicians, said the Rev. Dr. E.W. Mueller. The role of the church is to tell farmers *why* they should be good stewards: "because they are responsible caretakers of God's creation."

Mueller, who spoke on "Counseling Rural People in Crisis," has been a consultant clergyman for the National Conservation Districts Association, a Washington-based group not

See Ernie
page 10.





**Miriam
Nye**

From the kitchen window

Hello folks! Heee-rrrr-sss Nicky again...I haven't been involved with my Grandma's column for quite a while. But I noticed that she was tired and might need some help for the one this week. And I do have some things I'd like to tell you about...

I've had two rather special experiences just lately. One of them was being in Uncle Glen's wedding. It's quite a feeling to get all dressed up in a black tuxedo and a frilly shirt when you are 4 years old...to walk down the aisle carrying a ring on a cushion, with your cousin Brad also dressed in a black tuxedo, also wearing a frilly shirt, and also carrying a ring on a cushion.

I did about the same thing in a beige-colored tux back when I was only 2, but I didn't reflect on the happening as much that time. Now that I am older, I observe more, remember more...

Grandpa and Grandma N. came over to the wedding at Emerson, and to a little of the reception, but they couldn't stay for the dance. They told Uncle Glen and Lorie goodbye early. They had to drive a lot of miles that night, to be at annual church conference the next morning. When they left, other kids and I were running back and forth in the school yard. I was still wearing the "tux" and my shiny black shoes...

8 days later — on the American flag's birthday — some of us celebrated Grandma Miriam's birthday, too. It was a really different celebration. My Daddy and Mommy and I took her with us in our pickup truck to the old, old house that was built for her great-grandparents, more than 100 years ago.

Grandma told me it was the house where she was born, when the house was still out on the farm. The room she was born in used to be a bedroom, but later it was used as a kitchen. About the time Grandma was born, there was a storm, with wind and lightning, and rain.

Dr. W.W. Gingles and Nurse Laura Copeland drove out to the farm to help. It was early in the morning when Grandma first cried. Later, in the afternoon, her father brought 2 Grandmas to the farm, to see their first grandchild.

This year on my Grandma's birthday we were helping Great Grandma H. sort the things in the old house where no one lives and get them taken to where they can be used again. It was a big job. Many of the pieces of furniture are heavy. Many have papers or old clothes stored in them. My Daddy and Uncle D. did lots of lifting. All of us did some carrying.

You don't think that was really a birthday celebration, do you? It was, though. At noon-time we all sat out in the yard and ate a picnic lunch. Aunt C. had baked a cake. She also brought a jar of flowers from her yard in Sioux city to be the centerpiece. There weren't any candles. But Grandma M. pretended she was blowing candles out.

On the way through Smithland, going down to the old house at Castana, we had stopped to get some gas. Grandma took me across the street to see the replica of the first schoolhouse built in Woodbury County (1854). She explained that the school was already helping children learn when her Hawthorn ancestors came in a caravan to Smithland in 1856.

Driving back to the farm after the work at the Crow's Nest (that's what the old house is called), I fell asleep on Grandma's lap. I slept some more after we arrived. When I woke up, there were little yellow and black birds — American goldfinches — perched on the thistle-feeder. Peter Rabbit was scampering through the yard. Grandma had had a "different" birthday. But she said she liked it because we were with her.

Flash floods — those that come within a few hours of heavy rains or perhaps a levee failure — are the nation's top weather disaster. In 1979, such floods killed 100 persons and caused an estimated \$5 billion in property damage.

They check all incoming plants

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thirteen men on the southern tip of Florida are working around the clock to prevent an invasion that could cost American agriculture billions of dollars.

With thousands of Cuban refugees continuing to pour onto the Key West beach, the Agriculture Department inspectors are confiscating plants and food that might carry pests and diseases alien to this country.

"Anytime you have the movement of people coming in at ports of entry there is a potential for the introduction of plant and animal diseases we don't have in this country," said Dr. Ron Caffey of the USDA's plant protection and quarantine section.

"None of these things are transmittable to humans so it's not a risk to human health," Caffey said. "But it is a very real risk for the introduction of disastrous diseases to our agricultural economy."

Almost immediately after the refugees began reaching Florida a month ago, Caffey said the inspection station there, normally run by one man, was

sent a dozen reinforcements.

And with refugees coming in at the rate of 2,000 a day, those inspectors have already confiscated more than five tons of fruits, vegetables and meat and destroyed it at a nearby USDA quarantine center.

"The Cubans coming in at Key West by and large were not carrying much when they left Cuba except the clothes on their backs," Caffey said. "But the vessels that are bringing them back are purchasing stores in Cuba to use on the vessel while waiting in the harbor and on the return trip to the United States."

Iowa land value takes decline

AMES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa farmland has dropped in value an average of \$187 an acre since Nov. 1, 1979, an Iowa State University report said.

The 9.5 percent drop in value is the first decrease in 20 years, said Dr. Duane Harris, ISU agricultural economist.

The study shows the average value of an acre of Iowa farmland on May 1 was \$1,771 compared to \$1,958 on Nov. 1.

The special survey was taken because of reports that farmland values had dropped off in recent months in response to unprofitable prices for key farm commodities.

The \$187 decline was the largest since ISU began compiling farmland values annually in the late 1930s.

Harris said this is the first decline in the average value of Iowa land prices since the late 1950s and the first since 1970 when no increase was noted.

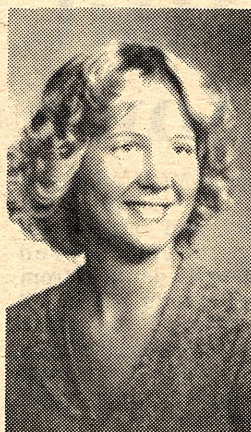
Land values in 1970 remained unchanged from 1969 when the average acre of Iowa farmland was worth \$419.

The downturn in land prices also ends a decade in which average prices soared upward about 367 percent to last year's record.

Real estate brokers cited high interest rates, tight credit, poor crop and livestock prices and a pessimistic outlook for the farm economy as reasons for the drop in value.

The decline ranged from a 15.4 percent drop in the northwest to 0.4 percent in the east central region.

She gets district queen title



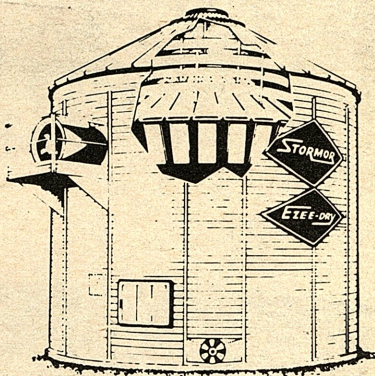
Fundermann

ANTHON, Iowa — Stacie Fundermann, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Fundermann of Anthon, was crowned District 5 pork queen at Audubon June 18.

Stacie competed against queens from seven counties. Her selection was based on a pork-related speech and an interview. She will compete in the state contest in January at Des Moines.

Stacie is a graduate of Anthon-Oto Community School. She plans to attend college at Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

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Hail-battered corn stalks stand near the Co-op Elevator at Hospers, Iowa.

Ernie Behn talks tillage

**Continued
from page two**

directly affiliated with the church. He is now retired and living on a farm near Plainfield, Iowa.

Farmers are custodians of the land and are accountable to God, Mueller said in an interview. The church should confront them with that responsibility.

Good stewardship of the land is a traditional concern of the church, but it's usually had low priority, said the Rev. Paul Ofstedal, Storm Lake, staff member for the Iowa district of the American Lutheran Church.

Recent events suggest that concern for good stewardship is growing, however. Ofstedal pointed out in an interview that the ALC's recent Iowa District convention focused on land issues, and that the district president elected last year, the Rev. L. David Brown, Des Moines, has written a book on the general subject of stewardship, including care of the land.

Catholic bishops from 12 Midwestern states recently issued a formal statement addressing issues of farmland ownership and management.

"After years of dabbling with soil stewardship...I think the church is discovering that we should be more of a headlight than a taillight on this thing," Ofstedal said. "It's evident that we should discover more intelligent ways to be concerned about the land."

Care of the land has not had high priority in the past, Ofstedal speculated, because pastors have not been comfortable with their limited knowledge of conservation matters. Thursday's event was designed to help offset that handicap.

"It takes a lot of courage to be a rather daring

steward of the land. There is risk...change," Ofstedal said. "We wonder if the pastor can't be an understanding source of courage for this risk. That's really our goal."

"This is a religious concern," he added, "to not only care for the land, but to care for those who are the caretakers of the land."

The church is concerned not only with its members' spiritual health, but also with their general well-being, he said. "I think the church is addressing life's issues in a holistic way. The way we earn our bucks has a lot to do with the way we feel about one another, the way we feel about the earth, the way we feel about God. It's all interconnected."

Some 50 persons, most of them pastors, attended all or parts of the field day. They represented parishes in the Sioux City and Spencer ALC conferences, which include about 70 parishes in all.

Dreeszen said the field day was important as a show of support to farmers like himself who have abandoned more conventional farming methods in favor of conservation tillage techniques. Earlier, author Behn had said that using the sometimes controversial minimum tillage methods — while the neighbors stick with convention — can be a lonely experience.

An event like the field day for pastors "is telling me that now we're getting some support from other circles, particularly the church," Dreeszen said.

He said the pope's visit to Iowa last year seemed to spark efforts by religious groups to concern themselves with land issues and how they affect people.

"There is an awareness that somehow soil and people go together," Dreeszen said, "and if we are to leave this place as we found it, we're going to have to do something different."

Hail, winds slam Iowa crop scene

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Crops, livestock and farm buildings have suffered extensive damage from high winds, hail and heavy rain in some areas of Iowa, the Iowa Crop and Livestock Reporting Service said last week.

The service said the full assessment of damage, however, will not be available for some time.

In its weekly report, the service said flooding and erosion have been reported in nearly every part of the state. The most severe cases were reported in west central, southwest, south central and eastern Iowa.

Between 2 and 3 percent of the corn acreage and 5 percent of the soybean acreage has had to be replanted, the service said.

"However, damage incurred by weekend

storms may result in additional corn acreage being replanted," the service said.

Despite the onslaught of hail in early June, the service said that the corn crop's condition is 13 percent excellent, 68 percent good, 17 percent fair and 2 percent poor. The stand is 92 percent of normal, with the height averaging 12 inches.

First time cultivation has occurred on 64 percent of the corn acreage and 32 percent of the soybean acreage. Soybean emergence stands at 97 percent compared to the 89 percent a year ago and the normal of 93 percent.

The stand of soybeans is reported to be 90 percent of normal with the condition reported as 13 percent excellent, 57 percent good, 26 percent fair and four percent poor.

Despite thun-

derstorms last week, the service said farmers had an average of six days available for field work.

Eleven percent of the reports received indicated top soil moisture to be short, 84 percent adequate and 5 percent surplus. Subsoil reserves are 5 percent short, 90 percent adequate and 5 percent surplus.

Fuel supplies changed very little from the past week with diesel fuel reported as 3 percent tight, 93 percent adequate and 5 percent surplus. Gasoline was 3 percent tight, 92 percent adequate and 5 percent surplus.

The service also reported on the condition of other crops. Alfalfa hay harvest progressed 48 percentage points to be 71 percent complete, ahead of the 68 percent a year earlier.