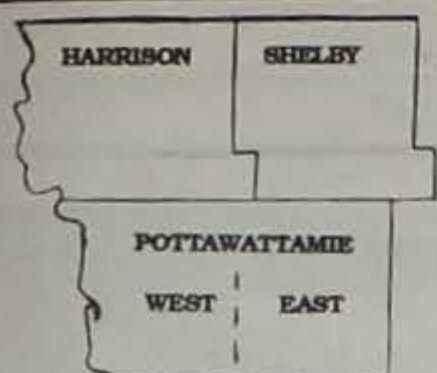




Volume 4

Quad-District Conservation News

Summer/Fall 1999



Issue 2

Garden is visual wonderland and delight to the soul

by Lou Waite

Murlyn and Lillian Ronk have been farming in approximately the same area for 58 years, and they have lived at 1571 Tracey Avenue, rural Dunlap, for the past 24. As farmers, they have run the gamut of crop and livestock production, through good times and bad. As Murlyn said, "You have to have the bad times to learn to appreciate the good." Today, their son Melvin does the farming, and they concentrate on a much more attractive "crop" which surrounds their pleasant home.

As the traveler approaches, from a distance can be seen a riot of color, which seems to blend into a mural of undetermined design and dimension. But when nearer, it all begins to take shape, and a virtual fairyland appears. Flowers are everywhere, interspersed with windcatchers and mills, waterfalls, lawn ornaments, fish pools, statuettes, wind chimes, and more. A gazebo with flowerboxes attached sits near a huge shade tree, and a wishing well rests in another spot.

A footbridge spans a miniature stream, where a water-wheel turns and water-lilies bloom. The breeze which sets the windchimes tinkling, brings the fragrant scent of roses, or honeysuckle, or a pleasant blend difficult to identify individually. Walkways of stone or tile bisect the garden, and lead from one eye-catching scene to another. There are hundreds of species of flowers and shrubs, including many perennials and Iowa wildflowers.

A large "Welcome" sign greets you, and an oblong bed



Follow the yellow brick road? While the bricks are not really yellow, the path through this one section of the garden leads to further visual delights.

adjacent to the roadway spells "Ronk" in red and white blooms. An American flag waves proudly against the blue of the sky. There is no doubt you have indeed reached Ronk's Flower Gardens. It seems almost too much to absorb, aesthetically.

Actually, the Ronks say it all began on a small scale, and each year just "seemed to grow". The gazebo was built by three family members the year that son Jerry was married in the garden. Extra flowerbeds were also added for that occasion. A fish pool was installed, then in succeeding years another

and another, until now there are four in all. Unique is the fact that most, if not all, of the objects in the garden were built by the Ronks, and many of them by Lillian herself.

A greenhouse was added four years ago, so that the Ronks could start their own plants. Once again, they built the greenhouse themselves, using recycled materials. "We heard of an old carriage house which was being torn down in Omaha," Lillian said. "They were going to discard everything, so we asked if we could have it. They were glad to let us haul it away. We used the French doors, patio doors, etc., for the greenhouse." Murlyn said with a chuckle, "Yes, the ends are actually large, fancy doors with side-glasses, which otherwise would have gone to the dump."

They start some of the plants in the winter under grow-lights in their basement. When warm enough (about April 1) they transfer them to the greenhouse, which has electric heat in case it gets too chilly.

"Around Mother's Day," Lillian said, "We begin setting out the annuals, and

adding more perennials, if it is warm enough." Murlyn laughed, and added, "We have been known to be out there in the evening covering everything with blankets!"

The bed by the road has become a tradition, with 100 plants spelling "RONK" in red salvia, surrounded by white sedum. The Ronks estimate they set out at least 2500 plants each spring -- 2,000 annuals and the rest perennials.

"Miracle Grow" is added at the time of planting, then Murlyn does later fertilizing when needed. "Usually they grow tall enough without," he remarked. Lillian noted that indeed some plants have to be "pinched" so as to grow "out and not up!" Watering is done when necessary, or as Lillian phrased it, "When the Good Lord doesn't provide."

Grass mulch keeps the weeds down and helps hold moisture. Lillian chuckled and commented that "To me, a flower where it does not belong is a weed!" They remove hundreds of such flowers each year, and either plant them elsewhere, give them away, or discard them. "Once I took a bunch, dirt and all, and dumped them in a ditch I was trying to fill in," Murlyn recalled. "Yes,"

Lillian said, laughing, "the next thing we knew, the ditch was covered by blooming flowers. Actually, it was a big improvement, until someone came along and sprayed."

Lillian said she has always loved plants, and learned much of what she knows by "trial and error". She has a prairie rose plant which her father, William Probasco, Sr. brought from Kansas before he married her mother. For 16 1/2 years she has propagated a geranium which belonged to her mother, Mary.

The Ronks readily admitted that the garden takes constant care and maintenance, but for them it is a labor of love. "We get a lot of pleasure from seeing visitors enjoy the garden," Lillian said, "and we have had a lot of them, individually and by the carload or busload. There are also the 'roadside viewers' who drive by very slowly, but do not stop. We have met some wonderful people, and many of them come back every year."

The gardens are open to visitors from May until "frost", usually late September. There is no

Continued on page 2



Relaxing in the shade of a huge, old maple tree.

Ronk garden . . .

Continued from front page



The gazebo, with a pond, bridge and water-wheel at the right.

charge for viewing, although contributions are welcomed.

Lillian's love of people has led to her having more than 50 pen pals, living in Germany, England, Trinidad, and all over the United States. The Ronks also like to travel, and have taken trips to Belgium, France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Hawaii. They took an Alaskan cruise, and toured the Butchart Gardens in Vancouver, B.C. They have also "seen the U.S.A.", or many parts of it.

Lillian has another pastime, which really cannot be classified as a "hobby". She is an expert woodworker (cabinet, furniture and clock maker) carpenter, plumber and much more. She has made rocking chairs of oak and walnut for her grandchildren and others, as well as wooden replicas of a railway steam engine and cars. Two beautiful oak hutches, which she crafted, display her collections of china and glassware.

Murlyn stated he was "happy to be retired", after

many years of farming. He said he enjoys helping with the garden, however, and is an avid reader.

The Ronks attend the Methodist Church in Dunlap.

Married 58 years, their immediate family consists of: Murlyn F., wife Penny and two children of Elko, Nevada; Melvin, wife Judy and 3 children of Dunlap; Jerry and two children of California; Nancy, husband Dennis Ressel and three children of Omaha and Terry, wife Sally, and three children of Sioux Falls, S.D.

District Conservationist Russ Kurth remarked, "The Ronk's garden provides an excellent example of all the things people in this area can do in their own backyards."

"We have a new publication in our office, called *Backyard Conservation*, which is available upon request. The Ronks have tried just about everything in the booklet, and are helping promote backyard conservation through their efforts. They are helping "spread the



One of the several ponds in the garden

word" by providing such an excellent result for all the visitors who come through the gardens each year to view. Murlyn and Lillian are certainly to be congratulated for their accomplishments."

Favorite Recipes of NRCS personnel

Apple Kuchen (Microwave)

Yellow cake mix
1 stick margarine
1 tsp. cinnamon
3/4 cup brown sugar
1 cup flour
1/2 cup butter
Peel and slice enough apples to fill an 8 or 9 inch glass square pan. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup sugar and 1 tsp. cinnamon. Mix brown sugar, flour and melted butter until crumbly. Top apples with topping mixture. Bake on high power in microwave 14-16 minutes.



The Ronks are shown with one of the beautiful hutches crafted by Lillian, with Murlyn serving, so he says, as "gofer"

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Backyard Conservation can be rewarding

Attracting butterflies

Making the yard more attractive to butterflies need not be an expensive or major undertaking. A few choice plants, a basking site and a source of water, may be all that is needed to help entice these colorful insects into your yard.

Before selecting plants for butterflies, find out what species are common in your area. While many species such as the well-known Monarch are found across most of the United States, other species are native to certain parts of the country.

Knowing what types of butterflies are common in the area will help select proper plants for the larvae. Butterfly larvae, or caterpillars, have very specific food requirements. Most species can only survive on a few types of plants. Monarch larvae feed only on milkweed plants, while the similar looking Viceroy larvae feed on willow and poplar leaves. The Black Swallowtail larvae feed on plants such as carrots, dill and parsley. Many species feed on plants we often consider weeds, such as nettle and thistle.

Adult butterflies require a source of nectar or other liquid from sap or over-ripe fruit. Their long mouth parts are able to reach deep into flowers to obtain this nectar. Butterfly weed, phlox, clover, zinnias, goldenrod, lantana, liatris, asters and numerous other species will provide the colorful adults with their needed food.

Here are some suggestions to make the yard more hospitable for butterflies:

- 1) Avoid the use of insecticides
- 2) learn to recognize the larvae of the butterflies
- 3) plant plants that will bloom from spring until fall
- 4) butterflies prefer red, yellow, orange and purple flowers
- 5) include native plant species
- 6) single flowers are easier to get nectar from than fuller, double blooms
- 7) locate the garden in the full sun
- 8) place several flat rocks in the garden
- 9) provide a source of water.

Be patient, for it may take time for the butterflies to find the yard, especially if it is the only one in the neighborhood providing butterfly habitat. Keep trying, and meanwhile enjoy the plants!

Beneficial bats

Bothered by mosquitos? Hate using insect repellants and defoggers? Maybe it's

time to consider a bat colony! While myths have made these fuzzy creatures into monsters, bats are really quite useful and important members of the ecosystem.

In the US and Canada, there are no vampire bats. While some bats do carry rabies, the number is far lower than any other wild animal. Rabies kills bats so quickly that they rarely have time to show the aggressiveness shown by rabid dogs or cats. Bats are important pollinators responsible for pollinating such crops as bananas, dates and balsa wood. But best of all, a single little brown bat can eat more than 500 mosquitos in an hour!

Providing bats with an alternative nest in the yard can keep them from seeking shelter in attics.

Here are some suggestions for providing shelter for bats:

- 1) Purchase a bat house or make one. Free plans are available on the Internet. The best houses are between 24 and 36 inches tall, 16 to 24 inches wide and 4 to 5 inches deep. Rough lumber allows bats to cling more easily
- 2) place houses at least ten feet above the ground, or 15 to 20 feet is better. Houses placed on poles are best
- 3) Locations 20 to 25 feet from the nearest tree are best. Using 3/4 inch roosting places helps limit colonization by wasps
- 4) Place houses so they receive at least 6 hours of sun per day, but are protected from bright lights at night
- 5) Water should be within a quarter of a mile, and natural vegetation also.
- 6) Bat houses will be most successfully colonized the first year, if they are put out before migrating bats return in the spring.

Fear of bats persists in the US, but Chinese



Ronk's Floral Garden near Dunlap, Iowa is an outstanding example of all phases of backyard conservation. Visitors from near and far have enjoyed the sight.

consider bats symbols of good luck, and some Native American cultures considered them powerful deities. Given a chance, bats can be a fascinating and beneficial addition to the backyard, as they swoop around at dusk, devouring annoying insect pests.

Patio Ponds

Garden ponds and fountains were once for the very rich. But today, anyone can have a garden pond with a fountain or waterfall, even if the "yard" is limited to a patio or balcony.

Adding water to the patio can be as simple as setting out a shallow dish of water for use as a birdbath. Any shallow container, about 6 or more inches wide and about a half an inch deep, will suffice. Pie pans, garbage can lids or flowerpot bases will work well. Fill with clean water and wash every day or two. The wildlife attracted to the water will be dependent on where the container is

placed. Containers set on the ground will probably attract the greatest number of species, from birds and butterflies, to those creatures which can fly or jump high enough to reach the water.

To grow water plants, or perhaps a fish or two, add a tub garden to the patio or yard. There are many products on the market today. Half whiskey kegs with plastic liners are frequently used. Numerous plastic tub gardens, in a variety of sizes are also available. These have the advantage of being lightweight and inexpensive.

Small pumps can be added to any of these containers to allow for fountains or cascades of water. Not only is moving water attractive to wildlife, but pleasant to hear.

Here are some considerations when adding a small tub pond to the patio or yard:

- 1) If water plants are to be grown, choose a container which is preferably at least a foot deep. While some water plants do well in shallow water, other species, including some water lilies, require deeper water
- 2) Consider adding

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Dunlap, Iowa

Grassed waterways improve land value

by Lou Waite
& Russ Kurth

Those passing by on Highway 30 just north of Logan may have noticed a great difference in the landscape this spring. While residents in this part of Iowa are accustomed to seeing erosion, some may have noticed ditches in the fields next to the rock quarry growing deeper with each passing year. The more observant, therefore, would also have noticed that those deep gullies have been replaced by wide, grassed waterways.

Gary Thien, of Thien Farm Management, Council Bluffs, said that in his initial report to landowner Kathryn Johnson of Louisville, Kentucky, he made certain recommendations.

"One of them was that the erosion problem in that area should be alleviated, so as to improve productivity and asset value of the land, as well as conserve soil and water. The upland areas of the farm had been terraced, but the bottom land from the highway to the Boyer River was always wet and gullied. I felt the ditches carried enough water to become good grassed waterways, rather than be

allowed to continue to degrade. I thought the area would qualify for the Continuous CRP waterway program. Kathryn agreed with me, so application was made to the Farm Services Agency, which forwarded it to NRCS for determination."

Russ Kurth, District Conservationist commented: "I reviewed the application with Gary to determine if the area was eligible for CRP and if a waterway was feasible. The feasibility includes measuring the drainage area, determining the peak runoff from a 10-year, 24-hour storm, and determining the grade of the waterway. Once all this information was received, a preliminary waterway design was completed and reviewed with Gary."

"The preliminary design called for a waterway 45-feet wide and 1-foot deep. I also recommended that some tile be installed to drain a wet and seepy spot in the upper reaches of the waterway. A grassed waterway with spring-water running in it part of the year will fail, and a ditch will erode in the middle of the grassed waterway. The tile alleviates that problem."

"A landowner can enter just the designed waterway

width into CRP. They can also elect to enter a wider area into CRP, up to 2-times the design width, not to exceed 100 feet. In this case, the landowner elected to go with a 52-foot wide strip."

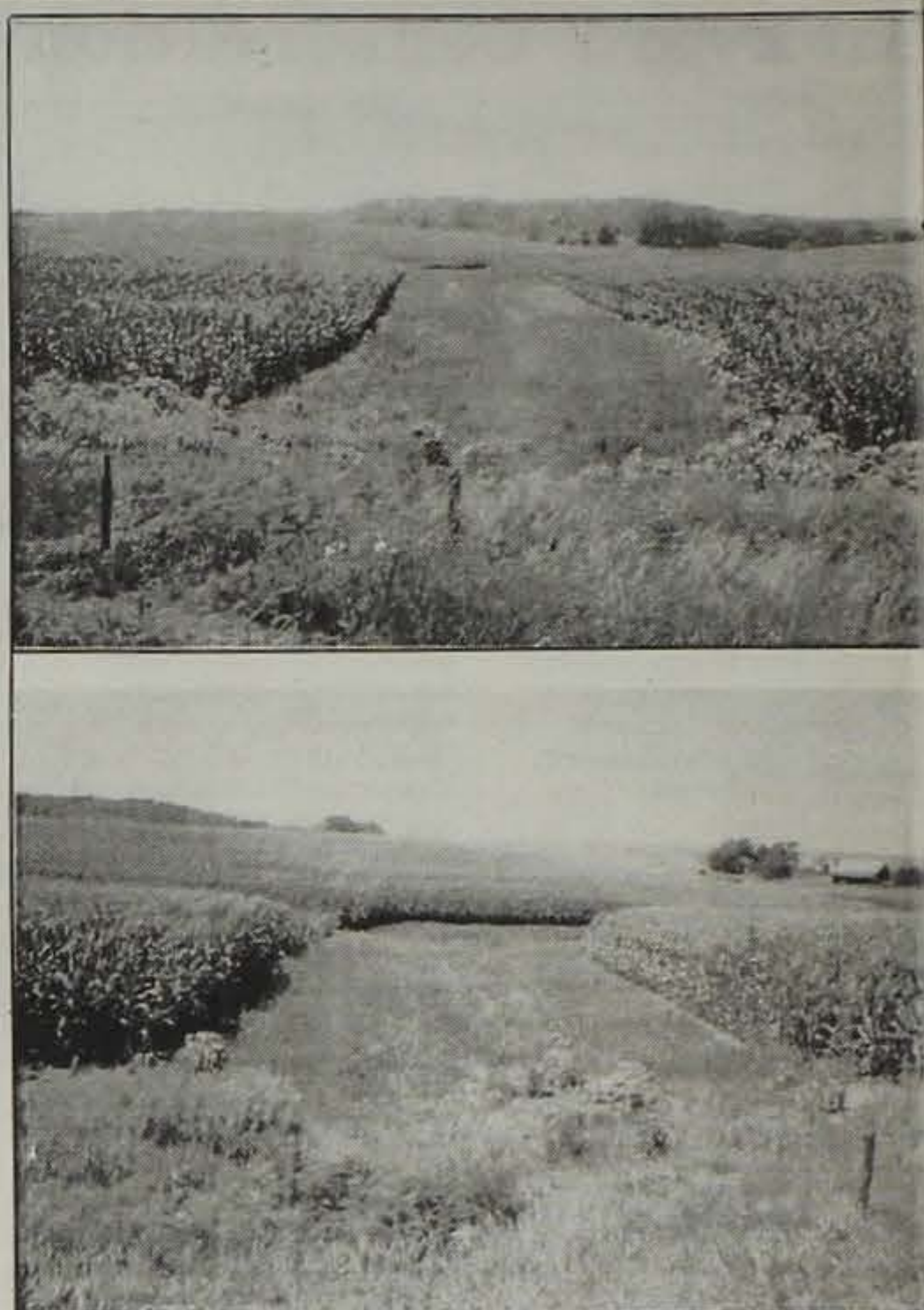
"Knowing the planned width and the length of the waterway, I figured the acres for CRP, and developed a cost-estimate to tile, shape and seed the waterway. A conservation plan was then developed for the field, and a contract to cost-share 50% of the estimated expense connected with installing the waterway."

"Last fall, after the crop was harvested on the Johnson land, we surveyed the waterway to determine the actual grade. From this survey, we estimated the size of tile needed, and the planned grade. The lower section of tile next to the river needed to be larger than the rest, because of the flat grade in that section."

"The survey was also used to determine the planned grade of the waterway and the needed cuts and fills to achieve the planned grade. This waterway was designed with a flat bottom and 8-to-1 side-slopes. The upper portion of the waterway has a 20-foot flat bottom, 1-foot deep. The lower section also has a 20-foot flat bottom, but is 1 1/2-foot deep."

Scott Pape, operator of the farm, said the improvement was "amazing", and made his work much easier, without having to cross or drive around the ditches. "I am operator of another of Kathryn's farms," Scott noted, "and she is always willing to do whatever it takes to preserve the soil. I certainly appreciate that."

Thien said the completion of the project met the goal he



These grassed waterways are a vast improvement over the gullies which once bisected the fields on the Johnson land

had set: to stop erosion of the ditch, and degradation of the asset value of the land. "Past efforts had been made to control the deep ditch," he said. "It was bulldozed in and cropped over, but never seeded. Naturally, it washed out again, and the problem re-occurred."

Thien said he felt another improvement was that the water flowing through the waterway will be filtered, or "cleaner", once it reaches the river. "It's a double benefit; saving soil and protecting the water quality," he

emphasized.

He stressed that fact that he has always had a good working relationship with FSA and the NRCS. "I appreciate their assistance, and I know Kathryn feels the same," he said. "I also commend Kathryn for being so concerned about protecting the land."

Kurth concluded: "This is a very good example of how a landowner can use the Continuous CRP program to help them improve their farm operation. In this case, the grassed waterway with tile installed stopped the gullying and ditch problems; dried up a spring; improved the appearance of the farm; made farming easier, and improved the quality of water running into the river. Future benefits will be even greater. We appreciate Kathryn, Gary and Scott's cooperative effort."

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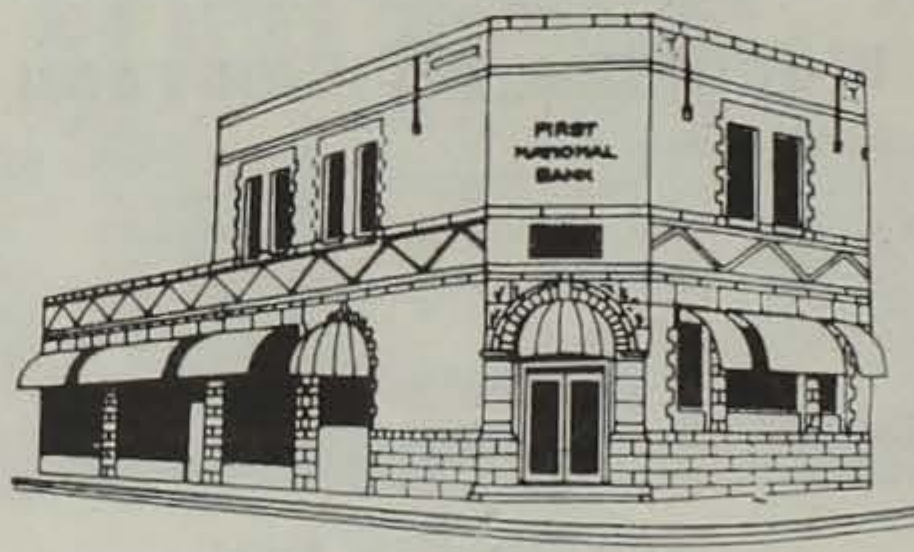
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Farm buffer strips utilized as a hunting preserve



Bryan Williams startles game birds into flight, in this shelter located on the Six Feathers Hunting Preserve.

by Lou Walte

Bryan Williams is a native of Oakland. He received a degree in Commercial Art (Graphic Arts and Design) from the Hawkeye Institute of Technology in Waterloo. He studied glass-blowing, pottery and sculpture at Palomar College in

California. But in 1990, he came back to Iowa, having purchased his grandfather's farm near Oakland. His art (examples of which demonstrate an obvious talent) is now a "hobby".

So perhaps one could say he is now sculpting the land. He has also established the Six Feathers Hunting Preserve, available to the

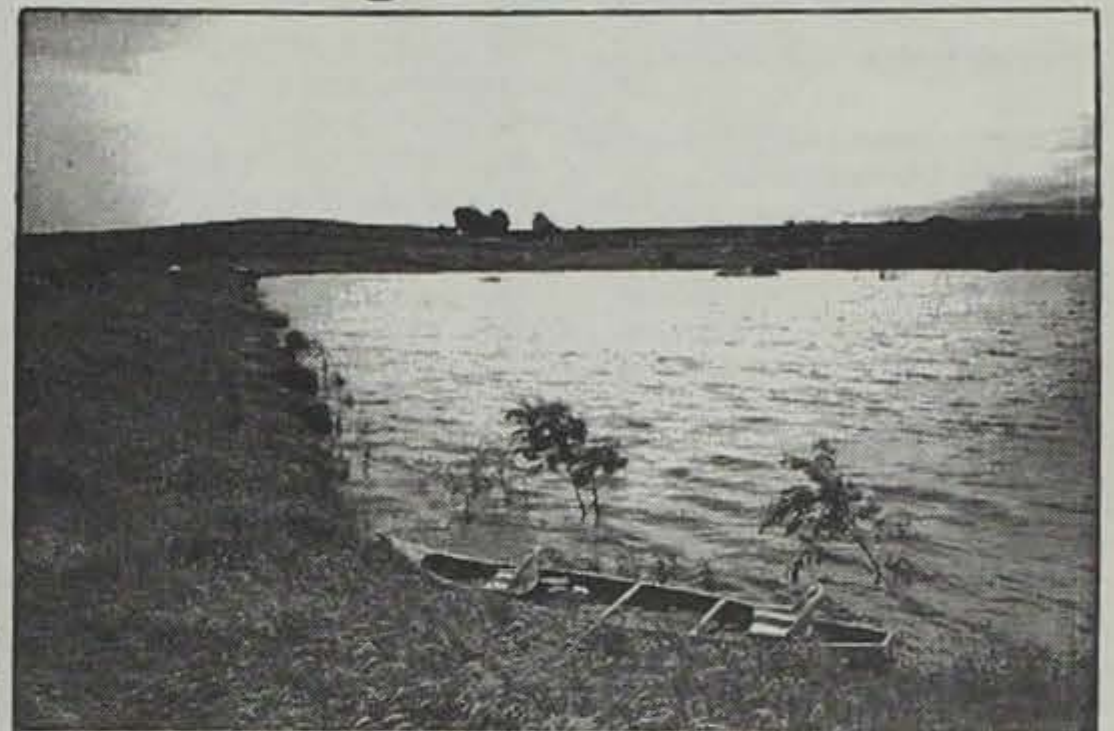
public. He uses his graphic arts skills to enhance the advertising and brochures.

But first came the farm, and Bryan admits it was "pretty much in need of conservation measures" when he obtained it. A creek which traverses the land had caused much degradation, and deep gullies had eroded the fields.

"First, the gullies were plowed in and seeded," Bryan said. "But there was an area which was almost always too soggy to farm. It was determined to be a wetland, so I decided to enhance upon that. With the aid of cost-share from NRCS, and staff assistance, a dam was built and a 7-acre pond created. Four acres in that area I am allowing to revert back to a natural wetland and wildlife haven."

The farm, with Russell Brandes as operator, has 75 acres of row crop which is no-tilled in a corn/bean rotation. The balance is native grasses, which Bryan is establishing. This includes Big Bluestem, Little Bluestem, Switchgrass, Indian Grass, etc. "NRCS laid out buffer strips of grass between the crop rows," Bryan said, "and those strips are used as part of the hunting preserve."

Bryan, working through the Army Corps of Engineers, dug four 1/4 acre pools in the wetland, three-feet and less in depth. "I wanted to attract waterfowl, and diversify the area so it would show several ecological factors," he pointed out. "In the 7-acre pond, I constructed five nesting islands, but the wave action kept eroding them away. So, in the winter, I took sleds of rip-rap and placed it around the islands,



The dam and part of the ponding area



An overhead view of the pond and hunting preserve area.

on the 'shelves' which had been formed by the erosion. There are three islands remaining, and I have to continually add to them to keep them maintained."

The effort has been worthwhile, however, for two Canadian Geese nesting pairs have hatched 6 goslings each of the past four years. A rare Trumpeter Swan, with a neck band lettered in red and white, visited the site. Five Blue Heron and a white Egret are there most of the time and nesting Mallard Ducks have hatched their young.

"Two years ago, I had 15,000 Snow Geese, and about 5,000 stayed for three weeks this year," Bryan informed. "But I really feel that if the problem of the overabundance of Snow Geese is not resolved, entire waterfowl flocks will become diseased with such ailments as Avian Cholera, Avian Botulism, etc.

Bacteria leaches into the soil and water when the affected birds are present, and other birds are infected from it. I know the US Fish and Wildlife Department and Department of Natural Resources are working on it, but so far, in my opinion, their efforts have had little effect."

The 1,000-acre hunting preserve is licensed by the State of Iowa, and offers six different species of game birds. The season is extended beyond the normal, being open from September 1 to

March 31.

Bryan commented that last year, the first for the preserve, was "good", and there has already been a lot of interest for this fall. Of the five ponds, only two were created using cost-share funds, with the rest paid "out of pocket". But they and the wetland area are already proving to be a good investment. "I appreciated the cost-share, true, but I also appreciated the excellent advice and assistance from Greg Mathis, Ron Peterson and Jeff Godwin," Bryan said. (Mathis is East Pott District Conservationist; the other men are engineers).

Bryan's partner in the hunting preserve is Scott Wright, who also owns the Big Grove Country Inn, east of Oakland. "He is actually the hunting expert and guide," Bryan said with a grin, "while I just concentrate on the wildlife."

Now that his other enterprises are off to a good start, Bryan wants to try "aqua-culture" (fish farming). Wildlife will always be his main interest, however, he said.

"I feel that if a farmer would just dedicate one percent of his crop acres for wildlife habitat, the returns would be tenfold," he declared. "I doesn't take much sacrifice or effort to do it, compared to the benefits received."

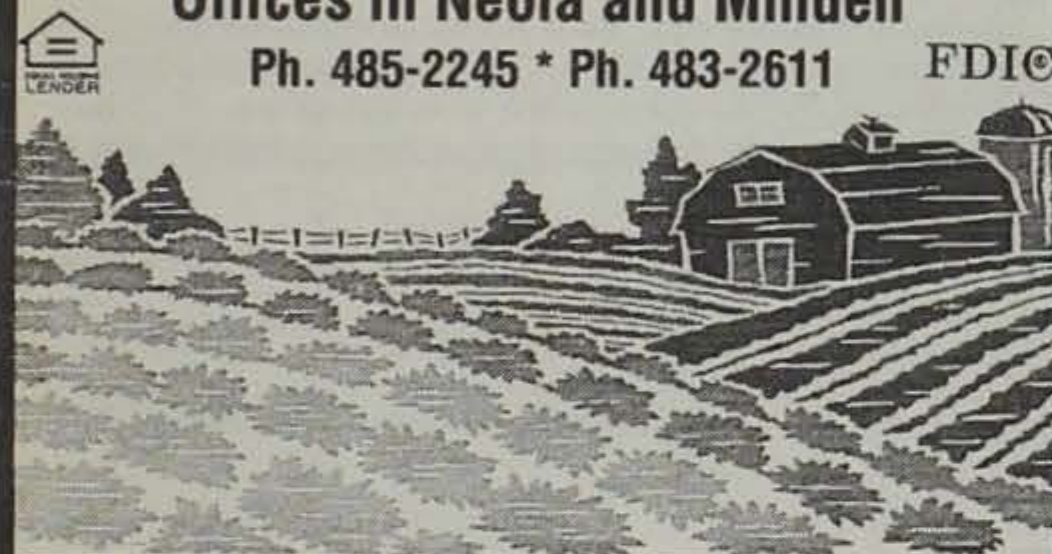


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Farm Creek "experience"

by Lou Walte

I have many times wondered how creeks received their names. In Harrison County, we have creeks named Stowe, Allen, Richardson, Mill, Hoffman etc., which could have been named after people. Mosquito, Picayune, Steer, Pigeon, Potato, Six-Mile, Mud, Willow, etc., may have been named for characteristics. I know that Mud Creek lives up to its name, and Willow Creek is lined with trees of that specie. But Six-Mile Creek is longer than six miles, Potato Creek has no potatoes, and there are no more pigeons around Pigeon Creek than any other.

Obviously, the names of some creeks are very descriptive, some are mundane, and some just plain unimaginative. But however the case, most creeks have characteristics which make them individual and unique.

Such a stream is Farm Creek in East Pottawattamie County. With a name which couldn't be more mundane, Farm Creek . . . or the section I saw of it . . . is far from the ordinary.

When Greg Mathis informed me that a water quality workshop was to be held, using Farm Creek as an example, I felt it would be a good opportunity for a story and photos for this publication. When the scheduled day arrived, however, and the heat index

rose to 110 degrees, I wasn't so certain. But long years in this business have conditioned me to know, like the familiar saying, "the show must go on."

We met at the Wheeler Grove Church for the initial session. The group included farmers and landowners, a scattering of youngsters, NRCS personnel, a park ranger, a naturalist, and at least three reporters/photographers. The session was sponsored by the Izaak Walton League, the Iowa Environmental Council and East Pott NRCS.

Julie Middleton, director of the IWL's *Save Our Streams* program instructed us in how to monitor water quality in a creek. She showed slides of various creeks which had been "adopted" by citizen's groups, and improved through their efforts. Many of her slides were of streams in the eastern part of the States. The shallow, clear, rock-bottomed creeks bore little resemblance to what we have here. I thought to myself that this might be a learning experience for Julie, as indeed it turned out to be.

Julie said it is hoped individuals and groups in every area will consider monitoring a stream or streams. Biological monitoring, she said, provides information which will determine whether or not a stream has been polluted, or the ecological balance is affected by harmful conditions. These



Julie Middleton, left, Director of IWL's *Save Our Streams* program, is assisted by Assistant Park Ranger Darren Jones, as she nets biological samples from Farm Creek.

might include physical problems (excessive sediment); organic pollution (human or livestock waste); and toxic pollutants (chlorine, acids, pesticides, oil, etc.) The result is a reduction in the number of insects. Macroinvertebrates, on the other hand, will live for many years in streams where adequate habitat and water quality exist.

We were given a chart of stream insects and crustaceans, with drawings of such critters as Caddisfly, Water Penny, Dobsonfly, Scud, Alderfly, Aquatic Worms, etc. The only ones with which I was familiar were the Dragon Fly, Leech, Mayfly and Crayfish (Crawdaddy). I was very aware of my lack of knowledge, having never considered too carefully what was living in our muddy creek waters.

Slides were then shown of some of the organisms, and we were to identify them from having examined the chart. I failed that miserably, for I could see

little resemblance to the detailed, black and white drawings, although I did recognize leeches (yuck) and crayfish.

Then it was time to put our newly gained knowledge to work, and we set out for the Farm Creek. While waiting

for everyone to gather on the bank, I learned from Greg that the creek was a waterway still in its natural state, never having been disturbed or straightened. Farm Creek Watershed had

Continued on page 7



Michelle Zimmerman, East Pott County Resource Planner, with James Henry, who provided a site for examining the samples taken from the creek.

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Farm Creek . . .

Continued from page 6

been formed about three years ago, and encompasses croplands, pastures with cow-calf herds, a cattle feedlot and a swine operation. (I did wonder about the water quality, with all the possibilities of contamination). Greg noted that the emphasis was on soil erosion and stream degradation; common concerns in this part of the country. (Of course, I thought, he does not yet know if the stream quality is to be an added concern).

I found the creek to be charming, with the water moving quite rapidly along a partially grass-filled channel. But then I am attracted to streams of any kind, and the plant life growing there. The hot sun, however, rapidly lessened my pleasure, and I had foolishly brought along no hat to shade my face.

Darren Jones, Assistant Park Ranger from the Hitchcock Nature Center, donned tall waders, but Julie simply plunged into the creek . . . shoes, clothes and all. From the bank, the creek didn't seem too deep, but the water came to Julie's waist, which I think surprised her somewhat. She was also taken off-guard by the slippery mud bottom, and almost dunked herself once or twice. But she began dipping the net she carried

under the water and into the streambank, to capture whatever might be found there. After rinsing some of the mud from the net, its contents were dumped into a bucket held by Darren. This continued until Julie felt they might have an adequate sampling, although she noted that usually more would have been taken.

We had earlier heard her say that there were four main habitats of muddy-bottom streams. These are

1) Steep banks/vegetated margins; the habitat along the bank and the edge of the water, with vegetation, plants living along the shoreline and submerged roots. It may be home to dragon flies, damselflies and other organisms.

2) Silty bottoms with organic matter, found where the water moves slowly and there is overhanging vegetation and other sources of organic matter. These may harbor burrowing organisms.

3) Woody debris with organic matter, consisting of dead or living trees, roots, and other submerged organic matter. It is important because it helps trap organic particles which serve as food sources for organisms and provides shelter from predators.

4) Sand-rock/gravel



"Does that look like a crawdaddy? And what is this squiggly critter?"

substrata, found in slow-moving streams. The velocity of water is usually not rapid enough to move along larger rocks, which then provide productive habitat.

There are three categories of streams: clean, some pollution and severe pollution. We were to determine into which category Farm Creek fell, and also to identify the macroinvertebrates which had been found there.

The group trooped up to James Henry's farm, where shade trees and a shelter house were the best thing I had seen all day. The gunk from the buckets was dumped into shallow pans, and the larger group was divided into three smaller ones to assess what had been

captured.

I think the youngsters present really took an interest in this, and carefully prodded the mud to see what was lurking within. Most of the adults also took part in this activity. I know that caddisflies were found, as well as "crawdaddys", dragon flies, water pennies, beetles and perhaps more.

A sack lunch was served, after which I departed, having another interview to conduct. But as far as I know, Farm Creek was determined to be basically healthy, although some improvement could be made.

I guess I could say the same for myself, once the sunburn I acquired became less painful.

I have not learned whether

or not the stream was "adopted" by some of those present, but if so, then I can tell "the rest of the story". (Sorry, Paul Harvey)

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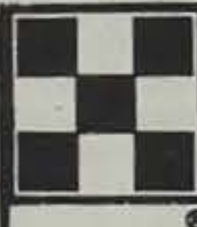
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Looking Back

We are introducing a new feature in the East Pottawattamie section of the Quad-District Conservation News. It is interesting to see what was happening in the past, and perhaps compare with today's concerns. We hope the reader will also find these articles of interest. If anyone has any information about Mrs. Travis, her family, or about Jordon Creek Watershed, we invite them to share it with us. Greg Mathis, D.C.

The following appeared in the June 24, 1965 issue of the Oakland Acom.

I am Jordon Creek . . .

by Mrs. Ralph Travis
Oakland, Iowa

I am Jordon Creek. The Mormons named me, I think. They probably thought when they crossed me they would find the Promised Land.

To tell the truth, they were already in the promised land; land flowing with things just as valuable as milk and honey. That land was my watershed. I received the water from nineteen thousand acres of the richest land in the world, most of it covered with trackless forest. Huge trees, vines, wild flowers and bushes sank their long roots into the cool, black earth and drew forth the food they needed to grow and multiply.

When fall came they

returned their gifts to the soil again, in the form of dropped leaves and decaying wood, and this exchange went on for thousands of years. I was a small stream then, because the fallen leaves and the tangled bushes held the water back on the moist land. Only the surplus found its way to me, where I gladly received it.

But then the white man came. As he cut the trees and plowed out the shrubs, there was nothing to hold back the water, and I became at times a raging torrent. My banks grew steeper and my water grew muddier, as more and more of that rich topsoil came down my channel and into the muddy Missouri, then on to the sea.

Soon, no wagons could cross me like the pioneers had, down the grassy slope through the clear water, and up the other side. Now bridges had to be built across the chasms, and as I got deeper and deeper, I would even wash those out. At first it was fun, destroying what those whites were doing. Carrying their precious soil down to make deltas at New Orleans seemed a pretty good way of paying them back for the destruction they had done to my forests. I was taking away from them the very thing they had come west to find . . . good farm land.

But now I am beginning to see things differently. In the first place, those pioneer farmers are gone, and a new generation has come to take

their places. They don't remember how rich that topsoil used to be, and they go ahead and mine the soil as if it would be there forever. I've tried to make friends with this new generation and they try to respond in their own peculiar ways. They drive their evil-breathing machines across my bridges or along my banks and sometimes say admiring things about me. I try to look up and smile, but who can smile through mud and debris?

Sometimes I wonder how dumb people can be! Wouldn't you think they'd know better than to plant up and down a hill and plow up the grassy waterways, inviting their top soil to come down to me? Of course, some of them are getting smarter. I look up through my mud and see terraces and grass waterways and contour farming to help keep the soil and water where it ought to be. Some of them have even planted trees and bushes where they used to be, and that makes me happy . . . not only me, but kids and picnickers and hunters, and people who just naturally love the forests like I do. I give a special thanks to those people who have never cut their timber, but have left it for future generations to see what the promised land used to look like.

Some people leave their money to museums and schools for the future generations. These people leave just as important a heritage.

The other day two fishermen were talking where I could hear them. One said, "I hear they are planning to dam up this creek and make a big lake here."

Well, I could tell them a thing or two! If they put in a dam, I'll soon fill up the lake they built with black silt, and then make water fall over their dam. Can't they see that first they will have to hold the water on their farms with terraces and other conservation practices if they don't want their lake to be nothing but mud? I don't object to the dam. It will be more fun for me to hold up motor boats and splash at swimmers. It would be a new chapter in my long life. But I do hope they don't fill



Denise Miller, left, with Julia Gubbels, West Pott County Resource Planner. Both took part in the Farm Creek project.

Welcome, Denise!

Since June, a new face has been seen around the NRCS office in Oakland, after Denise Miller's arrival to assume the position of Soil Conservation Technician.

A native of Emerson, Iowa, Denise received a B.S. Degree in Agronomy and Horticulture from Northwest Missouri State University, Maryville.

Prior to coming to Oakland, she served as a Soil Conservationist with SCS and then NRCS in Iowa, Kansas and Missouri. "My husband, Dan, is employed by a banking firm," she said, with a smile, "and has been transferred from place to place. Fortunately, I have been able to find a position in each area."

While her duties as an SCT are basically the same, she has noted many differences in emphasis in the various states. "I went from a focus on erosion control in Iowa to water conservation in Kansas," she said. "Then in Missouri, they do a lot of tiling, using big tile, which is not as prevalent back

me with mud from their valuable fields.

Some of these days, I am going to ask the preacher of Wheeler Grove Church to tell me what became of the "Promised Land" the Bible talks about. Did it all wash down to the sea like this promised land is doing? Will people learn before it is too late?

Yours truly,
Jordon Creek

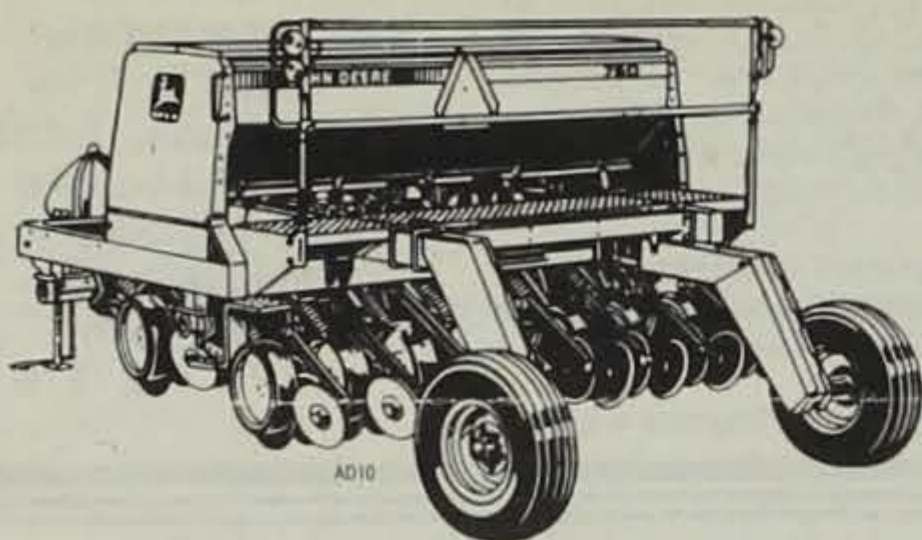
here. But designing and laying out terraces and structures, working with farm plans, making status reviews, doing data entry, etc., is pretty basic. You are just working with different statistics and different factors in each state."

Denise, whose effervescent good humor and outgoing personality is readily apparent, said she has found the Oakland office staff to be "wonderful".

"They really have been great," she affirmed, "and the landowners are outstanding as well. They are very willing to work with us, and very cooperative."

She said she has already noted that the Oakland office and staff is highly respected. "I certainly want to do everything I can to maintain that," she emphasized. "I am looking forward to developing further working relationships with the cooperators."

The Millers have two children: Jackson 8, and Andrea 5. The family enjoys camping, fishing and rock collecting. Denise likes to quilt, and refinish and restore antique furniture. The couple bought a large, 100-year-old Victorian house in Red Oak, which they are remodeling and redecorating. Dan also serves as landscape artist, when not involved with his duties at the Houghton State Bank in Red Oak.



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Serans enjoy "a beautiful place of retreat"

by Lou Waite

Gene Seran came from Istanbul, Turkey, to Omaha, Nebraska in 1958, to attend Creighton University. Ericka Schanber came from Boeblingen, Germany to become a student at Creighton. They met and became "good buddies", with that friendship evolving into a closer relationship, and in 1963 they were married. "We are still best friends," Ericka said, with her charming smile.

The next twenty-seven years were busy and productive. Gene was an instructor at Boystown, when Father Wegner was in charge, then taught mathematics at Ralston High School. He became a counselor at Ralston, then Guidance Director. He served as a Project Recovery Director for seven suburban area schools in the Omaha vicinity. In between all this, he received his Master's Degree in Guidance and Counseling from Creighton, and also coached soccer and wrestling. After this whirlwind career, he decided to take "early separation" in 1991... but certainly not to retire. He and his son, Orhan, began operation of two full-service gas stations in Omaha. Orhan still operates one of these.

"But now," Gene said, with a grin, "I am only a farmer." And so, one might ask, was Ericka just a "hausfrau" during those transition years? Far from it! Ericka was busy buying and selling real estate!

"I so much enjoyed finding older homes and restoring them," she said, with her soft German accent. "Each one was a challenge, but I really enjoyed remodeling and redecorating them. Sometimes, I did not want to sell them again." Ericka is still being challenged, but this time the home she is restoring will not be sold. It is on the farm which the



Years of neglect had left their mark on the house, but the Serans envisioned it as it had been, and could be again.



The stately old house, restored to its former attractive, dignified appearance, proves what TLC and plenty of hard work can do.

couple now owns.

"It was pure luck that we got the farm," Gene said with a chuckle. "I had heard the farm (in rural Council Bluffs) was for sale, so one evening I drove out to see it. The next evening, I brought Ericka to see it."

"Yes," Ericka said emphatically, "I first saw

the old barn, and I loved it. I said right away, 'I want it!'"

"That's true," Gene said, with a nod of his head. "We bought the farm within half an hour after she saw it."

They used proceeds from the sale of their other businesses to buy the place. The original ten acres contained a two-story,

Victorian-style farmhouse, a large barn, a wash-house/shop and several outbuildings (including an outdoor two-holer), all in sad need of repair.

"Oh, but I could see the possibilities," Ericka said. "I knew it could become beautiful again!" And indeed, it is becoming so, due to many hours of hard work, which the Serans say has been a labor of love.

Additional land was purchased at various times, so now the farm encompasses 95 acres. Every bit of it is being improved and developed.

"We wanted a wildlife area," Gene said, "so we talked to Tom (Bottoms). With his guidance, we have plans to build an erosion control structure, so as to create a pond. We will plant native grasses and wildflowers there. We have already planted a windbreak with SWCD cost-share assistance. These people (NRCS) are so wonderful to tell us what is available, and what is best for us. We appreciate that so much." Ericka added, "Yes, what would we have done without them?" Tom commented that he has found it a pleasure to work with the Serans, and is looking forward to seeing the result of all their efforts.

With their own funds, the Serans have replaced all the old trees around the buildings with evergreen, birch and maple varieties. Tom noted that there are plans to do more terracing, and place some acres into the CRP program. The previously-mentioned

structure will be built and perhaps some forestry improvement made in the wildlife area. "There are a lot of trees," Tom commented, "and they also have five acres of virgin sod there. It has never been plowed, and that is a rare condition to find."

The exterior house renovation is almost complete, but finishing the interior will "take some time", the Serans admitted. The rooms which are done are very attractive, and evidence of Ericka's good taste and decorating skills. The only major structural change planned is to convert the present kitchen into a "mud room", and construct a new kitchen adjoining.

"I want to restore the wash-house", Ericka said, "and make it into a guest cottage. We are also saving the cement slab where once the chicken house stood, and will put a fountain there, and benches, and plant flowers all around." Already existing are colorful flowerbeds, bordered by old bricks found in the barn, with plans for more to be added. (One could wager that Ericka will even do something spectacular with the old outhouse! Oddly enough, that particular facility is semi-attached to a huge maple tree???)

Waving her hand toward the barn, Ericka said they plan to restore it. "It is wonderful!" she declared. "Eventually we want to have animals... maybe burros and some sheep and lambs!" With a shrug she added, "Or

Continued on page 10

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The Serans and one of the trees which they planted, following their purchase of the farm. In the background is the old barn, which they plan to restore.

Serans enjoy . . .

Continued from page 9

some peacocks, even!"

Gazing at the old structure for a moment, she turned back with a whimsical smile and declared, "I even love the barn swallows!"

The Serans said their children love to come and help with the work at the farm. They also like to simply enjoy the peace and tranquility, away from the

city hustle and bustle.

Son Rohan will be married to Robin Norquay in September. The vows will be exchanged in the restored barn, with a festive reception to be held on the lawn. Daughter Deniz and husband David Wintroub are certain to attend. Deniz is proprietress of a shoe store in Omaha, and David is an



Erika and Gene, seated, with Tom Bottoms standing, shown in the dining room of the home, which has been repared and redecorated. The large oak table will accommodate a large group of family or friends for dining pleasure.

attorney. Daughter Suzi, a psychology major at UNL will surely be there.

"I hope the children will always keep this place . . . make coming here a family tradition," Ericka said a bit wistfully. "People need the memories which hold a family together. The farm is so rich in land, culture and history! America has been so good to us! I cannot tell you how much it means. We want our children to continue with this, and build upon it."

Ericka loves to read, when she is not busy gardening or working on the house. Gene, who is chief carpenter, electrician, plumber, etc.

finds time to serve as a board member of "Children's Square", in Council Bluffs. He also belongs to the Optimist Club in Treynor.

Gene and Ericka live in Council Bluffs, but perhaps some day may move to the farm. At the present, however, it is a retreat for all their family and friends to enjoy.

"Sitting and watching the sunset is like getting a gift from God," Ericka explained. "We never saw the sky while living in town. It is so beautiful. I cannot find the words!"

But indeed, she did find them, and they touch the heart.

of her thoughts:

My Dear Gene: On a snowy October day last year, you anxiously told me of a surprise that you could not wait for me to see. As we drove out of the city into the white hills of Iowa, I couldn't imagine what I was about to see. As we approached the farm, I saw a faded red barn, placed among the serenity of the open country.

Gene, I thank you for such a peaceful place, that we can work on together. This farm has provided us and our children a beautiful place of retreat, that can be enjoyed by generations to come.

Love, Ericka

At the time of the interview, Ericka presented Gene with an album, filled with "before and after" photos, and this expression

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Doing more with Loess!

"One of the first steps in protecting the hills is realizing what you have; a family tradition, a reputation, the satisfaction of calling the hills 'home.'" - David Zahrt

The Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF) is expanding efforts to help landowners protect Iowa's "fragile giants," the Loess Hills of western Iowa.

This unique and beautiful landform draws a half million tourists each year and holds more large prairie tracts than anywhere else in Iowa. Yet only 3% of the native Loess Hills prairie remains.

INHF is a non-profit, member-supported organization that protects, preserves and enhances Iowa's natural resources for future generation. The Foundation is focusing its protection efforts into direct contact with area landowners. "Everyone talks about protecting land in the Loess Hills, but we want to make a real, personal effort to talk with landowners instead of *about* them," said Mark Ackelson, INHF President.

More funding

The Foundation recently won two major grants to expand its outreach to Loess Hills landowners. Both grants require matching funds.

The Iowa West Foundation approved \$48,650 for INHF Loess Hills Voluntary Protection Initiative. The program provides information and support services to Loess Hills landowners who want to protect their natural land, prairies and grazed hills.

Another \$177,250 in federal funds has been awarded to INHF by the Iowa Department of Transportation to work with interested landowners along the Loess Hills Scenic Byway.

Though some funds will be



available to purchase natural lands, that is not the sole focus of this program. "Many lands can be protected while remaining in private ownership -- through conservation easements or other methods," noted Ackelson.

More staff

Thanks to grant funding, the Foundation has hired a new staff member, David Zahrt, to work directly with Loess Hills landowners. Since more than 95% of the 650,000-acre region is privately owned, David has a big job ahead of him.

David's family farmstead in Monona County straddles the steep, western face of the Loess Hills and the flood-prone valley below. Like other area landowners, he's struggled with invading cedars, variable crop prices, and the pain of seeing parts of the local landscape "scraped away."

"I've grown up in the hills, so they are really home to me," David said. "The idea that there's a concerted effort to protect the essence of them is very appealing to

me. People don't realize that they have options they can use to protect the land they own. My job is getting information out to the people, letting them know about alternatives they didn't know they had."

"One of the first steps in protecting the hills," David added, "is realizing what you have; a family tradition, a reputation, the satisfaction of calling the hills 'home.' Another closely related step is spelling out how you want to protect your property... what kind of legacy you want to leave."

More cooperation

Meanwhile, the Foundation remains active in the Loess Hills Alliance. INHF President Mark Ackelson now chairs the Alliance's land protection committee.

"The Loess Hills have brought together all kinds of new partners, with all the joys and challenges of teamwork," said Mark. "Even though the partners have varying missions, Alliance's of this size and significance offer plenty of

work for everyone."

For example, INHF has been collaborating with The Nature Conservancy to expand an inventory of natural lands. Once the inventory is complete, each organization and others can identify and pursue the projects that best fit its individual mission.

More projects

The Foundation's most recently completed Loess Hills project is an addition to the Oak Ridge Conservation Area in Woodbury County. INHF purchased 80 acres from Jerry and Cecelia Bumstead of Mapleton. The Bumstead property is very hilly land on the western bluffs of the

Little Sioux River. The Woodbury County Conservation Board will repurchase the area from INHF and manage the land for wildlife and public hiking. Restoration of native prairie remnants is also planned.



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Attention prairie pluckers!

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Three new prairie species will join the list of Iowa-origin plant materials being developed for the Iowa Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) prairie roadside projects. They are Mountain Mint *Pycnanthemum virginianum*, Bluejoint grass *Calamagrostis canadensis* and Prairie Sage *Artemisia ludoviciana*.

Much seed from southern Iowa only are collections of Canada Anemone *Anemone canadensis*, Golden Alexanders *Zizia aurea*, Great Blue Lobelia *Lobelia siphilitica* and native switchgrass *Panicum virgatum*.

Statewide collections of butterfly milkweed *Asclepias tuberosa* and Prairie cordgrass *Spartina*

pectinata are still being accepted.

Greg Houseal of IRVM says, "Scout out your favorite patches of these species and help us add their uniqueness to Iowa Ecotypes Project seed. Thanks for your participation!"

What means culture?

A totally integrated Roadside Vegetation Management program employs a variety of methods. The National Roadside Vegetation Management Association Task Force divides these methods into six categories. The categories include:

Mechanical, Biological, Cultural, Chemical, "Hands Off" Approach and Preservation/Conservation.

Except for "cultural", these are pretty self-explanatory. "Cultural" sounds like introducing

plants to the theatre or ballet. The IRVM task force defines cultural as "Using methods such as seed selection, planting, mulching and controlled burning aimed at the

successful establishment of species that aid in erosion control, enhance aesthetics, improve habitat and diversify and restore natural vegetation."

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Road Type	Miles	Roadside Width	Acres Per Mile	Total Acres
Interstate	1,200 miles	150 feet	18.0	21,818
Rural Divided 4-lane	1,550 miles	150 feet	18.0	28,181
Primary 2-lane	8,950 miles	45 feet	5.5	48,818
Secondary (paved)	18,000 miles	60 feet	7.0	131,000
Secondary (gravel)	73,000 miles	35 feet	4.0	309,697
TOTAL				539,514

Roadside widths vary widely on many roads so acreage totals are estimates. Does not include acreage around ramps and interchanges.

Few US adults have basic environmental knowledge

Do you think you know about the environment? Chances are you don't! A 1997 survey by the National Environmental Education and Training Foundation (NEETF) on environmental attitudes and behavior has revealed some disturbing facts about basic environmental knowledge in the US.

The survey, a pre-tested, 12-question quiz, was administered to 1501 randomly sampled adults cross the country to gauge their environmental knowledge. The results were disturbing --- only 23% knew that the main cause of water pollution is from run-off,

and only 33% knew that the US gets most of its power by burning coal and oil.

Ironically, the survey showed that adults cared the most about water and air pollution, and 95% support teaching environmental education in schools.

Misinformation on key issues is as great a problem as the lack of knowledge, the survey showed. Fully 50% of adults think that factories are the main source of water pollution in the US, even though that has not been true for years; and two out of three surveyed said they think the country's power is produced by hydropower, nuclear or solar energy

sources, even though these power sources only account for a small fraction of the total power produced.

The report of the results also stressed that educators should note the differences in the survey between men and women. Women are more supportive of environmental protection than men -- yet only 23% of the women passed the quiz, while 43% of the men passed. Social researchers told NEETF the difference most likely reflects the variation in the amount of science education men and women received in schools. A counter-intuitive impact of high levels of environmental knowledge also comes out in the survey. Those who are most knowledgeable (answering 9 or more correctly) were 11% less likely to think we face an environmental catastrophe in the next ten years, and 11% more likely to think environmental regulation has gone too far.

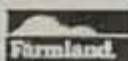
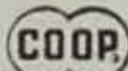
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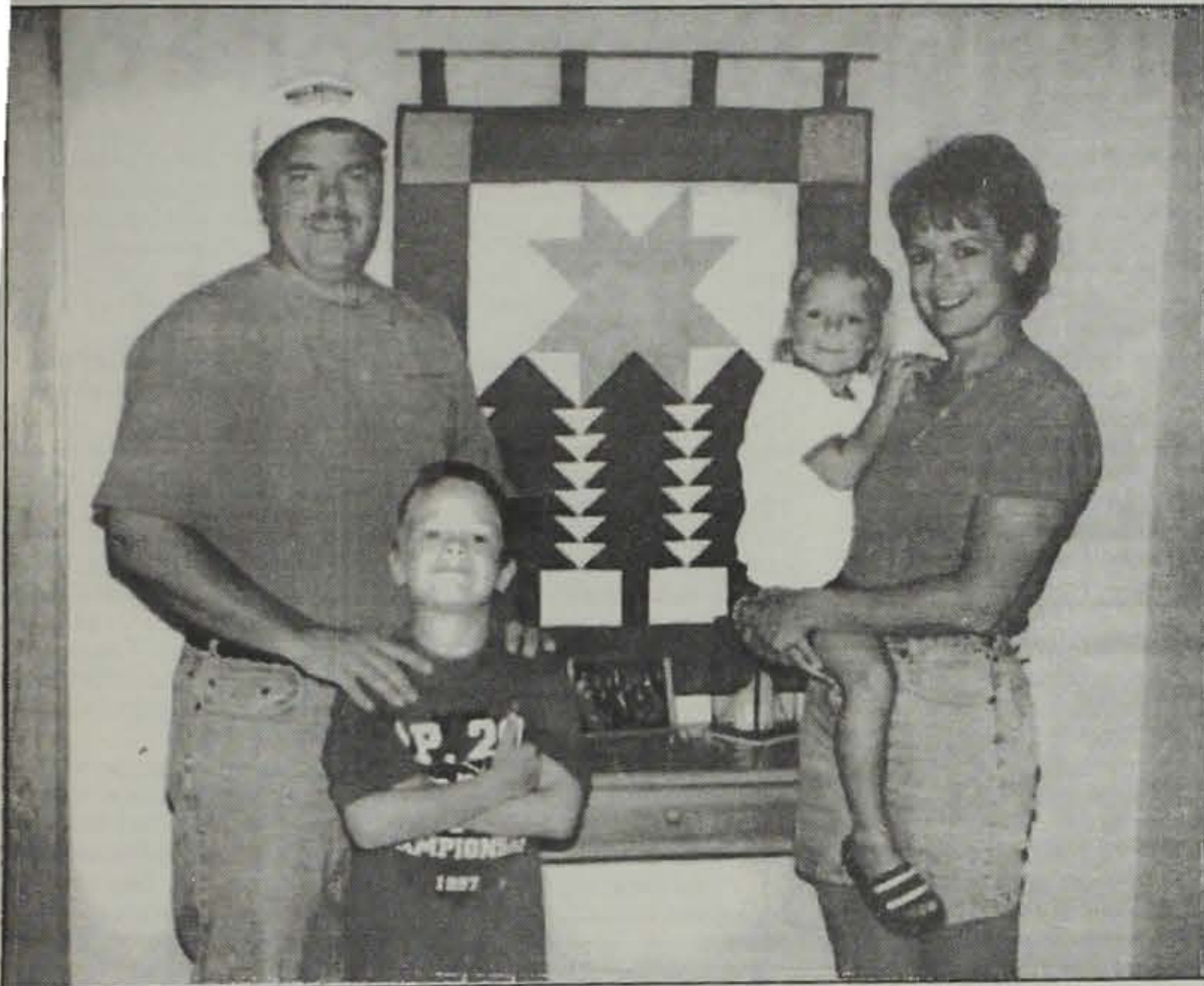


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Kevin Mills says, "Must be optimistic about farming!"



Kevin and Lori Mills, with their children Justin and Sidney. The wall hanging in the background is one of the many attractive quilted projects Lori has completed.

by Lou Walte

Kevin Mills believes that you have to be an optimist when it comes to agriculture.

This second generation farmer says his family is "ag through and through", with father and mother, Ed and Gloria (although semi-retired) and brother Wade also involved in the operation.

Kevin attended Iowa State University in Ames, then Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs. He received a degree in business management accounting. He was employed in Omaha for a time, then moved to Carroll in 1988, where he worked for Terra Industries, beginning as a salesman then becoming plant manager. He later decided to establish his own commercial business, and also continue his farm interests. Moving to Jackson Township in Shelby County, he opened Prairie Rose Ag., named after a nearby park and lake. The firm dispenses chemicals and seed; provides field scouting, etc.

He uses no-till and minimum-till residue management systems for his farm operation, growing corn and beans. "In the hills around here, 70 percent of the growers use no-till in one way or another," Kevin declared. "Walking the fields after the heavy rains this spring, I could see that every cornstalk was a miniature dam, and there was minimal erosion.

Water absorbed into the soil can penetrate and is not lost. You can get into the fields sooner after a rain, since the water is absorbed faster."

Kevin noted that he realizes no-till is not always the best option, and some farmers need to use minimum till for various reasons. Tillage is needed especially when the ground is heavily compacted. "But if one uses a para-plow, the big, curved shanks go down into the soil and loosen the compaction without disturbing the surface residue," he pointed out, "and the water absorption is increased. It is best to do it in the fall when the moisture goes down, freezes and thaws with the cycle, and breaks up the compaction. In areas where there is flat, black soil, such as in Carroll County, if tillage isn't done in the fall, there are real problems to be faced in the spring."

Kevin recalled that his father was one of the first farmers to try mini-till, and received a lot of criticism for it at the time.

"But time also proved how effective it is, and seeing is always believing," he said with a chuckle. "I know that this year when the soil was wetter than normal, I could plant beans sooner than others who hadn't no-tilled. There is a great savings in time and money, and time especially is of the essence in my case, because of the other business."

Kevin declared that while his heart is in farming, he also loves the chemical and seed business -- loves the agronomy -- and feels he has the best of both worlds.

"It's always a new challenge, a new technology to learn," Kevin said. "I used to deal with maybe four or five chemicals used for crops in 1988, but now we deal with hundreds. We must therefore do the research and have the information to provide to the farmers. It is a constant effort to stay on top of the product demand and the predicted result. When the farmers ask for advice, we have to be certain we can give it,

and make certain it is accurate and complete."

This year, brother Wade raised tofu soybeans, contracted to a Japanese buyer. White corn is also raised, and primarily contracted to firms who use it for tortillas, white corn chips, tacos, tostados, etc. Next year's crop is already contracted at above-normal market price.

"Farmer's today need ways to diversify," Kevin affirmed, "and this has been a good way for us. Also with no-till, there are so many more tools to use which are more efficient and more effective. It is the same with chemicals. Many farmers now have their own sprayers and their own GPS monitors on the equipment. Each farmer has to have the ability and the willingness to adapt a change very quickly, based on weather, economic conditions, or whatever affects or influences it."

Kevin noted that farmers need to be very conscious of input costs, when corn and soybeans are at record low prices. "But by the same token," he continued, "it doesn't pay to take agronomic shortcuts, because by cutting rates, you soon have a weed problem. You still need to 'weed and feed' the crop in order to get the best results. We don't know what the future holds. We could still see \$2.40 corn. You just have to remain optimistic about agriculture."

After musing for a moment, Kevin said, "I remember the first line of the FFA creed I learned in the 9th grade, which was, 'I believe in the future of farming with a faith not of words but of deeds.' There was more, but I have always remembered that much."

With a wave of his hand, he emphasized, "I wish I could just flip a switch and get people's attention. People don't realize. They think the economy is good, because they are not aware of the farm situation. It's really pretty sad."

Kevin and his wife, Lori, have two children: Justin, 6 1/2 and Sidney, 3 1/2. The family enjoys stock car races, snowmobiling, water skiing, boating, fishing and hunting. Lori loves to quilt, and some of her attractive examples decorate their home. The children are involved with swimming, soccer, T-ball, and other activities. The family attends the Immanuel Lutheran Church in Harlan.

"Our major goal is family," Kevin said, "and we are definitely family-oriented, just as we are ag-oriented." With a smile, he concluded: "They are alike in a way, for you have to give up some things, in order to gain others. But you gain a lot more than you lose, in the long run."



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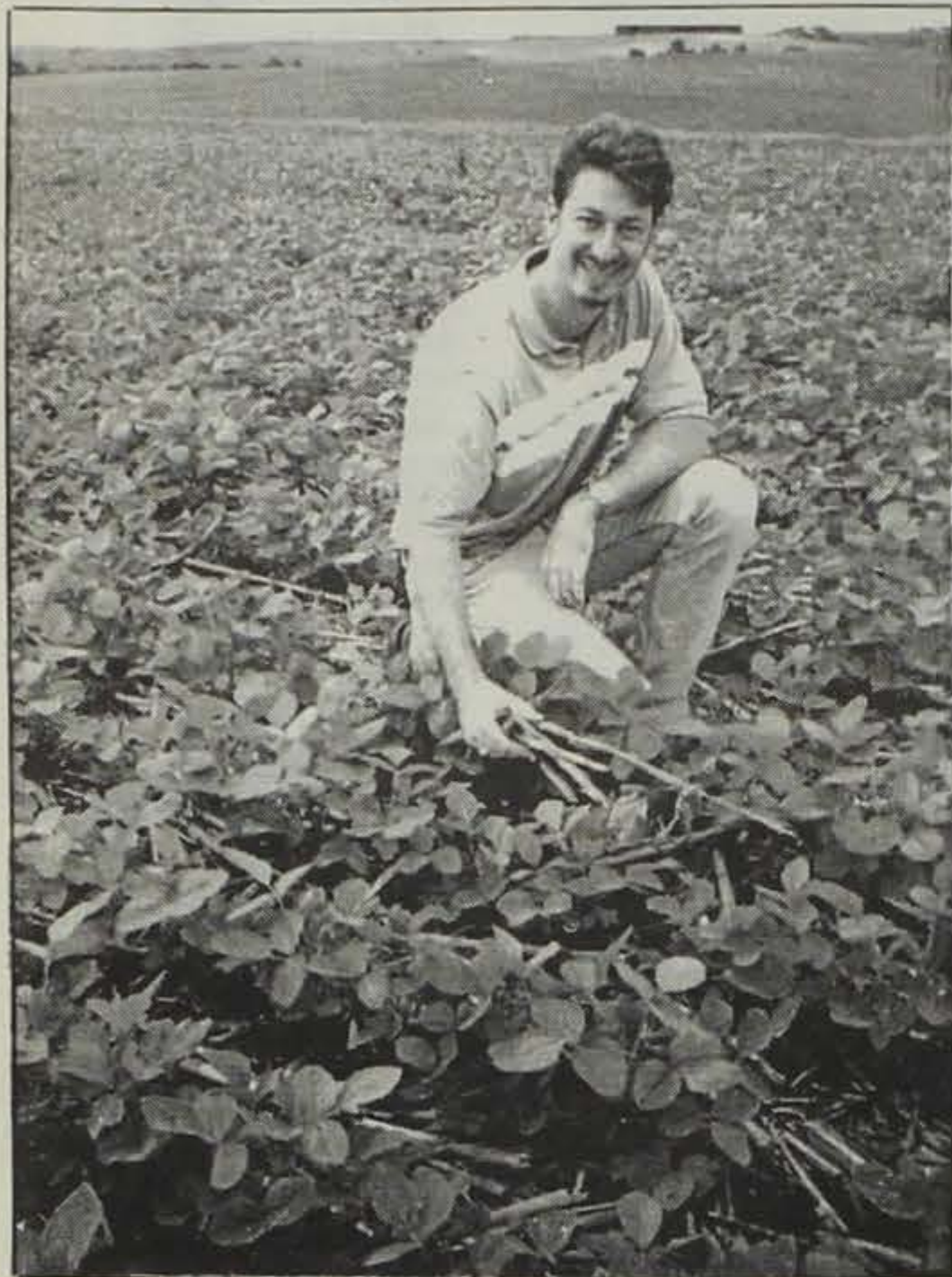
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Century Farm once owned by great-great-grandfather



by Lou Waite

Sabre Mayhugh lives on the Century Farm which once belonged to his great-great-grandfather. His ancestor came from Hanover, Germany on a clipper ship, and was among the "49'ers" who searched for gold in California. He later worked for a railroad, and many times passed through Iowa on a train. He was so impressed with it, that sometime prior to 1870 he came to Iowa and purchased the farm which his descendant now owns.

Sabre himself grew up in Denver, Colorado, and attended Harvard University, receiving a degree in East Asian Studies, with emphasis on China. His first farm experience came from working for a farmer in As, Norway. "This experience was a very positive influence on my life," Sabre commented, "but I also came to realize that in comparison, the American farmer has the best combination of natural resources, developed infrastructure and stable political and economic systems, to be the most efficient producer in the world."

Sabre lived and worked on mainland China and also in Taiwan, but decided to move to the family farm in Iowa. "I felt it would be a great way to combine physical and mental challenges," he said with a wry grin. Obviously,

he is attempting to meet and overcome the challenges, some of which he anticipated, and also some he had not.

"My farming experience in Norway was helpful, but the biggest crop there is timber, and they grow very little grain," Sabre noted. "So when I moved back here, I tried to work with the neighbors and learn from them. I also took a job with Con Agra, and currently work as a risk analyst with the livestock sector. Through Con Agra, I have learned how to market grain, and the method by which value is added to raw farm commodities."

The 500-acre farm has 430 tillable acres, with corn and soybeans being the major crop, plus some alfalfa. Sabre uses a no-till residue management system, which he said is "invaluable" to one who also holds an outside job. "The time-saving factor is of great benefit," he pointed out, "and the low costs associated with this system, plus the ecological benefits, make it ideal."

He said that he knew some farmers have moved away from no-till for various reasons, but he has found it to be very effective, using all the tactics learned from experience, and "staying with" the system.

"I use the methods and equipment recommended," he emphasized, "maintain the equipment in good working order, and try to

keep production costs down. I use a no-till planter for the row crops, rather than a drill, and have the combining custom-done."

Next year, Sabre plans to grow crops organically, utilizing the land presently in alfalfa. Organically-grown soybeans will definitely be one of the crops.

"I would like to see in the United States more focus on a third, large-scale commercial crop, such as an oil-seed or fiber crop," he stated. "I believe that farmers would then be provided with a tighter corn and soybean balance-sheet (prices are now so weak because of large surpluses) and revenue would continue to be generated in rural areas."

The farm has some old terraces, and some which have been installed more recently. Grassed waterways are established. Some tiling has been done, with more needed. The necessary field borders are also in place, and Sabre would like to implement some riparian buffer strips along a creek and the West Nishnabotna River, both of which run through his farm.

A Chicago/Rock Island railroad bridge still remains on his farm. The tracks of course, are long gone, but the bridge is a reminder of the great-great-grandfather who once traveled along them, and fell in love with the land.

Sabre's parents still live in Denver where his father, Charles, is a physician and his mother, Barbara, a nurse practitioner. His younger brother, Catamount, is in a Master's Physics program at the University of Colorado in Boulder. At the time of the interview, Catamount was a visitor of his brother, while working on a book he is writing.

Sabre's interests include antiques, with some beautiful family pieces decorating his home. He is a talented artist, as evidenced by several works which are also part of the decor.

When asked his opinion of what the future might hold, Sabre reflected, "In spite of the current low prices, I am still bullish on agriculture, because the American producer is low-cost, and the 'Internet age' only opens up a lot more opportunities. These range from precision ag to shrinking the size of the world. With the Internet, small communities have the world at their fingertips. It is like having a vast library of information available to increase knowledge and improve productivity."

(One wonders what great-great-grandpa would think of such statements?)

Sabre Mayhugh has found no-till to be time-saving and economically feasible. This bean field, shown in July, is an excellent example of that type of conservation tillage.

The Flower Barn



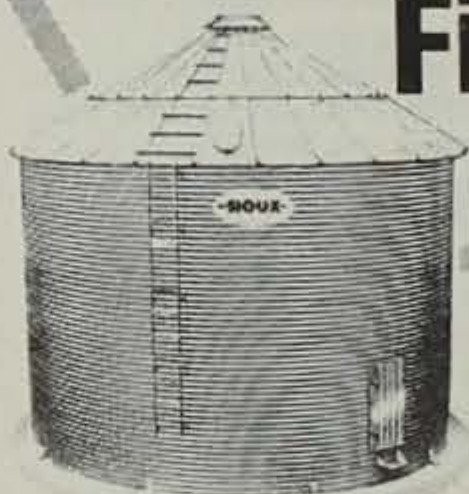
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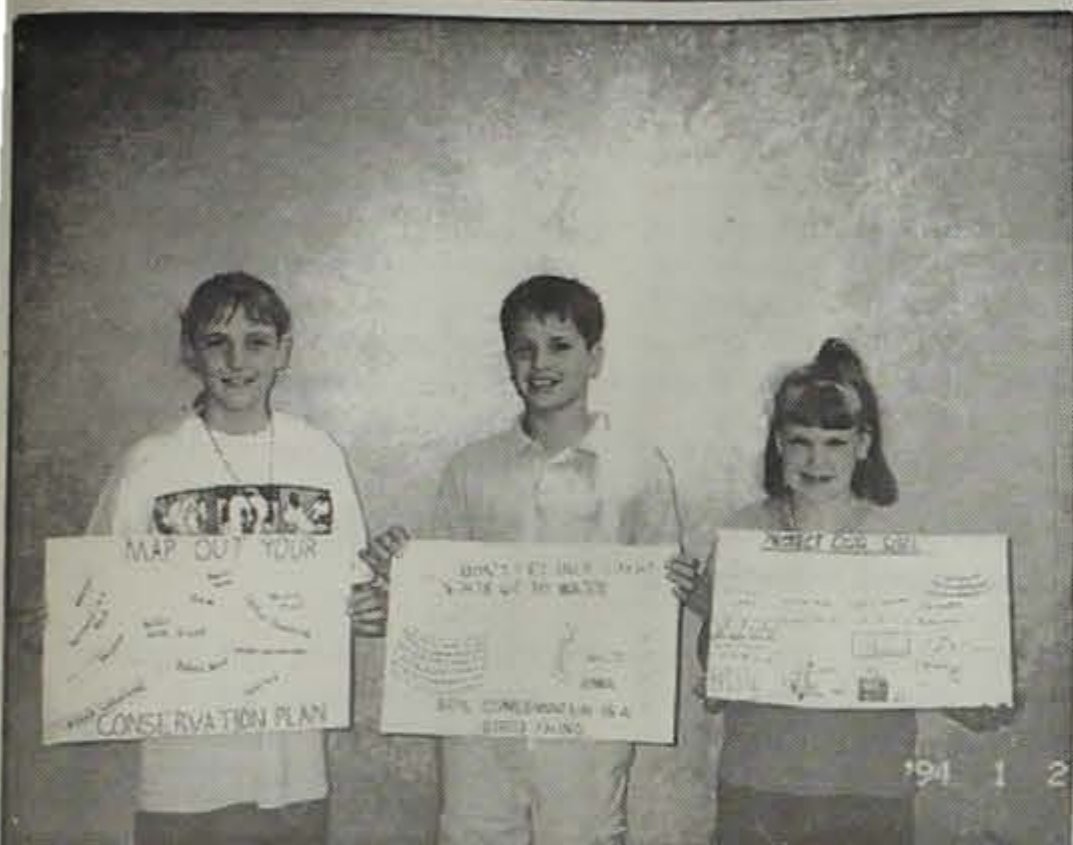
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Poster winners Bailey Schechinger, John Kohorst and Lyndsey Fries.

Poster winners

First place winners in the annual conservation poster contest sponsored by Shelby County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Shelby County Conservation Board were:

First place: Bailey Schechinger, daughter of Terry and Jody Schechinger

of Manilla, fifth grade, IKM Middle School; John Kohorst, son of Kate and Bob Kohorst of Harlan, fourth grade, St. Michael's School of SCCS; and Lyndsey Fries, daughter of Kevin and Brenda Fries of Kirkman, third grade, New Park Elementary School.

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Favorite Recipes Quick and easy

Streusel Cream Peach Pie

Place four cups fresh or drained canned peaches in a prepared pie shell. Mix together and sprinkle over peaches:

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 tsp. nutmeg or cinnamon

Beat together and pour over peaches:

1 egg
2 Tbsp. milk
Mix together and crumble over peaches:
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup flour
1/4 cup butter or margarine

Bake at 425 degrees for 35-45 minutes.

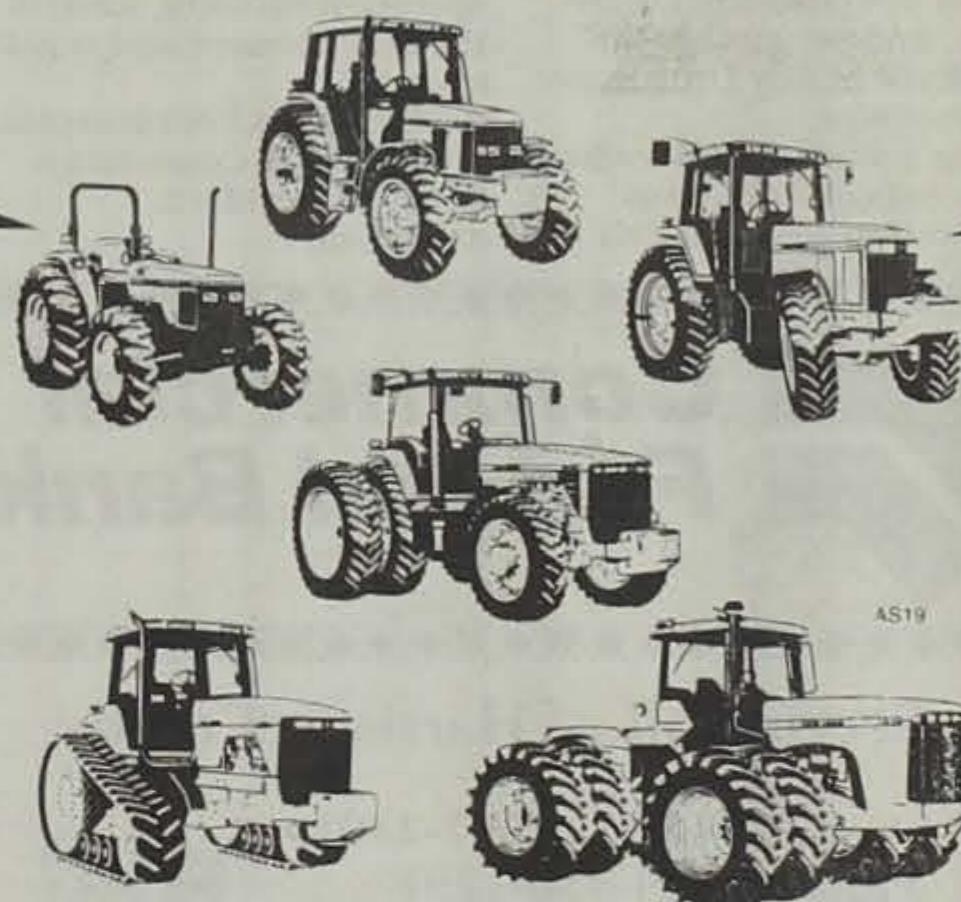
Zucchini Drop Cookies

1 cup grated zucchini
1 tsp. soda
1 cup sugar
1/2 cup margarine
1 egg, beaten
2 cups flour
1 tsp. cinnamon
1/2 tsp. cloves
1/2 tsp. salt
1 cup nuts
1 cup raisins
Combine zucchini, soda, sugar and margarine. Add egg. Combine flour mixture, nuts and raisins. Drop by teaspoonfuls onto cookie sheets. Bake at 375 degrees for 12-15 minutes



As "high as an elephant's eye?" A no-till cornfield on Sabre Mayhugh's farm in Shelby County, with grassed field borders shown at the right. See story on page 14

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by Konda Slagle

In May, 170 fifth and sixth grade students from Woodbine, Logan, Missouri Valley and West Harrison schools participated in the Harrison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) poster contest. The theme for this year's competition was *In the Children's Hands*.

Brian Martens from Missouri Valley Middle School was chosen as the district grand winner, and was given his award during the Middle School Awards Day event. Making the presentation was Commissioner Chairman Babetta Lucke. The poster was forwarded to regional competition. Brian is the son of Jack and Joan Martens.

Second and third place district winners were Amy Kruempel of Missouri Valley and Lindsey

Poster contest award winners

Ahrenholtz of Woodbine. Teachers of the three top winners were Don Hoffman of Missouri Valley and Don Groff of Woodbine, respectively.

First place award winners were Andrea Henson from Missouri Valley; Michael Holben and Ryan Scott from West Harrison; Anna Frisk and Molly Blackwell of Logan-Magnolia, and Brady Dickinson and Kane Thompson from Woodbine.

Receiving second place honors were Kayla Nelson, Phoebe Hornbeck, Victoria Lee, John Gochenour, Kylie Bertelson, Alicia Jensen and Tami McIntosh of Missouri Valley; Nicholas

Bunz, Jennifer Rife, Paige Shelton, Daniel Christensen, Derek Farris, Michaela Bennett and Drew Tranmer from West Harrison; Machenzie Loftus, Christin Leonard, Sara Neil, Kendra Miller, Alexis Alvis, Troy Donelson, Cara Hedger and Sara Bonham of Logan; Matthew Powers and Marc

Dresen of Woodbine.

Winning third place were Ashley Custer, Alicia Krogstad and Amber McIntosh of Missouri Valley; Nathan Hussing, Justin Kuhlman, Wade Remington, Bryant Wallis, Katlyn Johnson and Kendra Flint of West

Harrison; Brooke Knauss and Keith Foreman of Logan and Rebecca Melby, Kayloni Bybee and MacKenzie Mathison from Woodbine.

Martens was presented a \$25 cash award, with Kruempel receiving \$15 and Ahrenholtz \$10.

Backyard Conservation . . .

Continued from page 3

plant species. Depending upon the depths of the tub, place pots of plants either on the bottom or on bricks to achieve the proper depth. Floating plants such as duck weed can also be added. Floating plants reduce the amount of sunlight which enters the water, and helps reduce the growth of algae. When adding potted plants, place a layer of stones on top of the soil before setting in the water. This will help keep the soil in place as it is placed in the pond, and if fish are added, this will help prevent them from "digging" into the pots 3)

Consider what will be done with the tub garden in the winter. Small tubs can be moved inside if there is a suitable location. Other tubs may need to be drained to prevent freezing damage. 4) Use caution if toddlers will have access to the pond. Even small tub gardens can be hazardous to young children. If there is a fountain or waterfall, make certain there is a grounded electric outlet available.

A water garden can be an enjoyable hobby, and also provide wildlife habitat.

Ganzhorn is scholarship 1999 winner

by Konda Slagle

Brian Ganzhorn of Woodbine was recently selected to receive the Second Annual District Scholarship Award of \$150. Harrison SWCD Commissioners present this award each year to an applicant selected by the scholarship committee. The applicant must be planning to pursue higher education in an agriculture-related field.

Brian is the son of Scott and Beverly Ganzhorn. His father operates the family farm, and his mother is employed at Eby Drug Store in Woodbine.

As a student at Woodbine High School, Brian was involved in baseball and

wrestling. He is a member of the United Methodist Church and active in church affairs. He is also a member of the Hawkeye Ramblers 4-H Club.

In his application, he stated, "My career goals are to go to college to study John Deere Ag Tech. I wanted to do something that could fit in with farming. With this, I will learn a trade at which I can make a living, but still be able to farm. I can help cut costs with the farming operation by doing some of the maintenance and repairs myself."

Brian has been accepted at Southeast Community College in Milford, Nebraska.



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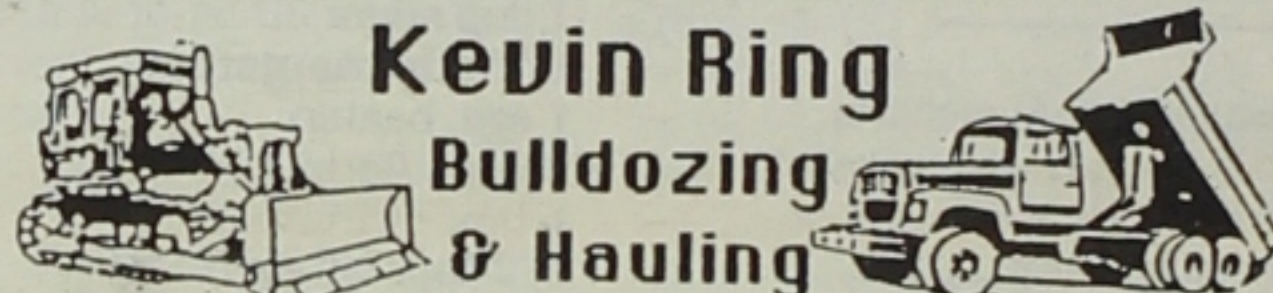
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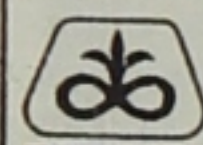
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