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Farm Family Near Eldora Competes For State Title In Conservation Contest

The Ray McDowell family of Eldora has been selected as the sweepstakes winner of the 1969 Des Moines Register and Tribune Conservation Achievement Awards Contest for Region III. They will now be in competition for the state sweepstakes award.

The progression of awards is: soil conservation district winner, regional winner of a division, sweepstakes winner of the region, and finally sweepstake winner of the state.

The McDowells' 290-acre farm is located one mile east of Eldora on state highway 175.

One-half of the farm lies within the Lower Pine Lake Watershed. All runoff from this land is controlled with over three miles of seeded backslope terraces, 28 water control structures and over 7,000 feet of tile. The remainder of the farm has 400 feet of terraces and two water control structures. Presently, 104 acres of cropland are protected by seeded backslope, bench type terraces.

The remaining 132 acres of cropland is managed according to its land capability class. Contouring and rotations where needed keep this land as near to a permissible soil loss level as possible until additional terraces can be installed.

Corn and forage are the primary crops raised. Eighty percent of the grain and all of the forage is utilized on the farm. Annual corn production ranges from 7,000 to 10,000 bushels.

The McDowells farrow 450-500 pigs annually and maintain an Angus herd of 40 cows, with plans for expansion.

The family extensively remodeled their home in 1967. The house was torn down to a bare shell, expanded and then rebuilt.

The farm has been in the family since 1953. McDowell has farmed it since 1957.

Mr. and Mrs. Arthur McDowell, owners of the farm, reside in Grinnell.

Mrs. McDowell is employed at the Eldora Community Elementary School, where she is director of the Learning Materials Center, Title I. She is a graduate of William Penn, Oskaloosa, 1954, with a BA in elementary education. She is presently working towards a Master of Library Science through UNI. Mrs. McDowell has completed a bibliography of conservation teaching aids in conjunction with her graduate study this past summer. She is the president-elect of the Eldora Community School Teachers Association. She will be participating in a panel discussion at the Iowa Conservation Education Council Fall Conference, Luther, Iowa, Oct. 10-11.

Ray McDowell is a graduate of William Penn with a BA in business administration and is a veteran of the Army.

The McDowells were hosts of the 1968 Conservation Field Days. They provided space for parking, test plots, exhibits and some of the facilities.

They have allowed the Agricultural Research Service to install a run-off experiment station in the completely controlled watershed on the farm. The McDowells will not be paid for this service.

The McDowells are members of the First Baptist Church of Eldora. Ray is chairman of the church board of trustees and Mrs. McDowell is leader of Junior BYC. The McDowells social life centers around the church and its activities. They have two children, Margaret Annette, 10, and Mark, 12.