

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED
CHAIRMAN, MILLS SWCD

Paul H. Hatcher

Mills County Soil and Water Conservation District **50 Years of Service** (1941-1991)



It is with great regret that this issue cannot contain mention of the many men and women who gave conservation a great foothold in Mills County. Their leadership and foresight set precedent for much of the nation. Five decades of work translates to immeasurable man hours of planning and trial and error. The same rich soil that produces abundant crops requires careful stewardship.

County starts conservation early

by Dick Stille

Soil conservation got off to an early start in Mills County. A Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp was located in Mills County in the 1930s. Lots of good erosion control projects were completed by CCC. Awareness of the need for soil conservation on the land was raised, setting the stage for later conservation efforts.

Enthusiastic soil conservationists including early district commissioner Cy Wearin and SCS people like Ray Jones got the Mills Soil Conservation District off to a fine start. As a result of their efforts, Mills County now has a strong conservation ethic and soil conservation practices are widely accepted.

Both the District and SCS have a very good rapport with landowners,

contractors and other agencies. The level of cooperation is quite high, reflecting the groundwork done by others so long ago.

The current soil and water conservation program in Mills County has expanded beyond that of years past. The terrace application rate is quite high, with 600,000 to 1 million feet constructed each year. Unlike many districts, Mills SWCD has had an active summer construction program for over 10 years. Most terraces built now are the narrow-base configuration.

Another portion of the Mills

SWCD program is the PL-566 watershed projects. There are three organized watersheds in the Mills District. Mule Creek, lying southwest of Malvern, was one of 11 pilot watershed projects in the nation. Mule Creek was the first watershed project to break ground, with all construction completed in 1955 through 1957. The structures are still functioning today.

Pony Creek Watershed was organized in 1958 with construction completed in 1981. This included Site 21, with an 80-acre permanent pool, the largest structure of its kind

at the time.

Waubonsie Creek Watershed is currently under construction with 22 structures completed in the Mills District portion. Eight more structures are planned for the Mills County part of Waubonsie Creek Watershed.

All three watersheds get lots of recreational use, as well as providing grade stabilization and flood control benefits.

The Mills SWCD is also part of the Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development (RC & D)

Continued on page 11

SWCD is congratulated by Area Conservationist

June 24, 1991

Mills County SWCD
P.O. Box 190
204 West 5th Street
Malvern, IA 51551

Dear Commissioners and Mills County Office Staff:

Congratulations on your 50th anniversary celebration.

The Mills County Soil and Water Conservation District has a long-standing record of high conservation accomplishments.

I have appreciated working with the Mills District and congratulate you

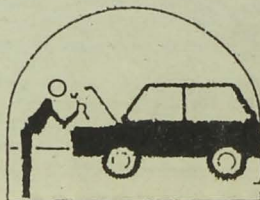
on the fine leadership that has directed the Mills County program. I have been associated with your activities for the last 20 years, and it is evident that the landowners, operators and the general public in Mills County believe in and support conservation. The amount of conservation practices on the landscape and the project work completed is commendable.

I wish you the best in a continuing conservation program.

Sincerely,
Erwin O. Aust,
Area Conservationist,
Room 233 Federal Building,
Council Bluffs, IA 51501

Congratulations Mills County for 50 years of conservation!

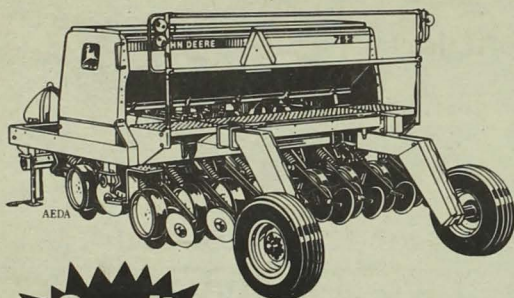
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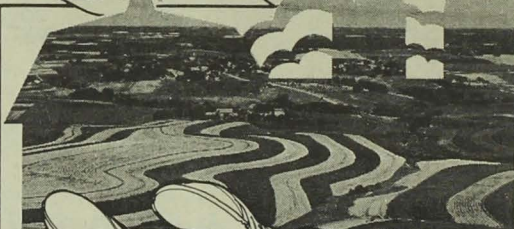


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Congratulations Mills County for 50 Years!

Malvern Trust & Savings Bank

PLAN YOUR FARM



FARM YOUR PLAN



Summers is early soil illustrator



Felix Summers

It is with great honor that we are able to reproduce in this special edition some of the artwork of Felix Summers. Felix came to the area in 1954 when Mule Creek Watershed was under construction to illustrate the need for gully erosion control. He went on to provide hundreds of conservation drawings and cartoons used nationwide by SCS. "Conservation Conversation" between two crows was well known to readers of the Journal of Soil and Water Conservation. Felix's artwork appeared regularly in exhibits, newspapers and magazines, winning him national acclaim.

Proper use and treatment of land

and water resources underlie all the ideas he represents. Beauty of the countryside, pollution control, wildlife, soil stewardship and flood prevention are favorite themes with both popular and technical treatment.

A native of the Strahan community, he graduated from Strahan Consolidated School, then went on to earn a baccalaureate degree from the University of Nebraska in 1932. He then earned another degree from

Yale and spent a year in New York City with Eugene Savage, a noted mural artist. After leaving Malvern, he went to Lincoln to become a national illustrator for USDA with the Soil Conservation Service, retiring from that position in 1972.

Felix and his wife Mary have three sons, Gary, Donald and Jamie. He is also remembered in this area for his annual yuletide drawings for the Malvern Leader.

Field borders curb erosion

by Galen Hartman,
Soil Conservation
Technician

Many of the farm plans of the 1985 Food Security Act require field borders on highly erodible fields. Field borders are perennial vegetation established at the edge of a field to control erosion. The primary purpose is to provide turn areas for farm equipment and replace end rows that would run up and down the hill.

On conservation plans that require contouring there cannot be any end rows planted up and down the hill if the slope is over 5 percent, this includes along waterways also. Field borders will be needed to replace end rows. Minimum width is 16.5 feet, but it is best to make them wide enough to turn equipment on.

Recommended seeding mixtures are Bromegrass at 25 pounds/acre

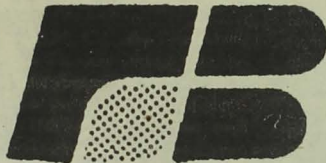
or Bromegrass at 8 pounds/acre and alfalfa at 5 pounds/acre.

Area should be limed and fertilized with 30 pounds of phosphate (P₂O₅) and 40 pounds of potash (K₂O) per acre. You may want to seed a bushel of oats per acre for a nurse crop. Seed bed should be prepared with a disc or field cultivator. Use a roller or cultipacker to smooth and firm seedbed before planting. To protect against erosion before your cover gets established, mulch the area with straw. Spread two tons per acre evenly over the area. A manure spreader will work for this. It is best to anchor the mulch using a straight disc. The disc should punch the straw into the top inch of soil, leaving enough on the soil surface to help prevent erosion. Once field border is established, mowing should be delayed until after July 1 to protect nesting birds and other wildlife.

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Thanks for taking the extra time and effort
to conserve for future generations. Congratulations
Mills County for 50 years of soil conservation!

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Malvern, Iowa



Henderson Tax Service

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Congratulations
Mills County for
50 years of soil
conservation!

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Congratulations on
50 years, Mills County
Soil Conservation District!



Changing practices. . .

Soil, water now protected

by Albert Washburn

"Conservation" is a word that is applicable to many things in this world: energy of all kinds, recyclable products and many other things too numerous to mention. Water and soil are the two conservable commodities that Mills County has had in great quantities.

Many generations ago this land called Mills County had thousands of acres of prairie grasses that bound together some of the best and most

fertile soil in the world. Water was very plentiful and of springlike quality. Surface water flowed in the serpentine rivers and creeks, so slow that it took heavy rains some time to drain. This slow process conserved the water and, of course, the soil in the early and middle 1800s. With the abundant prairie grasses, there were no problems with soil erosion and water quality.

Iowa became a state in 1846. Farming was becoming a way of life

and, consequently, the prairies started to disappear. Disaster was not yet apparent. The streams were straightened in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Life on the farm became very picturesque. Farming was done with horses and occasionally a runaway caused great destruction to the machine and sometimes the farmer. In the spring the raking and burning of cornstalks was a sight to behold. Then came the fall and a bountiful harvest with the sound of ears of corn thrown against the boards of the wagon as it was picked by hand. A good man could pick and scoop about 100 bushels of corn in a day and that was work, by the bushel.

During this time of plowing up prairie to grow bountiful crops to feed people and livestock, there were other forces at work that were taken for granted. Sun, wind and rain are the main ingredients for a good crop, together with rich soil and a lot of hard work.

Then came the '30s and the impending disaster became apparent overnight. There were dust storms in the Midwest such as had never been seen before. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the sun looked like the moon, if you could see it at all. Candles had to be used to do the housework during the day. There wasn't a house tight enough to keep the dust out. It was red dust, much of it, that came from hundreds of miles



HONORED FOR THEIR service to the Mills County Soil and Water Conservation District at SWCD's annual banquet June 25 included Carl Zimmerman (right), now of Corning, the district's first conservationist, and Albert Washburn, a District commissioner since 1957.

away. People lost their farms because they literally blew away.

After the terrible destruction of the dust storms and dry weather, Congress established the Soil Conservation Service. Under this program any state and county desiring help with soil erosion problems could enter into a memo of understanding with the S.C.S. Thus, in 1941 Mills County became a Soil Conservation district. Three commissioners were elected, a district conservationist was hired and we were in business.

Since that period in 1941, thousands of miles of terraces, waterways and dams as well as other conservation practices have been

applied to the land. Three watersheds have been constructed since the middle '50s: Mule Creek, a pilot watershed, Pony Creek and Wau-bonsie watersheds. This conservation work has had a great influence on the attitude of people concerning the soil and water problems of the county. A change in the way people handle their soil and water problems is quite apparent even to casual observers. Change in the way the countryside appears, as well as how it produces, is to many people a beautiful transformation from what was a disaster in the '30s to a productive and very necessary commodity—soil and water and sun—which makes life for the living.

Status review takes look at farm compliance plan

by Linda Seipold

SCS conducted status reviews again this spring. Five percent of the owners or operators are randomly selected with compliance plans in each county. All SCS employees, ASCS county executive directors and ASCS county committee members who own or operated land will also be selected.

The purpose of a status review is to clarify any questions the owner may have concerning his or her farm plan. Some changes are possible at this time. A comparison of what the landowner/operator is doing and what is scheduled to be done is made.

Residue checks are made and found to be quite helpful.

A SCS field review will determine:

—That the original highly erodible and wetland determinations are correct;

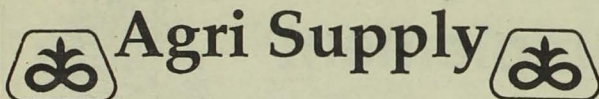
—That practices scheduled in the plan are applied according to the schedule;

—That practices already in place are properly maintained;

—That there are no swampbuster, sodbuster or CRP violations.

For more information about status reviews, or if you have questions about your conservation plan, contact your SCS office.

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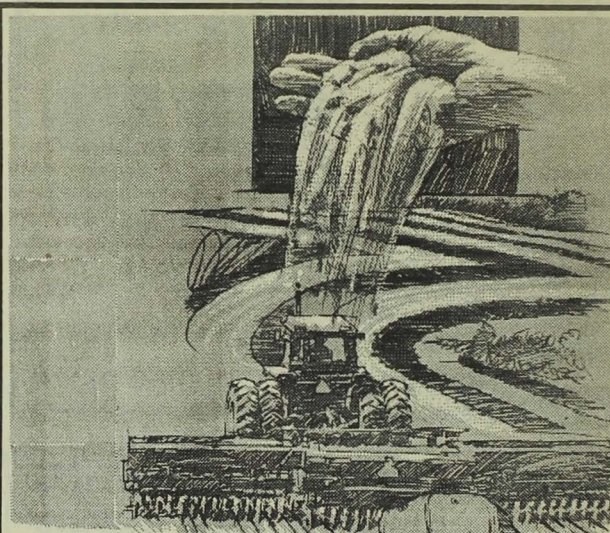
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more about

... SWCD history

Continued from page 8
acres of waterways. A full-length movie "With Our Own Hands" showing the development of the Mule Creek Watershed was made by the Allis Chalmers Company.

1956: The flood control structures in Mule Creek Watershed were completed in September, bringing total number of structures in Mills County to 52. There were 2,157 total miles of terraces in the county.

1957: Ray Jones moved to the Council Bluffs office, creating a big hole in the Mills County District. Richard France replaced him as unit conservationist. Leo Van Fossen came to the Malvern office as a technician. The Mills County Conservation Board was established. Dallas McGrew was recognized as "Outstanding District Commissioner" in the state of Iowa.

1958: Mills County led the state in terraces built, a record 319 miles this year alone. This brings the county total to 3,110 miles. Pony Creek Watershed began to organize.

1959: Dallas McGrew went to Washington to receive the Outstanding Commissioner award. Pony Creek farmers sent a delegation to Des Moines to present their case for a watershed.

1960: The District sponsored a "Queen of Conservation" contest.

Six structures were completed this year.

1961: Pony Creek Watershed received approval for construction. The plan includes 21 structures. Waubonsie Creek Watershed began to organize.

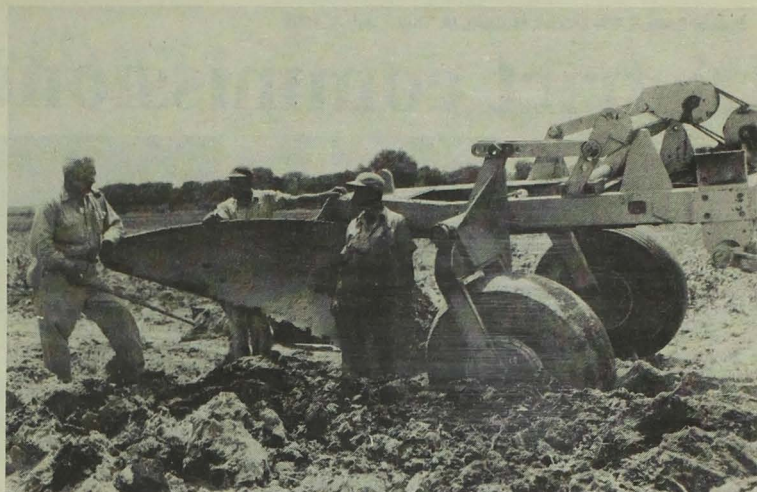
1962: Waubonsie Creek Watershed was approved. Edith Powles was hired as a new clerk. Keith Glandon became the new unit conservationist.

1963: Construction began on Pony Creek Watershed with the completion of six structures. The first bench terraces were constructed on the Frank Schoening farm four miles north of Glenwood. Miles of terraces in the county total 3,410.

1964: Duane Sell was named the Outstanding Soil Conservation District Cooperator in the Goodyear awards program. A seed plot of Emerald Crownvetch was established on the Myron Jones farm.

1965-66: This year celebrated 25 years of conservation in the District. Harvey Bolte was picked as the Outstanding Soil Conservation Cooperator in the Des Moines Register and Tribune contest. Lawrence Jones retired with nine years service.

1966-67: Conservation spread to more urban interests with the onset of rapidly expanding business. Five structures were completed on Pony Creek Watershed. Ruth Stevens was



RECORD FLOODS in April 1952 resulted in sand deposits in the county ranging from 6 inches to 6 feet. Huge deep plows pulled by dozers were required to incorporate the sand. Shown at left is Ray Jones, early district conservationist.

hired as new district clerk. The official name was changed to Mills County Soil and Water Conservation District. Parallel terraces became popular.

1968-69: This year saw the formation of the Waubonsie Creek Watershed. Forty miles of terraces were constructed, bringing the total miles in the county to 3,557.

1969-70: The District Commissioners changed from a three to five-man board. Geraldine Pavkov resigned and Ruth Stevens was rehired. Nishna Valley set up an out-

door classroom, planting more than 100 species.

1970-71: Louis P. Grissom became the new district conservationist. The District sponsored one boy and one girl to 4-H camp and held a speech contest. Julius Buch was named winner in the Register and Tribune contest.

1971-72: Work was started on the Standard Soil Survey for Mills County. Forty-eight miles of terraces were built.

1972-73: Gerald Bower re-

tired with 27 years of service. The District distributed 1,500 conservation workbooks to grade schools, sponsored a speech contest, poster contest, slide shows, tree sales and helped with the Malvern outdoor classroom.

1973-74: Work continues on the Malvern outdoor classroom. All but one structure is completed on Pony Creek Watershed. Richard Maaske was hired as a state technician. An extensive inventory and evaluation was completed for the

Continued on page 10

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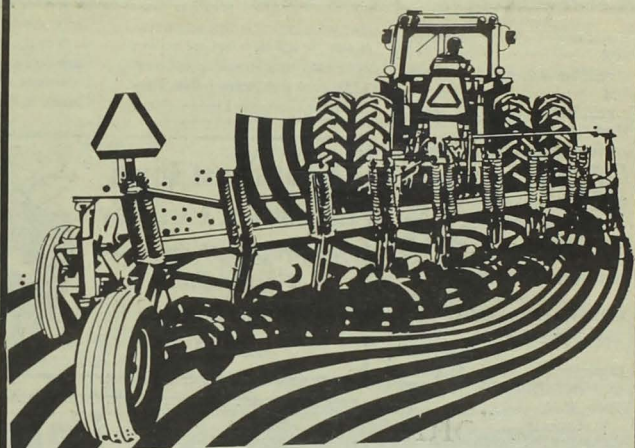
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for 50 years
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District commissioners help lead

Paul Hathaway: Paul Hathaway is the chairman of the District serving since 1978. He farms 1,000 acres with his father in White Cloud Township. His conservation practices include field borders, waterways, no-till and approximately 48,000 feet of terraces. Paul has served as contracting officer for the Waubonsie Creek Watershed since 1983. He is involved with Tinkle Branch RC & D, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the



Paul Hathaway,
District Commissioner

Mills County Veterans Association and the Glenwood Methodist Church. Paul and his wife, Diane, reside in Glenwood and have one daughter, Lindsey



Albert Washburn,
District Commissioner

Albert Washburn: The Mule Creek Watershed southwest of Malvern was under construction when Albert became an assistant commissioner in January of 1956. In July 1957, Albert replaced Dallas McGrew as chairman and held that position for 25 years. Albert has witnessed the completion of Mule Creek, Pony Creek and most of Waubonsie Creek watersheds, not to mention the millions of feet of terraces and other practices constructed since becoming a commissioner. He and his wife Carolyn live in Indian Creek Township and farm 1,600 acres with their son Rob. They also have a daughter Linda and four

grandchildren. They finish approximately 2,000 hogs each year. He has constructed thousands of feet of terraces, waterways and field borders. Albert is a member of the Wesley Chapel Methodist Church and a township trustee. He is a past member of the American Legion, the Elks, the Malvern School Board, AEA Board of Directors, National Livestock Feeders and the Mills and Montgomery Livestock Feeders. This year he celebrates 35 years as a district commissioner.

Steve Roenfeldt: Steve has been farming for 21 years and serving as a commissioner for 10. He and his wife, Tammy, reside in Center Township and farm 750 acres. He is on the Board of Directors for Farm Bureau, chairman of the REAP Committee, trustee of the Methodist Church in Glenwood, member of



Steve Roenfeldt,
District Commissioner

the RC & D Board and is active with the Soybean Association and Corn Growers. They have two children, Clint and Carissa, and are very involved in their activities and sports. Steve also works at Offutt doing snow removal during the winter months. Steve says it takes a very understanding family to maintain this schedule.

Lynn Goos: Lynn and his wife, Jan, reside in Ingraham Township where they have farmed for 25 years. Besides farming 1,300 acres, they have a large cattle herd. Conservation is a way of life for Lynn, as his grandparents, J. A. and Maude Burgoin, were the first official co-operators in Mills County in 1941. They have two children, Eugene and Michelle. Lynn is active in Farm Bureau and the Golden Hills RC & D Board.



Lynn Goos,
District Commissioner

John Jennings: John, who has been on the Board since 1986, lives in Deer Creek Township where he and his son Jeff farm 1,700 acres. They are very diversified with a farrow to finish hog operation and a cattle herd, so there is little leisure time. He and his wife, Deanna, have three children, Jeff, Nancy and Jack. John is active with the Mills/Montgomery Cattle Association, the REC and the Presbyterian Church in Shenandoah.

Steve McGrew: Steve has been farming in Deer Creek since 1979 and serving as assistant commissioner since 1987. He and his three brothers, Bill, David and Robert, are active conservationists, farming 1,800 acres. Steve and his

Continued on page 7

Mills County SWCD Annual Report 1990-91

REVOLVING FUND

Balance on Hand 7-1-90

\$1,672.92

Expenses

Office supplies and equipment \$ 579.51
Postage 633.49
Thank you gifts 78.22
Insurance 164.00
Levels, contour gauges and flags 444.20
Dues 1,127.00
Stewardship materials 140.25
Meeting expenses 151.93
To Money Market 1,000.00
50th Anniversary expenses 2,586.58
Misc. expenses** 787.81
Total Expenses \$7,692.99
**Misc. items include subscriptions, memorials, contests, journalism intern, etc.

Deposits

Donations \$1,940.00
SCS reimbursements 1,080.00
I-M reimbursements 1,488.84
II-M reimbursements 130.00
From Money Market 3,000.00
Sales (includes tickets) 679.90
Total Deposits \$8,318.74

BALANCE ON HAND 6-30-91

\$2,298.67

MONEY MARKET ACCOUNT

BALANCE ON HAND 7-1-90

\$30,278.59

Deposits \$1,276.10
Interest earned 2,093.69
From M.M. to checking 3,000.00
BALANCE ON HAND 5-31-91
\$30,648.38

I-M BUDGET

Initial Allocation \$3,700.00
Commissioner mileage \$1,362.36
Office supplies and expense 1,945.21
Balance returned to state \$462.43

III-M

89/90 cost share
Total allocated \$122,439.73
Total spent (50% cost-share on terraces) 122,048.29
Returned to state 391.44

90/91

Total allocated \$121,415.35
Total spent (50% cost-share on terraces) 97,748.42
Total obligated
Total obligated but not completed 22,370.00
Unobligated balance 296.93

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conservation efforts



**John Jennings,
District Commissioner**

Continued from page 6
wife, Nancy, have two children, Nicholas and Monica. He is a 4-H leader, active in Farm Bureau and on the Wesley Chapel Church Board.

Dick Biermann: Dick is a



**Steve McGrew,
Assistant Commissioner**

resident of Glenwood Township where he has been engaged in farming since 1971. He and his wife, Kathy, farm 1,000 acres. Dick served as an assistant commissioner from 1975-1977 and then as a commissioner from 1977-1985. He is pres-



**Dick Biermann,
Assistant Commissioner**

ently an assistant commissioner and is very active with our Soil Stewardship program. He is a member of the St. John's Lutheran Church of Mineola. They have two children, Matt and Ann, who are involved in many activities.



THE MILLS COUNTY SWCD office moved to its present location at 204 W. Fifth in Malvern on Oct. 1, 1985. Also housed in the building are the ASCS offices.



MEMBERS OF THE Mills County SWCD staff include (front row, from left) Linda Selpold, federal technician; Ruth Stevens, state clerk; Bonnie Pierce, federal technician; back row--Dick Stille, district conservationist; Rich Maaske, state technician; and Galen Hartman, federal technician.

Early history of conservation reviewed

Conservation of soil and water resources was an unthought of idea in this county 20 years ago. Then we were given the old one-two by the Big Depression and then the drought, so that by the mid-1930s our economy was in poor condition.

Our soils suffered adversely from both causes. The hard times led farmers to crop much more intensively than formerly, and the drought caused a succession of legume seeding fail-

ures as well as cash crop failures, which resulted in less livestock and in increased acreage of corn. The whole effect snowballed until it was all out of hand and our farms began going down hill, literally. Older observers date the rapid spread of gully and sheet erosion from this period.

The problems then confronting conservationists were ones of staggering proportions. Not only were

most farmers unaware of the seriousness of the erosion situation, but they were also not in a position financially to do much about it, had they been so inclined. For years, from the inception of the agency era in the mid-1930s, to the war years of the early '40s, the main problem seemed to be an educational matter.

(Reprinted from the Soil Conservation District Annual Report, Dec. 31, 1951).

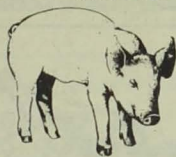
Mills County SWCD District Commissioners

COMMISSIONERS

James Steele, Malvern (1941-1953)
Josiah Wearin Jr., Hastings (1941-1957)
Dallas McGrew, Emerson (1941-1961)
Shirley Lincoln, Pacific Junction (1953-1957)
Albert Washburn, Hastings (1957-present)
Dale Lincoln, Glenwood (1957-1966)
Myron Jones, Glenwood (1961-1973)
Carl Green, Glenwood (1966-1970)
Harold Tackett, Glenwood (1969-1980)
William Stacy, Glenwood (1969-1977)
Glen Sell, Glenwood (1970-1978)
Roger Jackson, Henderson (1973-1978)
Richard Biermann, Glenwood (1977-1984)
Paul Hathaway, Malvern (1978-present)
Steve Roenfeldt, Glenwood (1980-present)
Lynn Goos, Silver City (1984-present)
John Jennings, Emerson (1986-present)

Dr. James J. Ahern, DVM

902 Marion Malvern, IA



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To all those in Mills County who work to make soil conservation a successful and progressive endeavor... congratulations!

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SWCD's history spans 50 years

Mills County: In the spring of 1941, a group of farmers traveled to Des Moines with a petition of 455 signatures to organize the Mills County Soil Conservation Service. The vote to organize resulted in 172 in favor, 20 opposed. June 25, 1941, Mills officially became the ninth district to organize in the state. Malvern was picked as official headquarters. D.N. McGrew, J.F. Wearin Jr. and Jack Steele were elected as the first commissioners. John H. Longstreet, county agricultural agent, was appointed secretary.

1941: Mr. L.D. Kuester, District conservationist for Montgomery County, was appointed temporary D.C. Carl Zimmerman was the SCS technician in this office. The first cooperator agreement in the county was signed by J.A. and Maude Burgoin. In that year 10 miles of terraces were built by contractors and 3 miles were built by farmers with tractors and mold board plows.

1942: Commissioners sponsored the first annual Plow Terrace Building Contest on the J.F. Wearin farm. There were four contestants and more than 100 spectators. Records show 646 acres of contouring reported that year.

1943: Commissioners sponsored a 12-week high school course on conservation. The main objective was to learn to lay out contour lines for terrace layout or for planting. That the program was highly successful is evident in the records: 31,500 acres were contoured and 52.5 miles of terraces were constructed that year. Because the locals were convinced that Iowa State test results were not totally accurate for the soils in Mills County, test plots of small grains and grasses were developed on the James Steele farm north of Malvern. Ray Jones, SCS technician, developed the "Mills County Method of Waterways Construction" to obtain flat bottomed waterways ready for seeding. Twenty were established. This method was later described in John Deere publications and attributed to this county. The second annual Plow Terrace Building Contest was held on the Harry Evans farm with eight contestants and 600 spectators.

1944: This year the Southwest Iowa Association of Soil Conservation Districts organized with six neighboring districts, a large accomplishment considering the ongoing war. The third annual Plow Terrace Building Contest was held on the C.W. Kayton farm. There were 15 entrants and over 1,500 in attendance. Prizes included war bonds. The Whirlwind plow was introduced, revolutionizing the process. Some 74.7 miles of terraces were constructed in that year, bringing the total mileage in the county to 274.2.

1945: Hampered by erratic weather conditions, work continued on the test plots of small grains and grasses. Plans were laid to host the National Plow Terrace Building

Contest in 1946. The total terrace mileage was 417.

1946: In conjunction with the Omaha World-Herald, the National Plow Terrace Building Contest was held Sept. 12 on the Jay Wright farm three miles east of Glenwood. It was a huge success with press and radio coverage and over 20,000 in attendance. Thirty-six contestants vied for top honors. Experimental plots of hay production with commercial fertilizer were established on the Henry Washburn farm. Miss Amy Hammers, county superintendent of schools, was very active in promoting conservation. Prior to this time she had written the first conservation handbook for grade school students to be used in the state. Natural Gas Pipeline built 55,575 feet of terraces on farms through which their lines passed. In addition, they paid for construction of 611,800 square feet of waterways including the seeding. This year a conservation plan was developed for the State School, over 1,334 acres.

1947: This was a year of disastrous floods, followed by prolonged droughts. Soil Conservationist Ray Jones obtained a war surplus tractor, power control unit and a bulldozer and rented them to contractors for a nominal fee. Malvern Bank published a booklet "It's Time to Open a Soil Savings Account." Jones took a four-man crew to Memphis, MO, to demonstrate terrace construction. Those men were Ralph Scott, H.F. Clark and Russell Bird of Malvern and Luther Munsinger of Tabor. Records show 32 farm plans were completed, 46,300 acres being contoured and a county total of 830.5 miles of terraces.

1948: The District purchased a

war surplus camera for \$109. Ray Jones became the photographer with much professional assistance from Commissioner Steele. Hundreds of hours were spent by these two men developing and printing pictures. This added immeasurably to the history of conservation in Mills County. A part-time clerk was added to free the technicians to spend more time in the field. Lillian Campbell was hired at 80 cents an hour. There were bus tours of the research farm near Clarinda. Total terraces constructed were 1,062.3 miles.

1949: This was the year of the formation of the Mule Creek Watershed Association. Their plan for gully erosion control called for treatment of 63 farms with a total of 10,265 acres. Besides waterways, fencing, contouring and pasture seeding, 306 miles of terraces were needed and 24 structures. On Sept. 16, Operation Conservation took place on the Euel Anderson farm south of Silver City. When the job was finished, there were 6.5 miles of terraces, 4,000 feet of waterways, 38 acres seeded and 478 rods of contour fence in place. The Aero Club sponsored aerial tours of the county with 61 participants. This was the first time state funds were made available, \$654.28. Total ter-

J.F. Wearin Jr.

Jack Steele

D.N. McGrew

racies: 1,319 miles.

1950: Gerald Bower joined the District as a federal technician. Warren Gregory, one of the first cooperators to adapt and apply a conservation plan, reported an average corn yield of 117.5 bushels per acre.

1951: State and federal cost share funds totaled \$7,829.10. Terrace construction continues briskly with the total mileage in county at 1,663.

1952: Record floods in April crested 3-4 feet higher than any time in the previous 80 years. Sand deposits on the bottom ground ranged from 6 inches to 6 feet. Huge deep plows pulled by dozers were required to incorporate the sand. The total cost of restoration: \$242,618.

1953: Congress established 50 pilot watersheds in the nation. Of those, Mule Creek was the first to break ground. Twenty-four structures were to be built. The government contribution was \$300,000.

1954: The 2,000th mile of terraces was completed this year. Mule Creek, a forerunner in gully erosion control, was started with work on the Blackman Structure. Fire dams were completed this year. Felix Summers of Milwaukee was assigned to this office to illustrate the watershed work.

1955: This Soil Conservation District was recognized by the State Soil Conservation office as being one of the leading districts in Iowa for terrace construction and first in
Continued on page 5

50 years old and getting better all the time. Congratulations on your progress, Mills County Soil Conservation District!

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ASCS praises 50 years of area service

June 14, 1991
Mills County Soil Conservation
District
204 W. Fifth
Malvern, IA 51551

Dear Commissioners and Staff,

Congratulations on your 50 years of service to Mills County. The entire county, as well as farmers have benefited from your conservation efforts. As your sister agency, ASCS has enjoyed a good working relationship with you for many of those years and we expect to continue working towards the same goals. We have both seen farmer after farmer and citizen after citizen become convinced of the need to conserve the soil and water. Many of those have become personally involved with various conservation

projects which you have proposed.

My staff and I are currently involved in transferring farm data from old aerial photographs to new ones and are continually amazed at the magnitude of change that has taken place over the last 10 years. Many farms that had not used conservation practices are now terraced. Even though the photos were taken in April, we see field after field that are not tilled. This tells us that efforts to reduce

excessive fall tillage have been successful.

Again, from my staff and I, congratulations! We look forward to working with you for many more years to come.

Sincerely,
Steve Peterson,
County Executive Director,
Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service



PERSONNEL at the ASCS office in Malvern include the following: (from left) Barb Cross, Linda Burgoin, Myrna Leu, Judy Bruce, Steve Peterson, county executive director, Susie Berry, Roger Neumeister and Judy Waller.

SWCD, Extension share a long history

by LaVerne Obrecht,
County Extension Director
The Mills County Extension Service started in 1920. This was the

early start of USDA agencies. At that time the stated purpose of the Extension Service was to disseminate information to the people in

agriculture and home economics. This is still true today with the addition of community resource development and business.

In 1940-41 it is reported that county agent John Longstreet assisted the Mills County Soil Improvement Society and the SCS technician in conducting tours, demonstrations and educational meetings throughout the winter, spring and summer to bring before the farmers of the county information regarding contouring, terracing and other erosion control practices. They held a series of meetings between Oct. 1, 1940, and March 1, 1941, to explain the Soil Conservation District. They circulated a petition and held an election to enable the farmers in the county to obtain a Soil Conservation District charter before spring work started in 1941.

The Extension Service has been very pleased with the working relationship over the past 50 years and looks forward to many more years of working together.



MILLS COUNTY EXTENSION staff members include (from left) Liz Dahlgren, home economist, Betty Wolfe, office assistant, and LaVerne Obrecht, county Extension agriculturalist/director.



ASCS COUNTY COMMITTEE members in Mills County include (from left) Roger Jackson, chairman, Scott Hillyer, vice chairman, and Francis Dashner.

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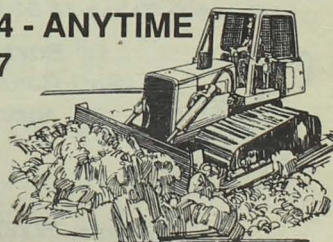
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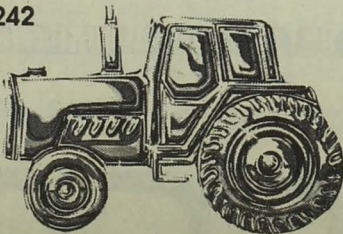


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Wearin recollects start of SWCD

by J.F. Wearin Jr.

In the late 1930s the area was beginning to recover from the devastating effects of two unrelated events. First came the economic

depression which dealt its hammer blows of ruinous prices for crops and livestock and the bank closings. It seemed as though nothing could be done correctly, and then we were

hit by dry weather in 1934 and 1936, the likes of which no one could remember.

It was into this sad state of affairs that the Civilian Conservation Corps camp and its young men were thrust. There was a need for meaningful work for these youths, and it was they, under the guidance of a corps of dedicated men in the newly formed Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, who put the practices in effect on a demonstration basis on the land. There were many new ideas about how the land should be treated coming from the minds of these conservation people. From our 50 plus years of hindsight, some were good, some not so good, and many have had to be revised and modified, but basically, the concept was sound and very revolutionary and, hence, met strong resistance.

The Iowa Legislature, thanks to forces beyond my ken, saw fit to spell out the formula for establishing soil districts. These local entities would then represent local interests in working with the Soil Conservation people in the county. A number of people realized the need for changing the way our land was being used, so they got together and followed the necessary procedures to get a Soil District organized. It is the culmination of that effort we are celebrating this year on the 50th anniversary of the birth of the District.

From the very beginning we commissioners, Dallas N. McGrew, J.M. Steele and I, J.F. Wearin Jr., realized that we had an educational problem on our hands. We had excellent help in the two principal S.C.S. men, Carl Zimmerman and Ray W. Jones, who were full of ideas for promoting the cause. We tried several avenues. Among them was the idea that by teaching high school boys about conservation, we might get their fathers interested enough to give some aspects of the



J.F. WEARIN JR. (right) was honored at the recent banquet of the Mills County Soil and Water Conservation District for being the only living original commissioner. Wearin served from 1941-57 and was recognized for being a leader in conservation efforts. Presenting the award was Paul Hathaway, Commission chairman.

program a try. The S.C.S. men held classes in several of the high schools in the county, at the end of which we awarded certificates to those who had attended.

Because there were few, if any conservation contractors, with virtually no bulldozers in the area, an attempt was made to use regular farm equipment to build terraces and waterways. The District technicians developed a system of doing so using the usual two-bottom plow and a tractor of the time. The idea of holding a contest to determine who could build the better plow-built terrace came up and was acted upon. The first such event attracted four contestants, an Omaha radio station, newspaper people and a goodly number of spectators. We were off and running.

The idea spread and was supported by city business and media interests. We held four of the events in Mills County, then it was moved to near Harlan, IA, and Weeping

Water, NE, in the six years that I can remember. It helped popularize conservation at a time when this new concept was in need of acceptance. People know about conserving the soil and water now, with many doing a great job of it and others not such a good job, and unfortunately, there are all too many who utterly ignore the idea.

It is these latter people who make us realize the need for continuing education. Just as in the beginning days of the District, there are those who have not yet seen the light. It is hard to emphasize strongly enough the need for the best of conservation farming practices. People who do not farm "around the hill" apparently do not realize what a treasure we have under our feet, a treasure that is too easily washed away. We have been here 137 years at most and, with continued proper farming, we should last that long again, but only if we all shape up.

more about

... SWCD history

Continued from page 5

city of Glenwood.

1974-75: Work began on the Waubonsie Creek Watershed. The Soil Survey was 40 percent complete.

1975-76: Mills County took first place in the Conservation Booth at the State Fair. SWCD sponsored the Amateur Oil Painting Contest.

1976-77: The District completed three more structures on Waubonsie Watershed. The application for Golden Hills RC & D was approved.

1977-78: The Soil Survey was completed and sent to the printers. Sixty-five miles of terraces were built.

1978-79: Richard W. Stille became the new district conservationist. Total miles of terraces in the county is now 4,017.

1979-80: The state established Iowa Soil 2000, a program designed to reduce soil loss in the state to tolerable limits by the year 2000. The first narrow base terraces were laid out on the Paul Vestal farm southeast of the Nishna Valley school. They were completed in the spring of 1982. Pony Creek Watershed was completed.

1981-82: The District conducted reduced till crop tours. Finally, we received published copies of the Soil Survey of Mills County.

1983-84: No-till gained much popularity. There was a tremendous

workload on the Iowa 2000 folders that went to producers in the county. Galen Hartman was hired as a federal employee.

1984-85: Work began on Tinkle Branch, an RC & D project located west of Glenwood. The District had an open house to celebrate 45 years of SCS. Fourteen structures in Mule Creek were rehabilitated.

1985-86: The SCS moved to its new location Oct. 1, holding an open house on the 23rd of that month. The 1985 Farm Bill brought major changes including the Conservation Reserve Program. The first CRP sign-up was in 1986. Leo Van Fossen retired with over 30 years of service.

1986-87: The May flood caused extensive damage to crops and terraces. Seventy CRP applications were approved. New federal technicians are Bonnie Pierce and Linda Seipold.

1987-88: Highly erodible land determinations were sent to all landowners in the spring of 1988. Conservation plans were completed on 60 percent of that land. Some 228 miles of terraces were completed.

1988-89: FSA planning took top priority with a deadline of Dec. 31, 1989, for completion. Some 99 percent of the landowners signed plans by that date. The total number of miles of terraces in the county is 4,938.

1989-90: Mills County prepares to celebrate 50 years as an organized district.

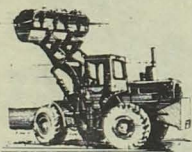
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more about

... conservation

Continued from page 2

project. A host of construction and associated measure projects have been completed in the Mills SWCD through the Golden Hills RC & D. The Glenwood Lake Park, Davies Amphitheater and Tinkle Branch critical area treatment measures are highly visible construction projects. The Loess Hills Prehistoric Heritage Society and the Loess Hills tourism projects are notable associ-

ated measure projects.

The Tinkle Branch CAT project has led to a new stabilization concept now being used on the county secondary road system. Extensive gully systems threatening our rural road systems are now treated with combinations of terraces, sediment and water control basins and grassed waterways. These projects have proven highly successful and very much cheaper than conventional

remedies to gully problems on county roads.

Soil conservation remains a strong and growing program in Mills County. Much credit for this must be given to the men and women who organized and guided the Mills Soil Conservation District in its early years. Their legacy is carried on and reflected in the soil conservation efforts of today's land users and the landscape of Mills County.



RAY JONES (from left) was one of Mills County's early Soil Conservation technicians and helped plan and promote many of the early efforts. Coming to the Mills district in the '40s, he served until his departure to accept a position at the Council Bluffs office in 1957. He is shown speaking with Joe Robbins and Euel Anderson.

Team work key factor to work of staff at Mills County SWCD

by Ruth Stevens

People come and go. In the more than 20 years that I have worked for the District, I have seen many do just that—come and go. Many people you remember very vividly, some are shadows. The length of time employees stay is another consideration. Part-time people usually haven't stayed too long and are more easily put in the back of your mind. Those who worked for many years you never forget, nor do you want to.

We have had every variety—short, tall, thin, fat, blonde, brunette, redhead, men and women. They were and still are part of the team. And that's what it's all about. TEAM WORK. Being able to work

together to accomplish a common cause. Each one helping the other.

I would like to try to name all of the employees that have worked in the office since I started, but just as surely as I tried, I would miss someone and I don't want to do that.

Commissioners are as much a part of the staff as the employees. They don't change as quickly but are just as important. We have never had any women commissioners, but we have had two assistant commissioners that are ladies—Sherry Bass and Judy Reimer, two very talented conservation minded ladies that certainly did an excellent job. Commissioners and assistant commissioners are very dedicated con-

servation minded people. They have to be dedicated or they wouldn't put in as many volunteer hours as they do. They receive NO pay, only mileage—when funds are available. Now that's dedication isn't it?

The SCS staff... there wouldn't have been a District if it hadn't been for the Soil Conservation Service. The federal funds to employee personnel are as important as the state funds to employee state personnel. The SCS district conservationist who captains and coaches the team, and the SCS and state technicians are without a doubt the most important players.

People—yes, that's what the TEAM consists of—just plain, ordinary human beings—PEOPLE.

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congratulate the
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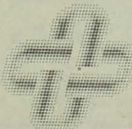
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Terrace systems can help in solving erosion of soil

by Galen Hartman,

Soil Conservation Technician

Terrace systems, in combination with other conservation practices, are used to help solve erosion problems. The main function of terraces is to control and manage water runoff by reducing slope length and steepness. This helps reduce sheet and gully erosion and conserves moisture. How well terraces do their job of protecting cropland depends on how they are farmed and maintained.

The back slope of bench and narrow-base terraces and the front slope of narrow-base terraces should be seeded as soon as possible after construction. Bromegrass is most commonly used for seeding terraces. It should be seeded at 14 pounds per 1,000 feet of narrow-base. Phosphate and potash fertilizer should be applied at the rate of 56 pounds each per 1,000 feet of narrow-base terrace. If the seeding does not take or you need to reseed thin spots, frost seeding may be your best option. Seed is applied by broadcasting on the surface after the snow is melted in late February or early March. Other grasses can be used in combination with Bromegrass. Legumes are not recommended for they invite more rodents, which will cause more problems from predators.

Terraces should be checked each spring for varmint holes and other breaks and repaired. Terraces should also be kept free of trees and weeds.

Sediment should be periodically cleaned out of the terrace channel. The accumulation of silt in the terrace channel reduces the capacity of the terrace, causing breaks and overtopping. The channel of broad-base and bench terraces can be plowed out with a mold board plow if they are not too full of sediment. Narrow-base terraces will have to be cleaned out by other means, either with a tractor and loader or a dozer. The best way to maintain terrace channels is to reduce soil loss between terraces, by means of reduced tillage or no-till (especially in bean residue).

Graded terraces having a tile system should be inspected frequently. Intakes should be free of trash and other debris. Outlets should be kept open and trees should be cleaned within 150 feet of the outlet and tile line. Outlets should be checked to be sure animal guards are still in place.

Terrace ridge height is critical to maintaining adequate capacity and protecting lower terraces. Any damage to the terrace ridge should be quickly repaired.

Terraces as part of a resource conservation system represent a large investment. How well terraces do their job as part of this system depends on how you farm and maintain them. A good maintenance program will increase the life of a terrace system many years.



AREA LANDOWNERS who received recognition at the annual banquet of the Mills County SWCD included the following: (front row, from left) Lynn Goos for Jean and Don Goos, Ed Leu, Kathy Harbor, Lola Wearin, Viola Hathaway, Bernice Woodfill; back row--Henry Fein, Jack Harbor, Roger Jackson, Fay McManigal, J.W. Hathaway, Robert Woodfill, Richard Bass and Everett McGrew. Not pictured are Bernard Roenfeldt, Arnim Young, Margaret Stevesson and James Durbin.

Conservation commitment is necessary

by Rich Maaske

For the last half century, many of us have realized that our resources are finite. Also a half century ago, the country realized and accepted an obligation of a common commitment to the conservation of our agricultural resources. Whether we live in a city or in the country, we share a common need for these resources, and we must realize that they require and demand our care and attention.

Healthy topsoil is a teeming mass of life. One teaspoon may contain 100,000 protozoa, 2 billion bacteria and 30 million fungus plants. Throw

in an earthworm or two and the roots of plants and you have a small picture of the "living earth." How many of us realize what is taking place beneath our feet? We literally stand 8 feet above a desert.

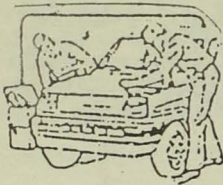
Mills County has seen the dedication that is needed to keep the "desert" away. Many people have been involved in promoting conservation "on the land." People like Jack Steele, J.F. Wearin Jr., Dallas McGrew, Carl Zimmerman, Ray Jones, Gerald Bower and Leo Van Fosson are a few among the many people who have been dedicated to the course of protecting our natural resources.

Individuals, working at their separate tasks, cannot protect the soil and water that will be needed by future generations. It has to be a shared task.

We as individuals cannot build the traditions our successors will need to continue this process of conservation. The conservation of our resources must be a common commitment, the task is too great for individuals and small groups.

If we succeed in our task, we can maintain the capacity of our country and of our country to support a growing population. If we fall short, a slow disaster will threaten us and the remainder of the world.

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