



The Goodland Daily News

Conservation Awards

Friday, February 22, 2002

Father and son are very conservative

By Rachel Miscall

The Goodland Daily News

Harlan House, a Sherman County farmer, said the annual conservation awards not only thank farmers for conserving, but give city folk an idea of what is being done to protect the environment and wildlife.

Harlan House and his son Andy House, who have farmed together since 1991, have been named "Conservationists of the Year" by the Sherman County Conservation District. They will be recognized at the district's annual meeting on Monday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall, along with other 2002 conservation award winners.

Sandy Rodgers, conservation district manager, said the award goes to farmers who have maintained conservation practices for many, many years. Harlan House said most farmers in Sherman County have earned the award.

"It's an honor that they singled us out," he said, noting most Sherman County farmers follow a conservation program and believe in preserving soil, water and other natural resources.

The actual award isn't what's

really important, he said. It's recognizing farmers' efforts and publicizing those efforts to people who don't live or work on the farm.

Harlan House said it's hard to accept an award for practices that are encouraged and expected.

"It's something you feel obligated to do," he said.

That doesn't mean Harlan House will refuse the award, or that he thinks conservation isn't important.

"It's environmentally-friendly," he said.

His son added it's business-friendly, too.

"It maintains the integrity of the soil and allows us to keep farming," Andy House said.

Harlan and Andy, who farm on land south and west of Goodland, do many things to protect the earth and wildlife, and are thinking of new ways to conserve all the time.

Harlan House said to prevent soil erosion and regenerate the land they practice summer fallow; no-till, minimum till and strip tillage; and rotational grazing and cross-fencing.

He said they also have planted windbreaks and built level and di-



Harlan House (left) and his son Andy are the Sherman County Conservation District's 2002 Conservationists of the Year. The farmers are standing on one of the fields they farm west of Goodland.

Photo by Rachel Miscall/The Goodland Daily News

version terraces to keep soil in its place.

To conserve water, he said, they use sprinkler irrigation, which re-

duces evaporation, and gravity irrigation with return pits. Harlan House said the drawback to gravity irrigation is there is more satu-

ration near the pipe, but the return pits allow the farmer to recycle the

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Conservation farm plans have changed as agency has evolved

By Alan Boerger

Resource Conservationist

When the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) was established in 1935, the agency's primary task was the reduction of soil erosion. As the agency grew and evolved, conservation farm planning be-

came the basis for all the actions that the SCS conducted.

The plans were simple, straightforward, and were easy to comprehend by the producers. Perhaps the most important feature of the early farm plan was that the plan was voluntary. Even though early con-

servation plans were voluntary, most producers applied the plan practices in order to save the soil resources they had.

In the mid 1980s, the Food Security Act of 1985 was written into law. When the law was passed, the way in which SCS developed

farms plans changed the way producers viewed the purpose of the traditional conservation farm plan. In order for producers to remain eligible to receive farm program benefits, all land labeled as "Highly Erodible" was to have a conservation farm plan developed

on it and all the plan practices applied by 1995. This particular law then made the conservation plan

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58th annual meeting, Monday, Feb. 25
6:30 p.m. VFW Hall



A Salute to Area Farmers



It starts with pride. Pride in himself and the way he farms. The American farmer knows he can expect a season full of long hours and hard work. But he's up to the challenge. In fact, he wouldn't have it any other way. A good farmer is a good neighbor, too. Involved in his community and committed to the land. He's a family man. Passing knowledge on to his children so they'll be ready when it's their turn to farm. A good farmer runs a tight operation. But his eyes are always open; looking for new ideas

and tools that can make his business a little more efficient; a little more productive. He listens hard when other people talk farming. But mainly, he takes a long look at his own program and decides things for himself. Throwing out what didn't work and sticking with the things that did. Upgrading his system until his goals are reached and then upgrading some more. He's hard to please, but he's fair. A good farmer, in short, is one of Americas greatest natural resources.

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Don't forget annual meeting

By Sandy Rodgers

District Manager

What do you have planned for Monday evening, February 25th?

Think about checking out what is going on at the Sherman County Conservation District's Annual Meeting.

The district will honor the conservation award winners, hold an election for two supervisor positions, have a short business

meeting and have the opportunity to hear the Goodland X-pressos perform.

In addition to that, a delicious meal will be prepared and served by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary.

I hear we are having "stuffed pork chops."

Don't forget — Check your calendars and we will see you Monday evening at 6:30 p.m.!

Family has farmed land here for four generations

CONSERVE, from Page 1

water.

He said he and Andy have taken steps to bring quail into the area and attract more fish.

Harlan House said they have stocked their farm with quail and have provided food and cover plots so the birds will stay. They also used a back hoe, he said, to clean sediment out channels, creating a better environment for fish.

They have tentative plans for other conservation projects, Harlan House said. He said they're considering adding more wildlife, doing gradient terraces on grass and building dams for water containment. He added they want to improve their current conservation practices by upgrading their terraces, adding more cross fences and becoming more efficient in rotational grazing.

Harlan, whose wife is Cora House, said the House family started farming in Sherman County in the late 1920s or early 30s. He said Andy, who is married to Gennifer House, is the fourth generation of Houses to farm here.

Harlan House said his family has always conserved on the farm, and Andy was introduced to the practices at an early age.

"He hoed weeds out of the windbreak as a kid," he said. "He's covered a lot of terraces.

He's grown up on it."

After he graduated from Kansas State University with a degree in geology, Andy House said he returned to Sherman County in 1991 to begin farming with his father. He said he doesn't want to live anywhere else or have another job.

"I just like being outside more, I guess," he said. "I didn't want to live in a city."

Andy House said his 4-year-old son Drew may be the fifth generation to farm here.

"He thinks he's going to farm," he said. Andy and Gennifer also have a 5-year-old daughter, Elizabeth. Harlan House said when he started irrigating in 1969, he did quite a bit of land leveling to stop erosion and to have better control over the water flow. He said he and his late father, also Harlan, won the Banker's Award from the conservation district many years ago.

In the late 1960s or early 70s, Harlan House said, he enrolled his farm in the Great Plains Conservation Program, in which conservation technicians made sure farmers were doing the most they could to conserve.

Harlan House said another reason why it's hard to take the award is because he knows he can try harder to conserve.

"There's always more you can do to have cleaner air and water," he said.

County district one of 105

By Sandy Rodgers

District Manager

The Sherman County Conservation District is one of 105 Conservation Districts in the State of Kansas.

Districts are governed by the State Conservation Commission in Topeka. They are led by Conservation District Supervisors, who are elected by all eligible voters in the county that attend the annual meeting — that includes city folks as well as country folks. Conservation doesn't just happen in the country.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service is a partner with the Conservation Districts. They are two separate entities, but work so closely it is very hard to make the distinction sometimes. The Natural Re-

sources Conservation Service is a federal agency.

Fred Wedel, District Conservationist and Kyle Schwindt, Conservation Technician, are both federal employees. Sandy Rodgers, District Manager, is employed by the Conservation District Board and her position is funded by Sherman County and the State of Kansas.

The District Board of Supervisors are the locally-led part of the equation, while the Federal Natural Resources Conservation Service employees provide the technical assistance to the Conservation District.

Now, if you are not totally confused, to make a long story short, we are all here to work as a team to meet the conservation needs of Sherman County.

Sherman County Conservation District • Program 2002

INVOCATION	Fred Wedel
Meal furnished by the Sherman County Conservation District, Bankwest, First National Bank, Western State Bank, & Farm Credit Services of Western Kansas	
PCA-FLCA	
WELCOME	Lonnie Whiteker
PROGRAM	Lynn Ihrig
ELECTION	Tom Eisenbart
	Dean Graber
INTRODUCTION OF COMMISSIONERS	Lonnie Whiteker
PRESENTATION OF AWARDS	Lonnie Whiteker
(Recognize former Award Winners)	
Special Award	Bill Selby
Educator of the Year Award	Sandy Rodgers
Poster, Limerick & Essay Contest	Sandy Rodgers
	Kyle Schwindt
Windbreak Award	Larry McCants
Bankers Award	Larry McCants
Conservationists of the Year	Fred Wedel
BUSINESS	Lonnie Whiteker
Minutes & Treasurer's Report	Dennis Shank

DISTRICT SUPERVISORS

Lonnie Whiteker	Chairman
Bill Selby	Vice Chairman
Dennis Shank	Treasurer
Lynn Ihrig	Member
Tom Eisenbart	Member
Dean Graber	Advisor
Sandy Rodgers	District Manager

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Fred Wedel	District Conservationist
Kyle Schwindt	Conservation Technician

Monday, Feb. 25 • 6:30 p.m. • VFW Hall • Everyone Welcome!



Farm couple had unique meeting

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Daily News

John and Kathy Baker, 2002 Sherman County Conservation District Bankers Award winners, met in April 1989 while both were in Hawaii, and had a long distance romance until Feb. 14, 1991, when John found a unique way to propose.

"We met at a luau, and I was with her for about four hours," John said. After returning to the mainland, they hooked up in Kansas City for their first date, and they had several such dates over the next 22 months.

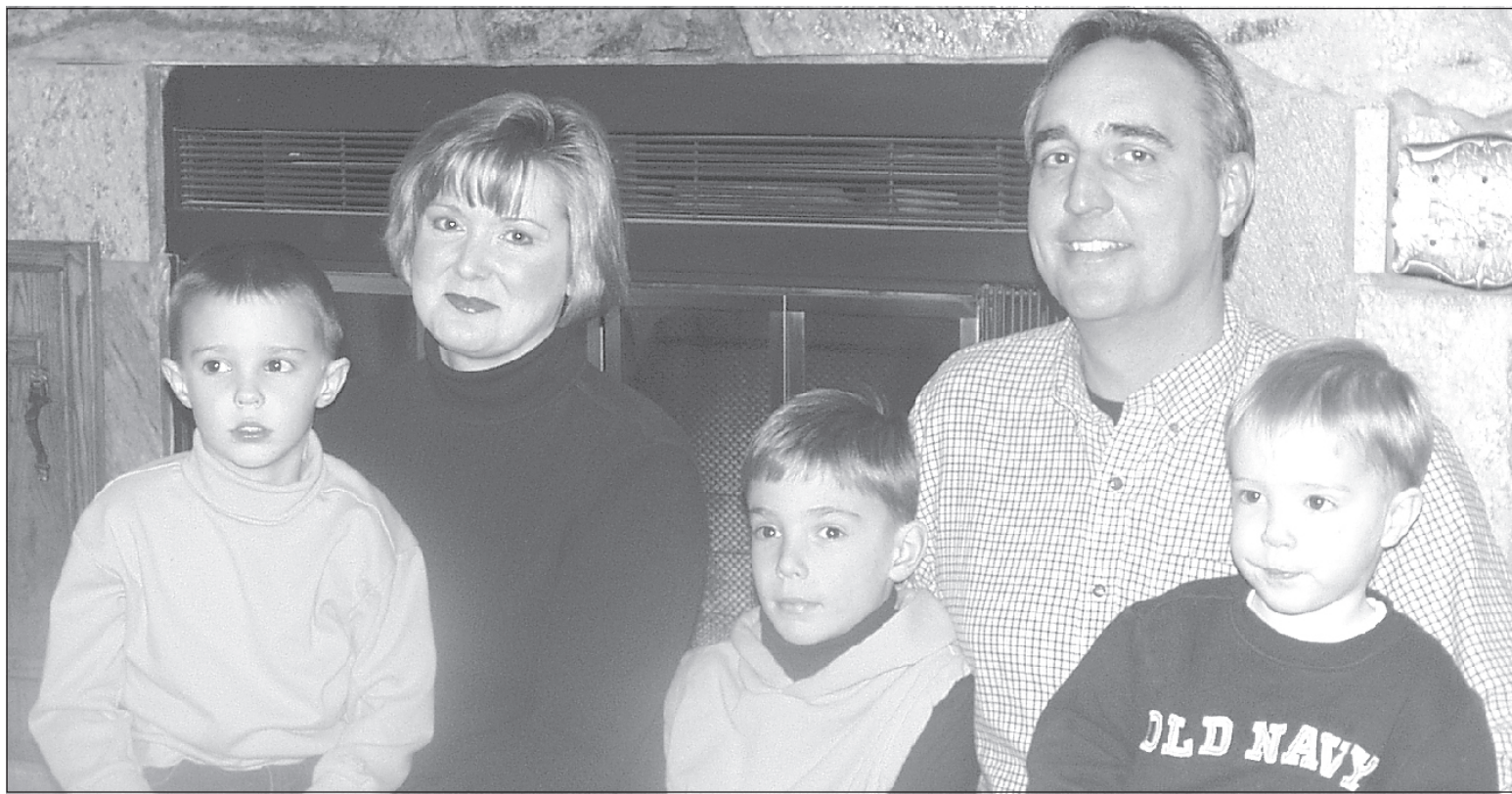
"I was sitting around one day and decided I wanted to ask her to marry me," John said. "I went out and wrote 'Marry Me Kathy?' in our of our fields."

"Then I got a friend to fly me down to Arkansas to get her. We told her we were going to Denver to watch a ballgame.

"When he banked the plane over the field I was watching Kathy's face, but for the longest time she didn't say anything," he said. "I was sure she had seen it."

Finally, he said she looked at him and said, "I think I've been out here too long. I am hallucinating."

She eventually said "yes," and they were married on Aug. 17, 1991. The Arkansas Gazette got wind of the romantic proposal and the Bakers were featured in a front page article.



Kathy and John Baker are being recognized as the Bankers Award winners by the Sherman County Conservation District. They have three sons, Connor, Tyler and Jackson.

Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Daily News

She remains a Arkansasan at heart, and John tells of her seeing a snow shovel for the first time and wanting to know what that was for.

"In Arkansas we sweep it way or have ice," Kathy says.

They have three boys, Tyler 7, Connor 5, and Jackson 2.

Kathy was an operating room nurse before marrying John and moving to Kansas. She

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**Congratulations to all
 conservation award winners!**

Family has farmed here for 40 years

BANKERS, from Page 4

now works one day a month for a specialist.

"Sixty hours in an operating room is easy," she said. "It is harder work 24 hours a day seven days a week as a parent."

She is a member of Chapter Z PEO, Rho Beta sorority and an avid creative memories scrapbooker.

The Baker family has been farming in Sherman County for nearly 40 years, and John Baker came to Northwest Kansas at the tender age of four when his family moved from Hutchinson to a farm northwest of Goodland.

His father, Robert Baker, and mother, Gertude (Rueb) Baker, met in Hutchinson where he had a job. She was from St. Francis, and after they were married they moved to farm ground in Sherman County.

John graduated from Goodland High School in 1975 and headed to Kansas University, where he attended two years. He switched to Kansas State University, where he



The John Baker family gathered around Sandy Rodgers of the Sherman County Conservation District to see photos she took of the family as the District Bankers Award winners. Photo by Tom Betz / The Goodland Daily News

was going to get an agriculture engineering degree, but when he

graduated in 1980 he had a degree in agronomy.

"I had it in my head I was not coming back to northwest Kansas," he said, "but when I got out in the real world, I decided small towns weren't as bad."

"It was nice to have a foundation to start from," he said of coming back to farm with his father.

"I brought my degree out here," John said, "but I learned more from him (his father) than five years of school."

He said his father started conservation farming back when the sweepplows were first developed. Those were to help keep more moisture in the ground.

Today, John says there are two major differences in farming technology.

First is the leaps and bounds in engineering of farm equipment. Today's equipment does more and has more uses.

"There are more specific pieces of equipment for special goals," he said.

Second is the agronomic advancements where there have been developments in more drought-tolerant crops.

"Plant vigor and standability has improved," he said, "and somewhat genetically engineered plants — bio-tech corns which are corn bore resistant. We spray less nasty chemicals on the plants, and they are more herbicide tolerant and resistant crops."

Another area where the plant breeding enhancements have helped is in the development of new varieties of sunflowers such as the NuSun variety.

The Baker farm is a grain farm where they raise wheat, corn and sunflowers. John says they have also raised soybeans and milo.

"The crops have to fit into the operation," he said. "You have to make a profit to be able to grow the next year's crop. It is simple economics."

As part of their conservation farming, John said he and his father started developing a system in the 1980s to "achieve more efficiency and profitability."

They use wheat stubble as part of a strip-tillage program. John said

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CONGRATULATIONS SHERMAN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT AWARD WINNERS:

CONSERVATIONISTS OF THE YEAR

Mr. & Mrs Harlan House
Mr. & Mrs Andy House

BANKERS AWARD

Mr. & Mrs John Baker

EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

Jona Neufeld

WINDBREAK AWARD

Mr. & Mrs. Bryan Hatcher

