



Shelby Coons (left) and Lawrence Tedford looked up their families in the *Sherman County and Family History* book. The men got together to mark 50 years of friendship, living, working and raising their children in Goodland.

## Airport helped keep him here

By Kathryn Gurfinkel

*The Goodland Star-News*

A good airport and a good job are what has kept Lawrence Tedford, 77, in Goodland for the past 53 years.

Tedford, a native of Minneola, worked with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service for 30 years.

His love of agriculture started on the family farm where he grew up. "I was already interested in conservation," he said.

He was drafted into the army during World War II, and when he was released in 1946, Tedford decided to pursue a career in agriculture.

"I got interested when I helped my family plant a windbreak," he said.

He began working toward a conservation career at Sterling College, a Presbyterian school in Sterling, where he and Max, his brother, broke college records in relay.

"It's a family college," he said. "All the kids went to Sterling."

Tedford continued to excel in track and passed his talent for running on to his sons and grandsons.

He went on to Fort Hays State University, where he earned a degree in agriculture with a minor in botany and range management.

He took a job in Goodland where he began working on June 4, 1951 for the Soil Conservation Service at the county courthouse.

Tedford worked on agricultural programs, installing irrigation, helping farmers plant windbreaks

and manage farm land. He said he had good crews throughout his career.

Once while on the job, he encountered a steer approaching a tame deer just north of Brewster. He enlisted the help of Julis Mai, area conservationist and his supervisor, to snap a picture that was later used in soil conservationist pamphlets.

"It's quite a picture," said Tedford's old friend, Shelby Coons.

Tedford said his love of flying began in high school when he attended a class in aeronautics. He took his first flight in a neighbor's wheat field on December 23, 1946.

"My dad's field was kind of rough," Tedford said.

A month after his first lesson, he went on his first solo flight.

"I soloed in the same field I took my first lesson," Tedford added.

He learned to fly in a two-seat Tailor Craft, or T-Craft, with 65-horsepower engine.

When he was learning to fly, Tedford said they didn't use a radio, and the tower would flash either a green or a red light to signify landing conditions.

Tedford had an uncle, Gene, who was a pilot in the 1930s.

"My uncle flew all through the '30s," he said. "Back then, you didn't have to get a license. They just started flying."

Gene owned an open-cockpit Eagle Rock airplane that caught fire in a lightning storm. Tedford said there is an identical Eagle Rock

hanging from the ceiling on concourse B at the Denver International Airport. Gene bought a 1940 Tailor Craft that he allowed Tedford to use.

"He encouraged me to fly anytime I wanted to," he said.

Tedford toyed with the idea of attending the Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa, Okla., but he stayed to help out on his family farm instead of attending the summer program.

He never stopped flying and frequently took trips home to Minneola with his wife, Evelyn.

"The wife and I used to fly down to see our families," he said.

Their flights south stopped, however, when they had their second child.

"You couldn't get two kids in there," Tedford said.

His most recent flight was a three hour excursion to Dodge City on Monday.

He no longer owns a plane and he doesn't renew his license so he rents an airplane and takes an instructor along on his trips.

Tedford's children, Jolene, who lives in Overland Park, and Terry, who lives in Castle Rock, Colo., sometimes took rides with Tedford. His other son, Donald, who now lives in Colby, took flying lessons and has flown with Tedford.

Tedford spent the last 53 years as an active member of the community in Goodland. He is a charter member of the Lions Club and an active member of the First Baptist Church.

building for a hamburger fry served by the Ruleton Eager Beavers 4-H club and provided by the First National Bank.

## Friends review 53 years

By Kathryn Gurfinkel

*The Goodland Star-News*

Friday marked the 53rd anniversary of the meeting of two good friends, Lawrence Tedford, 77, of Minneola, and Shelby Coons, 83, of Kanorado.

The two men observed their anniversary with a lunch together Friday afternoon.

The pair said they met on June 4, 1951, when after college, Tedford started working for the soil conservation district in Goodland.

Tedford worked in the northeast corner of the courthouse behind some filing cabinets and Coons worked down the hall at the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service.

"We were in the same building and did the same kinds of work," Coons said.

Tedford said the first person he met when he got the job was Coons.

"He was the first guy I saw when

I came up the stairs," Tedford said. "(He was) the very first guy I met in Goodland."

Coons jokes that he thought Tedford wasn't sure he wanted to stay in the job after his first few days.

"We tried to help him stay," said Coons. "(He was) an impressive guy. He was a very efficient and a very dedicated person."

Tedford and Coons worked closely with farmers as government employees. They both were raised on farms and liked working the land.

"We both liked farming," Coons said. "You had to have some connection with farmers."

Tedford spent much of his career working to improve farming conditions. He helped to introduce irrigation to northwestern Kansas.

"Irrigation was just starting in this country," he recalled. "I spent my whole career working with dry

land, ranches and developing irrigation."

Tedford also helped farmers with dams and windbreaks.

Coons made government payments to farmers for improvements through the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Tedford said the federal government paid for 70 percent of the work he did with farmers and the payments were issued by Coons.

Their jobs brought them together often and the men developed a friendship that extended past work.

"Lawrence and I had a lot in common," Coons said.

"We were friends ever since I walked up those stairs," Tedford added.

Once Tedford took Coons and a girlfriend on an airplane ride.

He flew them to Mitten's Cafe, a large truck stop in Oakley, where Coons was so impressed he bought coffee for everyone.

By Kathryn Gurfinkel

*The Goodland Star-News*

From a rough start, through the Great Depression to present-day life in Goodland, Shelby Coons has spent his entire life on the High Plains.

"I was born and raised in a sod house six miles south of Kanorado in 1921," said Coons, 83. "The doctor had to come out on the farm to get me."

He grew up in the same area where his grandparents had homesteaded. He said his family of five survived on the farm with no electricity and no indoor plumbing.

"We really had a good time," he said. "(Everyone) worked for their neighbors. It was good times because it brought people together."

Coons attended school in Kanorado and graduated in 1939. When he was 12, the depression was in full swing, and his family weathered that uneasy period.

"We went through the hard times of the 1930s," he said.

Coons said the family lived off of cream checks, or money they earned by selling the cream from their cows. In that day cream was sold in \$5 or \$10 cans.

"We milked cows by hand," he added.

The depression years left the Coons family short because the dry conditions made farming difficult.

"There were about three years in there that we didn't hardly raise anything," he said. "There wasn't any irrigation then. You had to de-

pend on mother nature."

Because they didn't grow enough crops Coons had to cut thistles to dry for feed. He said that at 13 years old he took the horses, his water bottle and his dog out to the field for a day of work.

Although times were tough, Coons said they never went hungry because they butchered their own meat and his mother and sisters tended a large garden.

"Dad always said we'll have warm clothes and enough to eat," Coons said. "And we did."

Coons added that playing sports was one of the outlets for the tough times.

"Sports was a big thing," he said. "That was all there was to do."

After graduation, he looked for employment, but the depression made jobs scarce. Failing to find a job, he tried his hand at farming with his father, but the harsh season of 1940 left his dad strapped. Coons said when they only made \$300 on 40 acres of corn, his dad told him they couldn't keep him.

In his job search, Coons came across an offer for a job under the Agricultural Adjustment Act, a program to help farmers during the depression. He was given the job and at \$50 per month, a good salary at the time.

"I remember I paid \$5 per month for board and room and still had money left over," he said with a laugh.

His job was to give payments to farmers for improvements through

the federal government. He stayed with it until he entered the Army Air Corps in 1943. Coons said served as a ground crewman with the 20th Air Force in Guam for a year and a half. He trained in Rapid City, S.D.

When he was discharged in 1946, he considered going to college, but noticed a job offer with the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service in Goodland. He returned to work at almost the same job he had before he left for service.

Later he entered the private sector, but he ended his career working for the Kansas Job Service.

"I was finding jobs for people and people for jobs," Coons said.

He said he enjoyed managing the job service and on May 15, 1996 he retired after 33 years of service.

Coons and his late wife, Ermalee, had three children, Jill Evinger who lives in Independence, Miss.; Stan Coons, who lives in Overland Park; and Julie Stefan who lives in Goodland. He has five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

"I've been in this county 83 years," he said. "I'm a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Elks and Knights of Columbus."

Looking back at his life, Coons said he is amazed at how much the world has changed.

"I went, in 50 years, from the horse and buggy to landing on the moon," he marveled. "I don't know where we go from here."

## Stearman Fly-In this weekend

By Karen Krien

*The Saint Francis Herald*

Those attending the 22nd annual Stearman Fly-In have begun arriving in St. Francis for the weekend events.

Many people come early so they can be up at sunrise to watch the hot air balloons fly at 7 a.m. Central Time both Saturday and Sunday. The takeoffs depend upon the weather, wind speeds and forecasts.

The main events start Saturday morning when Stearman aircraft (World War II-vintage open-cockpit, fabric-covered biplanes powered by radial engines) begin land-

ing at the Cheyenne County Airport, south of U.S. 36. They will be accompanied by other aircraft, including warbirds and experimentals.

During the two-day event, there will be tandem skydives which allows a novice passenger to share a parachute jump with an experienced skydiver. There are usually people waiting in line for their turn to experience the thrill of jumping out of an airplane on the back of a skydiver who knows what he is doing.

Both Stearman rides and tandem

skydives are available to the public, with sign-up at the west hangers at the airport.

"Skydiving demonstrations and Stearman flights take place throughout the day," said Robert Grace, coordinator of the show. The fly-in ends at noon on Sunday.

Breakfast and lunch will be served both days on the airport grounds. The St. Francis Chamber of Commerce is hosting a barbecue in Sawhill Park at 7 p.m. Saturday.

There is no admission fee for the show and there is shade and benches to sit on.

## Wheat tour planned for Tuesday

The Sherman County Wheat Tour will start at 3 p.m. on Tuesday, covering four locations in the county.

The afternoon will begin at the Alan Townsend plot, 8 1/2 miles south and a half mile west of the I-70 exit at Caruso, west of Goodland.

At 4 p.m., the tour will be at Aaron and Adam Duell's 4-H irrigated plot of five varieties, 8 miles north of

Ruleton.

The next stop will be at 4:45 p.m. at the Megan Leonard 4-H irrigated plot, a mile north, 2 miles west and 3 miles north of Duells'. The plot is a mile north of Leonard's home.

The final stop will be at 5:30 p.m. at Fred and Jeanie Schields' farm, 10 miles north of Goodland and east of the scale house. The tour will return to the Sherman County 4-H

**Freedom Fest 2004**  
**July 2-4**  
*"We Support Our Troops"*

Celebration parade starts at **6 p.m.** July 3rd on Main Street.

We need service men and women, veterans or pictures of veterans to ride on the floats.

Local businesses will "Adopt a Soldier" for their float.

If you know someone who has served our great country, help us honor them. Contact the Chamber of Commerce at 899-7130 or stop by the office at 1002 Main, Suite 101.

Prizes will be awarded.

The Goodland Star-News

The Ad Staff offers our most sincere apology to

and their customers for the inconvenience caused by placing the wrong ad in the TV guide on May 25 and June 1

## Chautaugua 2x5 in back Colby