

The Goodland Star-News



Sherman County Conservation Awards

Friday, February 11, 2005

Conservationists of the year: Burk Farms, Glenn and Michael



Evelyn and Glenn Burk



Joyce and Michael Burk

Windbreak award: Mary and Leonard Elliott



Leonard and Mary Elliott



Steve Duell, wife Colleen, sons Aaron and Adam with the family dog Sam.

Banker's award: Duell Farms Steve and Colleen



**61st annual meeting, Monday, Feb. 14
6:30 p.m. VFW Hall**

Annual meeting honors students, producers

By Fred Wedel
District Conservationist

The annual meeting of the Sherman County Conservation District will be February 14. The annual meeting is always great, thanks to District Manager Sandy Rodgers and the Sherman County Conservation District Board of Supervisors.



Fred Wedel

Students and producers are given recognition for a job well done. The annual meeting completes the year just ended and opens the door for another year of sustainable resource management on the farms and ranches of Sherman County.

At this time we look at three things. 1) What is constant on the "Topside of Kansas," specifically Sherman County 2) What changes have been made and 3) What does the future hold?

First, what is constant. The

people of Sherman County continue to work harder and smarter while holding on to their pioneer heritage. Family and community values remain important. Churches, civic groups, service organizations, youth groups including 4-H, scouts, and school activities exemplify the pioneer spirit of Sherman County.

Second, change has occurred and change will continue. Conservation efforts started in 1935 when the Soil Erosion Service was formed, headed by Hugh Hammond Bennett. Later the Soil Erosion Service became the Soil Conservation Service where soil and water conservation were the resources being managed. Stubble mulch, terracing, and water development in pastures were some of the conservation practices readily adopted. Irrigation changed farming and removed some of

the risk of farming in a semi-arid climate. Then in 1985 congress passed a law that began conservation compliance on farms and ranches. Soon the Soil Conservation Service changed its name to the Natural Resources Conservation Service. NRCS is now looking at five natural resources, not only soil and water. The five resources are: soil, water, air, plants and animals. "Whole farm planning" and "locally led" became buzzwords. So you see, change is always with us.

Third, where will change take Sherman County in the future? The 2002 farm bill increased spending on agriculture. A huge beneficiary was conservation. Programs like the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Wetland Reserve Program, Conservation Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program, Grassland Reserve Program, Conservation Security Program, and Conservation Tech-



Brook Redlin, 13, son of Chuck and Janet Redlin of Goodland, won third place in the State Conservation District Poster Contest. The CDs were real with homemade labels listing the various conservation programs and goals.

nical Assistance are all part of the 2002 farm bill. Conservation Technical Assistance is the building block for all other programs. Planning efforts are still done on whole farms, and

the concept of "watershed planning" is added. Watershed planning includes multiple farms and ranches where together water quality and soil quality resource concerns can

be more effectively treated. The best example of a watershed approach is the Conservation Security Program. The

See MEETING, Page 8

Sherman County Conservation District • Program 2005

INVOCATION	Bill Selby
Meal furnished by the Sherman County Conservation District, BANKWEST OF KANSAS, First National Bank, Western State Bank, Peoples State Bank & Farm Credit Services of Western Kansas PCA-FLCA	
WELCOME	Lonnie Whiteker
PROGRAM	Lynn Ihrig
Les Chantes	
ELECTION	Scott Jarrett
INTRODUCTION OF COMMISSIONERS	Lonnie Whiteker
PRESENTATION OF AWARDS	Lonnie Whiteker

(Recognize former Award Winners)

Friend of Conservation Award	Dean Graber
State Poster Award	Sandy Rodgers
Poster, Limerick & Essay Contest	Sandy Rodgers
	Dan Farmer
Windbreak Award	Mike Briney
Bankers Award	Joshua Dechant
Conservationists of the Year	Lonnie Whiteker
BUSINESS	Lonnie Whiteker
Minutes & Treasurer's Report	Dennis Shank

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Dean Graber	Member
Scott Jarrett	Advisor
Sandy Rodgers	District Manager

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PERSONNEL

Fred Wedel	District Conservationist
Dan Farmer	Conservation Technician

Monday, Feb. 14 • 6:30 p.m. • VFW Hall
Everyone Welcome!



Burk father, son conservationists of the year

By Sharon Corcoran

The Goodland Star-News

Like father, like son, or so the saying goes. But it's true, at least partly, of Glenn and Michael Burk.

Both grew up in Sherman County, sons of farmers. Glenn stayed his whole life; Michael decided he was going to get away. But then he came back.

After working together for over 30 years, father and son and their wives, Evelyn and Joyce, were named 2005 Conservationists of the Year by the Sherman County Conservation District.

Glenn is the son of Henry Burk, who farmed 20 miles southeast of Goodland. He said he farmed with his father until 1962, then was on his own until his only son joined him in '72.

"There's no place like home," Glenn said.

Michael took a little more convincing.

"When you're 19 years old," he said, "the best thing you can

think is to get away. Then you find out it's not so good."

Michael went to Fort Hays State University, where he graduated in '72 with a teaching degree in physical education. He said he had the opportunity to rent a farm in Sherman County and came back, and he's been here ever since.

Now Burk Farms includes about 2,000 acres scattered south of I-70 from east of Edson to Kanorado. Having the crops scattered throughout the county helps, Michael said, when there is hail or other harsh weather. Not all of the fields are in one area, he said, so not all are lost in one storm.

The Burk homes are close, less than a block apart, in the Armstrong Addition on the south side of Goodland. Glenn and Evelyn built their house in town in 1975. Michael said he and Joyce lived in town so their children would be close to school.

Their children are Jon (Kim) of Lawrence, Joshua (Anna) of

Corinth, Texas, and twins Jarrett "J.T." (Erin) of Loveland, Colo., and Jared "J.D.", a certified welder and works for a company in Omaha, traveling a lot. They range in age from 34 to 26.

Jon works for Sprint, Joshua for NEC, and J.T. is the youth director for Trinity Lutheran Church.

Michael said J.D. has been thinking about joining the family business but has some qualms.

"It's an enjoyable life," Michael said, "but you have to be careful. It takes a lot of investment. When we first started, ... in two months now, we spend as much as we did in a whole year then."

Besides that, he said, J.D. looks at his brothers. They are done in the evenings and have weekends off. Farming isn't like that.

"In farming," Michael said, "you're still there."

Especially during harvest and planting, he said, it takes a

lot of extra time.

Michael has a dedication to his craft that motivates him to keep learning and improving. He said his continuing education includes reading farm magazines to find out what others are doing.

He goes to meetings and applies what he learns to his own circumstances, and compares notes with other farmers, including friends in eastern Kansas.

"I visit with them about what's new," he said. "You fit things to your needs. Not all farms are the same."

The family talks farming all the time, Joyce said. When farmers go out to dinner, they talk farming with each other.

As for conservation, Michael said they have built terraces and maintain ground cover, often using chemical fallow, spraying the wheat stubble for weeds so they can keep it in place. And they rotate crops.

See BURK, Page 5



Evelyn and Glenn Burk have enjoyed spending their lives farming and working with their son Michael for the past 32 years. They share the award with Michael and his wife Joyce. Photos by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

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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 America's greatest natural resources.

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Joyce and Michael Burk, winners of the Sherman County Conservation District's Conservationists of the Year award, showed off their windbreak, which they planted 24 years ago at their home at 682 E. 25th. Michael said the trees were "this high" when they got them from the soil conservation office.

Burk's named conservationists

BURK, from Page 3

Over the years, the Burks said, they have raised soybeans, corn, wheat, sunflowers, pinto beans, sugar beets and milo. They used to raise livestock, Michael said, and ran calves on the beet tops before the beet plant closed.

They do a combination of irrigation and dryland farming. Glenn said they do no-till and summer till.

"We stay close to the plan of the soil conservation program," he said.

Glenn said he was glad to have Michael join him in farming.

"As long as we get along together," Glenn said, "we'll be here."

"Most of the time, we discuss things out, how we want

to do them, and then give and take a little."

Glenn and Michael both married "city girls" who have adjusted to farm life. Evelyn grew up around Jewell County and then moved to Goodland. She said she and Glenn met at a roller rink where the Veterans of Foreign Wars post is now.

Joyce is from Missouri; she and Michael met at Fort Hays.

Michael said he believes in being optimistic. It doesn't do any good to grumble, he said.

Glenn said he believes in doing things early. His motto is, "If it's time for it to be done, it should have been done yesterday."

Congratulations

to the conservation winners
from the staff of

The Goodland Star-News.

They were a pleasant group of people to interview, and we hope you enjoy their stories. — *Tom Betz*

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Leonard and Mary Elliott, winners of the Sherman County Conservation District Windbreak Award, are proud of their 20-25 foot pine trees. The pair planted the trees in 1980 and have watched them grow since. Photo by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

Couple plants mighty windbreak

By Kathryn Burke

The Goodland Star-News

Tall, strong pine trees line the northwest side of the Elliotts' property just four miles west of town, and keep out the strong plains wind.

A windbreak in this part of the world really helps, says Mary Elliott, adding that she really notices the difference when she walks out to get her mail.

"When you get past that last tree," she said, "you really feel it."

Leonard Elliott said they planted the trees in 1980 when they retired after 28 years of running a dairy farm and moved east into a five-acre spot just off of old U.S. 24.

"It was just plain when we got up here," Mary said.

"It was just pasture," added Leonard.

The couple live on a slightly

raised piece of land and felt they needed some protection from the wind.

They planted the windbreak not only to keep the chilly breezes away from the house, but for landscaping as well.

"We just planted them the way we wanted," he said.

"We wanted it for looks as well as a windbreak," Mary added. "We've had a lot of compliments."

The trees are lined up with two rows of 25 pines and one of 25 cedars running from the northwest side of the house around the west side. Further west of the pines are two rows of Chinese elm trees with two rows of locust trees tacked onto the south end. To the south of the tall pines, Mary has set up a row of lilac bushes and a small vegetable garden that links the line of pines to another smaller windbreak on the

south side of the house.

The pines stretch up taller than the house, and Leonard estimated they are from 20 to 25 feet tall. Even the smaller cedars, Mary said, are as tall as a person.

The pair got the trees from the Soil Conservation District in 1980.

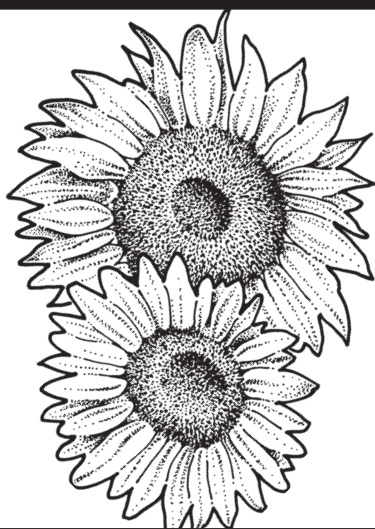
Fred Wedel, district conservationist for the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, said the Elliotts were chosen for the award because of the location of the windbreak in relation to the house, the trees' size and their condition.

"They're very healthy and well maintained," he said.

The Elliotts have been nominated for the award in the past and, Wedel added, this was their year to win.

"When we got the letter in

See ELLIOTT, Page 7



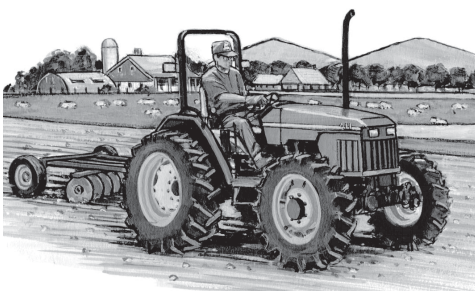
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A row of lilac bushes connects two sides of the Elliotts' windbreak, which won the Sherman County Conservation District Windbreak Award this year. The bushes are directly to the west of the house, with the bulk of the windbreak butting up to the north and then connecting again at the south. Further west, in a lower spot, the Elliotts have planted a continuation of the windbreak with cedar and locust trees.

Elliott's plant mighty windbreak

ELLIOTT, from Page 6

the mail," said Leonard, "we were just shocked."

Wedel said windbreaks can be kept up with a drip irrigation system, but the Elliotts' windbreak was hand watered.

"We watered these a lot to start with," Leonard said adding the grown trees still need a

lot of water.

The Elliotts know a little bit about windbreaks, as they grew up in Sherman County. Mary grew up on a farm northeast and Leonard grew up northwest of Edson. They both went to school in Edson, where he graduated in 1937 and she in 1946.

Mary said her parents

farmed and raised some dairy cows. Leonard's family had a farm when he was younger, but they moved to town where they ran a gas station and grocery.

After they married in 1948, the couple moved to a farm five miles west of town, directly south of the sunflower plant,

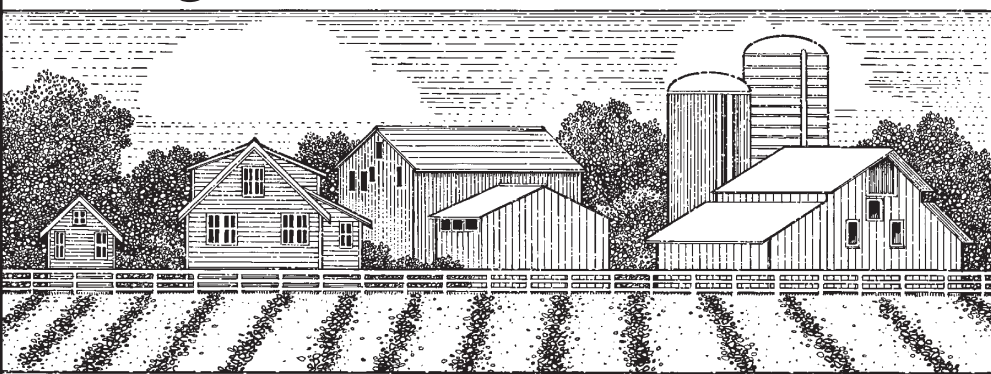
See ELLIOTT, Page 8



Mary and Leonard Elliott, winners of the Sherman County Conservation District Windbreak Award, enjoy the shade and protection they get from their rows of trees. The couple hand waters the trees each year to keep them healthy and strong.

Photos by Kathryn Burke/The Goodland Star-News

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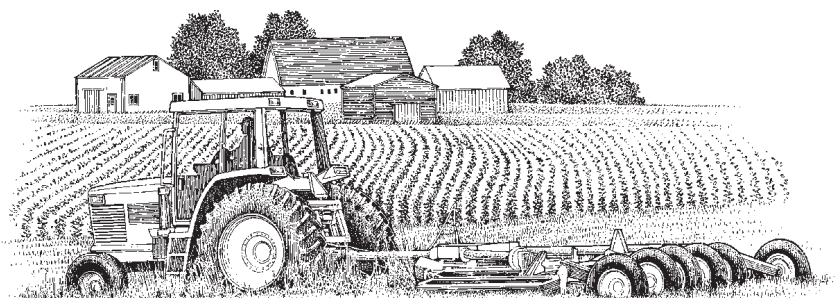
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Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Burk

Mr. and Mrs. Mike Burk

Friend of Conservation Award

Dana Belshe

Bankers Award

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3rd place State Poster Contest

Brook Redlin

Windbreak Award

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Susan Duke



The first snow of this year piled up on the row of the Elliotts' windbreak, which won the Sherman County Conservation District Windbreak Award this year. Mary Elliott, who helped plant the trees with her husband Leonard, said she takes a picture of the trees every year because they are so pretty when covered with snow.

Photo by Mary Elliott

Elliott's windbreak

ELLIOTT, from Page 7

where they ran a dairy. Mary said they had half of a section that they used as a pasture and for crops.

The Elliotts surrounded their dairy with a windbreak made up of Chinese elms and locust trees. Now retired, the Elliotts enjoy their free time going to Goodland school sporting events.

"The school has been good to us," said Mary, pointing to the awards on their living room wall. "We just have always enjoyed sports."

When their children, Carol Colby of Assaria and Marsha Way, Goodland, were in school, she said, they went to their games. The couple followed their grandchildren, Darren and Jason Way, through sports here in Goodland and kept up with Rhonda, Hailey and Kelsey Colby, although distance kept them from many games.

Elliott said although their great grandchildren are too

young for sports now, they are waiting to see, Davin, Tayler and Carter, the children of Rhonda, play.

Even though they don't have any kids playing now, she said they still go to as many games as they can.

In her spare time, Mary said, she crochets. Several times a week she makes the trip into town to play bingo or have coffee with her friends.

Leonard keeps busy with a round of golf at the Sugar Hills on nice days. He makes his way into town for bowling, too.

The Elliotts will get their award at the Conservation District's annual meeting and banquet at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 14, at the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hall in Goodland. They will be presented a framed windbreak certificate and a sign commemorating the award to place on their fence.

"We didn't plant that windbreak to get an award," Mary said. "We did it for ourselves. It's nice to be recognized."

Annual meeting honors students, producers

MEETING, from Page 2

security program is intended to reward farmers and ranchers who are already good stewards. The program encourages more enhancements to conservation and the environment

takes resource management to an even higher level. Conservation security encourages producers to continue their march to "No-Till" farming practices. In my mind, "No-Till" is the wave of the future. Soil organic matter is always

destroyed with tillage. Soil quality is dependent on organic matter and soil quality always precedes water quality and air quality. I practice "No-Till" on my own farm, with success. Is your farm a "no plow zone?" I leave you with this final thought

as you look to the future. I have never met a farmer who gave "No-Till" an honest chance for at least seven years' ever go back to tilling fields again.

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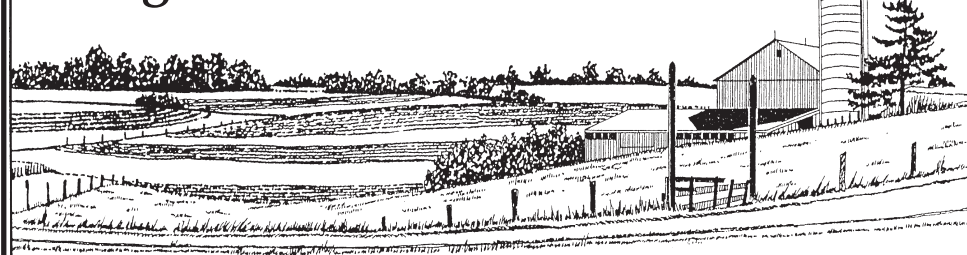
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