



IN HIS JOHN DEERE COMBINE, Doyle Brown (above) got ready to call it quits for supper time. Kurt Brown (below right) pointed at his brother-in-law, Gordon Kuntz,

while eating. Millicent Brown (below left) watched her father eat near the wheat field.

— Herald staff photos by Kimberly Brandt

Family spends harvest time together in field

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The big green John Deere combine turned right, heading for the next pass of wheat in the field just outside of Kanona.

The sun was beating down and a gray cloud was heading in from the west, putting Cheyenne, Sherman and Wallace Counties under a storm warning. But there still wasn't one out for Decatur County, and there was wheat to cut, so Doyle Brown continued on.

It was Saturday evening about 6 p.m., almost time to break for supper. The family had just started cutting the fields on Friday.

Mr. Brown said in September when it is time to plant wheat that he does most of it by himself, but some of the family returns for the harvest.

Joining Mr. Brown was his son Kurt, of Quinter who was driving the tractor, and son-in-law Gordon Kuntz of Hays, who is married to his daughter Kara, who was driving the truck.

All came in just for the harvest. So far, things are going pretty good, said Mr. Brown. The organic wheat, grown with no chemical fertilizer or weed killer, was yielding 30 bushels per acre with at least weights of 60 to 61 pounds.



Mr. Brown said the family is hauling the wheat to a bin, since it needs to be kept separate from any other grain.

Growing organic means, he said, that they don't use any man-made chemicals. It is all natural.

This is the first year that all of his fields have been certified organic. To prove that a field is certified, he said, records have to be shown for three years on the field.

Part of his ground has been certified for 10 years, but this is the first year it has all been certified.

Each year, he has to send a sample to the Kansas Organic Producers Association. A representative also comes out and checks the information and equipment each



year. This year they came out in May.

When he drills the wheat, he does put down a commercial fertilizer made of homogenized fish oil added to water. This dates back to when the Indians put fish in the ground with the corn seed.

Mr. Brown said a pump on the seed drill puts on about two gallons an acre as nutrients for the wheat.

Weeds are another problem, he said. In order to get rid of them, he uses a rotary hoe, which digs up the ground around the wheat and kills the weeds.

Before that, he said, he was doing no-till fields, using a lot of chemicals like everyone else. Mr. Brown said it came down to his al-

lergies. He said he was allergic to the chemicals used in no-till. The other thing was that when he was doing no-till, he noticed it was hard to even put a screwdriver in the ground and now he can just scrape it with his hand.

Born into farming, Mr. Brown said he hasn't missed but one harvest since he was 7. He recalls driving the lead tractor one summer when it was muddy and pulling a combine. Since then, he said he missed one harvest in 1973 because he had a virus.

The family starts the cutting around 9:30 a.m. and then works into the evening. The crew takes a short break for lunch and supper (See **HARVEST** on Page 8A)

City faces decisions on water

Council may have to go to a treatment system

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The Oberlin City Council may have some tough decisions in the near future about the city's water supply, which has been dropping in recent years.

The fact that the water level in the city wells is dropping isn't news to the council. For the last five or so years, the city has been working on a project to not only blend water from contaminated wells into the system, but to try to find more and better water.

Recently, the city purchased land south of town with an irrigation well on it with the idea that they could fill out the paperwork and make it a municipal well. Then tests showed that the water has three times too much uranium in the water as state and federal health regulations allow.

City Administrator Gary Shike said that so far this summer, the water level in city wells has held steady, after dropping with heavy use the last couple of years. It seems that things are stabilizing, he said, but there hasn't been any rise in water levels, either.

"Over the last couple of years, we have lost water," said Mr. Shike. "It will take some wet years to gain it back."

In well No. 10 east of town, the city has recorded a drop in water of 1 foot, 6 inches since August 2002. In well No. 9, also east of town, the level has dropped four feet since January 1999. Well No. 11, which

is by the bowling alley south of town, has dropped 2.8 feet since January 1999.

Right now, the city is using just two wells, No. 10 and No. 11. The city hasn't used a new pipe to blend water from No. 6, because, Mr. Shike said, the well doesn't have enough capacity and is too high in nitrates. The plan was to blend with the new well but that isn't an option because of the uranium.

Well No. 10 is the biggest well the city has. No. 9 can't be pumped at the same time because the wells east of town are too close together.

Mr. Shike said the city is pumping 756,000 gallons a day out of No. 10 and 432,000 out of No. 11. That means the city is pumping 1.118 million gallons a day, close to capacity for the two wells of 1.2 million.

So far, said Mr. Shike, the city has been able to fill the water tower every day.

Mayor Ken Shobe and Mr. Shike have talked about starting watering restrictions again this summer, but the council hasn't gotten in on the discussions yet.

By this time last year, the city was using even/odd watering days according to addresses, but then, last year it wasn't raining.

The trigger to start the water conservation plan is if the city is pumping 1.2 million gallons a day, Mr. Shike said, and they are close. Stage (See **WATER** on Page 8A)

Board decides to ask voters for tax increase

The Oberlin School Board agreed at an early morning meeting Monday to ask the public in a special election this month to allow an increase in the local option budget up to 5 percent for no longer than five years.

The board approved the property tax increase over a month ago, but a petition signed by 172 people in the district meant that the board had either to drop the hike or hold a special election.

The local budget is now set at 13.1 percent of the total general budget, and would go to 18.1 percent. The money comes from property taxes paid on land and property in the county. The maximum rate is 25 percent of the total budget. General fund money is used to pay teachers and employees and general operat-

ing expenses. Superintendent Kelly Glodt said it was a unanimous vote for the board, meeting at 7 a.m. at the district office, to have the election Tuesday, July 29. The last day to register to vote will be Monday, July 14 at 5 p.m.

Mr. Glodt said the board didn't have much choice. The district needs the increase for next year's budget, he said, and the budget has to be turned into the state by Aug. 15.

The board plans on holding town meetings in Norcatuar and Oberlin, but the dates haven't been set.

Mr. Glodt said he is willing to give presentations or answer questions for any organization. He said anyone interested in hearing about the election should call the office at 475-3805.

Rain stops cutting across the county

Combines shut down Saturday and hadn't resumed work as of mid afternoon Monday after rain soaked Decatur County, but farmers weren't complaining. After two years of drought, they need the rain for fall crops.

The area got anywhere between .70 of an inch to over 2 inches, making the wheat too wet and the fields too muddy for harvest to continue.

Before the rains started Saturday night, elevators in the area took in 700,000 bushels according to the harvest office report. The test weights ranged from 57 to 63 pounds per bushel.

The report said that harvest would be mostly completed by Friday if it didn't rain anymore. At D&S Grain in Traer, Office

Manager Shirley Nichols said she thought that area received about .80 of an inch of rain Saturday night. She said the cutting had stopped and they were hoping to get back in the fields Monday afternoon or evening.

She said she hasn't heard anyone complain about the rain, but it may make harvest last more than the normal two weeks.

So far, she said, farmers have brought in over 100,000 bushels with test weights averaging around 42 to 60 pounds per bushel.

At Norcatuar Grain, Manager Janice O'Hare said before the rains started, the elevator had brought in 160,000 bushels.

Even before the rain, the wheat was still kind of wet and harvest had (See **RAIN** on Page 8A)

Pheasant population will grow Friday

By **KIMBERLY BRANDT**

The pheasant population will grow by about 270 birds Friday when three men who have been raising a flock of chicks for the last 7 1/2 weeks release them into the wild.

One of those men is Dave Bergling, advertising manager for *The Oberlin Herald*, who lives about four miles south of the turn-off to Herndon on U.S. 36. The project is shared by Mr. Bergling, Steve Arnold and Clay Anderson.

Mr. Bergling said nearly two months ago, he picked up 300 pheasants the day they hatched from Beaver Creek Game Birds west of Atwood. The birds were taken in cardboard boxes and cat carriers to Mr. Bergling's farm, where they got settled into their



ONE OF THE 270 BIRDS stood on a hay bale in the barn at Dave Bergling's place. The pheasants will be released Fri-

new home in a barn. Ever since then, Mr. Bergling

has been checking the barn at least twice a day to make the sure there

is food, water and that nothing bad has happened to his babies. While he is at work, another one of the men comes in and checks the birds.

Before the pheasants moved in, he said, the barn hadn't been used for much except as a place for the cats to sleep.

The small birds, 90 to 95 percent female, lived under two brooders the first couple of weeks. The first week, the temperature for the pheasants had to be controlled at 95 degrees, he said, and then each week after that it could get 5 degrees cooler.

After a few weeks, the birds started to move around and fly. Mr. Bergling said he set up heat lamps around the barn so the birds could stay warm. There is hay on the floor for them to nestle into.

(See **BIRDS** on Page 8A)

* Harvest brings back memories

(Continued from Page 1A)
in the field. Mr. Brown said they farm the family land, including the Brown homestead near Kanona, which was cut on Friday.

If the weather holds, he said, they planned to be done by Tuesday. Friday evening, there was some rain, but they cut straight through it.

With organic farming, said Mr. Brown, you can't just use any seed. In the beginning the family had to buy seed and then raise it organically. Now they have their own certified organically grown seed which they plant.

When they first started in the organic market, Mr. Brown said he used to have to spend a lot of time on the phone looking for buyers, but now people call him.

He said over the years, he has raised everything, but is now just growing wheat and milo. He is trying to find a market for organic milo, and he said he has a few leads.

"We try not to grow anything that people don't want," he added.

Mr. Brown said the wheat looks good so far. The rain this year has been great, although he had a terrible time getting milo planted because of all the moisture.

He said he won't complain about the moisture, however. Even the pastures are green.

Around 6:30 p.m., the family stopped for supper. Kay, Doyle's wife, Valerie and the newest member of the Brown family, Millicent 5 1/2 months old, brought out sandwiches, chips and a special kind of cake cookie.

While Millicent chewed on her feet, the adults ate and talked about some of the traditional foods they eat during harvest: fried chicken, beef and noodles, tater tot casserole, chocolate cake and one kind of baked sandwich which wasn't a favorite among all of them. Some of the recipes have been passed down and others were new.

Supper didn't last very long. With the gray clouds moving in closer, Mr. Brown headed back to the combine with a cake cookie in hand. He dumped the wheat into the cart and headed back to the field to cut.

He said the kids talk about coming back to take over the family business and maybe retiring here. He said he doesn't know if that will happen, but that is part of the reason he does what he does.

* Rain stops cutting, but still welcome

(Continued from Page 1A)
been somewhat slow, she said. In town, they received 1.30 inches from the rain, and in the area reports ranged from .70 to over two inches. Mrs. O'Hare said she hasn't heard any complaints about the rain.

Some people say they wish it would have waited until after har-

vest, but after two dry years with no corn, the farmers all know that it helps.

She said as of Monday, they hadn't brought in any grain.

The Decatur Co-op in Oberlin, Hansen-Mueller, and elevators in Selden and Kanona were called but there was no one available to talk.

Group asks county for program money

Two representatives from the Northwest Local Environmental Protection Group met with the Decatur County commissioners to ask for \$1,100 to keep the program going.

A few months ago, Mike Balthazar met with commissioners to let them know that the service was going to receive less money because of the budget shortfalls with the state. Commissioners said they would like to see fees for those who use the service, but they didn't want them so high that the service wouldn't be used.

Tuesday, June 17, Mr. Balthazar said the group's board took a five-year average of the services in the counties they served and came up with an amount for each county to pay based on what is done in each. For Decatur County, that amount is \$1,104.

He said the board voted on the fees and they will start in January.

With help from grants, said Mr. Balthazar, the service has been able to put \$30,000 into reserve funds.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said if the county picks up any more fees, they are going to have to start paying out of reserves. With state cuts, he said, the county is already going to take a cut.

Mr. Balthazar said he isn't opposed to going back to the board and asking if the fees can start January 2005.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch

said as he understands it, the county will be charged for every well and waste water system inspected. The people with the well or septic system won't pay anything, said Mr. Unger. Mr. Balthazar agreed.

Mr. Unger said the commissioners asked for reasonable fees.

The county can't pick up everything the state has dropped, said Mr. Unger, asking what other counties are doing.

At first Mr. Balthazar said Decatur County was the only one to suggest fees. Mr. Unger said he had talked with other commissioners who wanted fees. Mr. Balthazar said there were some other counties. He said for the bigger counties, it is easier for the county to give \$1,000 to \$1,500.

He said the group is a not-for-profit agency.

Mr. Unger said the service can charge the \$5 for the water test, plus the cost of salary and mileage, and still have a reasonable fee for the users.

He said the county can put the request in the file and see what happens come budget time. He said he was disappointed that the service did nothing with the idea of charging fees to the users.

Mr. Balthazar said it is important for all the counties in the service area to stick together or the counties that choose to stay in the group will end up possibly paying more.



WITH A PHEASANT CUPPED in his hands, Dave Bergling told Ky'Lee Kolar, 3, and Kari Davis, 11, they could pet the bird.
— Herald staff photo by Kimberly Brandt

* Birds raised by three men

(Continued from Page 1A)
The birds were on game bird starter feed, finely ground corn, at first. They ate that for the first six weeks, but now they are on a grower feed which doesn't have as much protein in it.

Mr. Bergling said he has also been throwing ground-up corn on the ground to teach the pheasants how to forage.

Most of the food, he said, he has purchased from Mizer Milling in Atwood. So far he estimated that he has gone through 500 pounds of food, which runs at \$8 for a 50-pound bag for starter and \$7.50 for grower.

The kind of food isn't the only thing that has changed with the birds' eating habits over the last weeks. Mr. Bergling said the birds drank around seven gallons of water a day at first and are now up to 11 gallons.

About 30 birds have died, he thinks, though it is hard to count the survivors as they run around the barn.

In the first few weeks, he said, some of the runts were killed by the

other birds and others have had accidents. None of the birds have been killed by any kind of predator.

Mr. Bergling heard about the program through the Rawlins County Sportsman's Association, to which he belongs. He said he signed up for the chicks at the banquet. The association paid for the birds and gave the men seed for pheasant food plots.

The rules are that the birds have to be released, and although they can go out on their own at six weeks, the survival rate is better at eight weeks, said Mr. Bergling.

There has to be cover, food places and water for the birds once they are released.

Mr. Bergling said the idea is to try to get some of the birds to carry over and to re-populate the area. The survival rate in the wild is so-so, he said, although it will be better this year than last year since there is more cover and water.

The plan, said Mr. Bergling, is to let them go on the Fourth of July. There are already some food plots out and he said he plans to dump some ground corn to get the birds

started. There is a pond with water for the birds. There will also be wheat on the ground from the fields that surround the Bergling home.

With the hot weather recently, Mr. Bergling thought about kicking the birds out of the barn, but since they weren't yet eight weeks old, he, instead, set up fans and a drip system to keep them cool.

Although this is a first-time project, Mr. Bergling said he would do it again. He said he is learning a lot and has put a lot of work into the whole thing.

Next time, he said, he would like to do maybe 200 birds instead of 300, which might save some of the smaller ones.

Mr. Bergling said although he has never raised the birds before, he has already released 16 full grown hens on the property. He said he knows at least three of them survived and at least one has a chick.

An avid hunter, Mr. Bergling said the project has been fun and he hopes others get into it because if only 10 percent of the birds survive, that is 30 percent more than the area has now. He said he'd be glad to give advice if anyone wants it.

Council approves appointments

The Oberlin City Council has approved appointments of two members to the Arts and Humanities Commission.

Dr. Gary Fredrickson was appointed to another term and JoAnn Neidenthal was appointed to replace Leigh Davis, English and drama teacher at Decatur Community High School. Both terms will end in July 2006.

The council also approved the appointment of Councilman Joe Stanley to replace Mayor Ken

Shobe on the Convention and Visitors Bureau board. The term expires in January.

The council approved an ordinance tabled at the previous meeting to extend all city ordinances to include Sappa Park.

City Administrator Gary Shike said the payment for 2003 had been made on the sprinkler system at the golf course.

Mr. Shike said he recently toured Sappa Valley Youth Ranch with

Administrator Sue Glodt. He said the ranch now has 36 kids and he is impressed with all Mrs. Glodt has accomplished in her short time at the ranch.

In other business, the council:
• Held a 15-minute closed session for attorney/client privilege with City Attorney Steve Hirsch. There was no action taken.

• Heard that fireworks can be sold in the city limits between Friday and Saturday, July 5.

* Water choices to come

(Continued from Page 1A)
1 of the water emergency plan is a "water watch," which includes educating people and asking them to conserve water through voluntary measures. The second stage is going to a mandatory even/odd watering system.

"At the moment, the city is OK," said Mr. Shike "but if we get days like last weekend, it really sucks the moisture away fast. Right now, it just depends on the weather."

Mr. Shike said because of the timely rains this spring, the city had turned off the sprinkler system in City Park. He said it wasn't right to ask people not to water when the park was still being watered. He said he didn't know if the water had been turned back on yet.

With the current situation and the new well being so high in uranium, he said, he thinks the city is going to consider treating some water. The council is going to have to sit down and work the numbers and see what is the most cost effective, he said. That will add to an already heavy burden of improvements on the city's schedule

"We have a waste (water treatment) plant that has to be done in two years," said Mr. Shike. "and water treatment that has to be done. It is overwhelming to figure out what do while not throwing everything else away that needs to be done away."

Tower payment discussed

Decatur County commissioners talked with the sheriff about a rent bill for a tower which holds a repeater for county radios.

At a recent meeting, commissioners received a bill for \$3,900 for three years' rent for space on the tower from a firm known as SBA. The tower had been owned by a firm called WES KAN, and the county signed a contract with that firm three years ago.

The county paid rent from October 2000 to May 2001, said county clerk Marilyn Horn, and then didn't receive a bill again until last month. SBA is trying to collect for the past-due bill that the county would have paid to WES KAN at \$1,300 per year.

Sheriff Ken Badsky said at the meeting Tuesday, June 17, the tower at Kanona is 300 feet tall. He said he knows of one that is supposedly abandoned which is 180 feet tall just south of Oberlin. There is a possibility with the elevation of the land, they would lose 150 feet.

County Attorney Steve Hirsch asked if the county had ever talked with the Kansas Department of Transportation about putting the gear on its new tower west of Oberlin.

Commissioner Ralph Unger said maybe the county could negotiate the payments and double up for a few years instead of paying the back rent all at once.

Mr. Hirsch said the county will be paying different people, since the original company doesn't own the tower anymore. The commissioners didn't make a decision.

Emergency Preparedness Director Bert Cool said the recent hail and wind damaged the weather radar machine at the courthouse. The machine is leased, he said, and a technician will be out to reset the machine and put in the part it needs. The charge will be \$75.

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Cost Share Funds (Non-Point Source)

The Decatur County Conservation District will be taking cost share applications from
July 7 through July 18

"Funding is provided by the State Conservation Commission through appropriation from the Kansas Water Plan Fund."

Eligible practices include:
Household septic systems, livestock practices (waste lagoons, feedlot windbreaks, livestock wells/pipelines), and the plugging of abandoned wells.

Our office is located on South Hwy. 83 in Oberlin
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