

STEWARDS OF THE LAND

*"It was a dream that
brought us here"
said a pioneer."
And it's a dream we
gotta pass on."*

Throughout this great land, farmers and ranchers work every day to carry on their dreams and heritage. Taking care of their land, natural resources and livestock is a basic desire. Cattle producers understand conservation practices not only benefit the environment, they are good for business and enhance the quality of their lives.

The need to share our stewardship story has become increasingly important as people across this land lose their understanding and connection to agriculture, and as legislators and environmental activists force stricter regulations upon our industry.

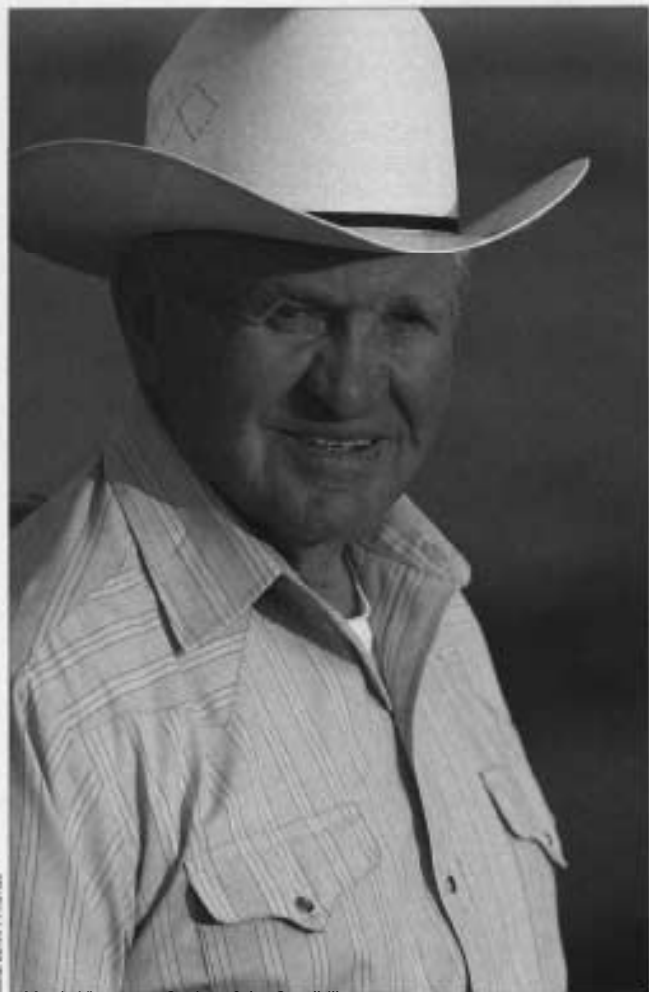
Serving as judges for the fifth annual award program were David Fischbach, president of the Society for Range Management; Calvin Perkins, president of the Soil & Water Conservation Society; and Ken Johnson, district conservationist and owner of Pebblebrook Angus Farm, Tompkinsville, Ky.

The judges evaluated the 14 entries on conservation practices, environmental awareness and educational efforts.

After evaluating each entry, winners from four regions of the United States – West, Central, East and South – were selected and will serve as spokespersons for our industry. They will be honored Nov. 14 at the American Angus Association annual meeting in Louisville, Ky.

An award program such as this is the least we can do to recognize the people who make it possible for the next generation of farmers and ranchers to carry on the dream.

— *Jerilyn Johnson*



MIKE BOHART PHOTO

Martin Viersen — Savior of the Sandhills



Angus replacement heifers thrive on Viersen's rangeland.



MARTIN VIERSEN

*Viersen Ranch
North Platte, Nebraska*

Long before environmental awareness was socially popular, and years before the environmental issues were front-page material, Martin Viersen had taken a proactive stand. The Nebraska Sandhills rancher has actively incorporated conservation practices into managing the Viersen Ranch; since he and his wife, Arlene, established their operation in 1941.

When the Viersens purchased their place near North Platte, the ranch bore little resemblance to the way it appears today. Poor management had left the land in sorry condition. Abandoned farmland was suffering from wind erosion and produced little more than tumbleweeds and sandburs. There were no trees and the rangeland was marked with numerous blowouts, some as large as 100 acres in size. One windmill serviced the 16,000-acre ranch pumping into a single pond. The only animals thriving on the ranch were prairie dogs.

Earlier rancher's attempts to convert cropland back to rangeland rarely succeeded through natural reseeding. Instead, Viersen interseeded native grass species into troubled areas. Crossfencing and water well development, as part of a planned grazing system, aided in development of productive rangeland.

Viersen first fenced cattle out of his reseeded blowoutst

allow re-established ground cover. But areas left totally ungrazed remained healthy plant communities were not established. Viersen learned that controlled impact by grazing cattle had a beneficial effect on the land. As a result, he developed rotational grazing strategies and implemented them long



before such systems became commonplace.

Viersen was among the first to recognize the value of rotational haying practices. Leonard Thye, a range conservationist for the four-county area included in the Twin Platte Natural Resource District, says Viersen realized how annual mowing of upland hay could be as detrimental as overgrazing. According to Thye, Viersen developed a system that called for a piece of ground to be hayed one summer, grazed a little that fall, and then allowed to recover for at least one year. The net result was ample hay

production and improved range condition.

Over the years, the blowouts have healed. The ranch's rolling hills are covered with hearty grass and rangeland is considered to be in excellent condition. Shelter belts established by the Viersens have helped control wind erosion, provided wildlife habitat and afforded protection for cattle.

Viersen has worked closely with representatives of his natural resources district and the Soil Conservation Service. He is a long-time member of the Society for Range Management and through that association, has shared his knowledge and experience. By many, Martin Vierson is considered the area's father of range management.



Considered an example of why Nebraska's Sandhills remain one of the greatest natural grasslands in the world, Vierson has received numerous awards including: Nebraska Grasslands Award for outstanding range conservation and management, Lincoln County Honor Ranch, Governor's Conservation Citation, and

Soil Conservation Society of America's award for national plant community management.

Viersen applied the same level of management to the cattle business and earned a reputation for producing top quality straightbred Angus cattle. He has been an avid supporter of the breed and active in the Nebraska Angus Association as a commercial representative.

Until recent years, the Vierson Ranch was a cow-calf operation, marketed replacement heifers and fed their steers through a custom feedyard. Now Vierson employs his version of semi-retirement. To eliminate the winter workload and calving chores, the cow herd was sold. Vierson now buys Angus heifer calves during January and February, develops them, and markets them in the fall as bred heifers.

Viersen believes the heightened interest in environmental management and conservation is a good thing. He also believes there must be more open communication between producers and those who would impose regulations to protect the environment.

Viersen says the ranching industry, overall, has a respectable track record for responsible utilization of natural resources. Concern and responsible action is necessary if any producer plans for long-term survival. Still, he knows producers must do a better job of informing regulators and the public of the good management practices already in place.



JIM & POLLY SHIPLEY

*Shipley Angus
Stockton, Missouri*

When school kids in Cedar County, Mo., see Jim Shipley their first reaction is, "There's that conservation dude. Hey! Mr. E. Rosion how's it going?"

Involving school children in fun skits and conducting valuable demonstrations in the classroom as well as on the farm are just a few of the many ways Shipley proves his commitment to conservation.

Jim's job as coordinator and technician for the Cedar County Soil & Water Conservation District allows him to work closely with area farmers, civic groups, teachers and school children. It also keeps him current with modern

conservation practices and regulations. He and his family often host farm tours to demonstrate, as he puts it, "we practice what we preach."

Conservation education is Jim's favorite part of the job. He helps in presenting workshops to area schools. Some of these activities include instrument and survey demonstrations, topography map layout and advising the soil judging team. Cedar County SWCD also offers two \$500 scholarships to high school seniors each year.

This "conservation dude" always adds a touch of creativity and fun to his classroom conservation skits. For example, after robing himself in a black garbage bag, he transforms into Mr. E. Erosion — one bad dude. He then proceeds to share a lesson on why soil erosion is bad for land and agriculture. It's a lesson the kids don't forget and often take home and repeat to their parents.

Another good educational tool has been a videotape called "A Soil Survey." Jim produced and narrated it. Polly and their son, Rodney, and daughter, Rebecca, contributed their musical



Jim has successfully re-established native warm-season grasses on his farm.

talents for the background music, "This Land is Your Land." The video informs landowners of the importance of a soil survey and how to use one. Each school in the county

Nominator: Nebraska Angus Association

WEST REGION NOMINEES

William Harner, Great Falls, Mont.

Charles & Janet VanderMay, Kadoka, S.D.

J. Henry Winterholler, Wendall, Idaho



Rodney Shipley enjoys the farm's well-stocked pond.



field of wildflowers can be found on the Shipley farm.

has a copy to help teachers in soil science lessons.

Jim's strong interest in conservation work took seed when he was a young man growing up on a farm in Ozark County, Mo. "I learned farming was hard work with lots of responsibilities. The biggest responsibility is taking care of your land and natural resources," he says.

Today Jim and his wife, Polly, manage a 140-acre farm near Stockton where Angus cattle, Quarter Horses and a variety of native prairie grasses and wildlife thrive. The land borders flat prairie and Ozark hills. Its diversified topography

and soil type makes conservation work a real challenge.

The best solution they have found is to be grass, not crop farmers. When the Shipleys purchased the farm in 1982,

they found its previous owners had raised corn and other grain crops on the bottomland and did not replenish the soil with fertilizer. The Shipleys placed the highly erodible cropland into the Conservation Reserve Program. One field was seeded to Indiangrass and a second to big bluestem. The remaining acreage was seeded with warm-season grasses and improved for hay and pasture.

Recently, Jim seeded a couple of five-acre pastures to Eastern gamagrass and caucasian bluestem. These forages are not only good for the land, they increase cattle gains and productivity.

For those very same reasons, the Shipleys have implemented rotational grazing, utilizing both their

cool-season and warm-season grasses. Legumes have been no-till seeded in all cool-season pastures to dilute their high-endophyte tall fescue and to boost soil fertility and cattle gains.

When you drive in the entrance of Shipley Angus Farm you'll see a warm-season grass demonstration plot which Jim maintains. The site has all major warm-season grasses adaptable to Cedar County, including big bluestem, switchgrass, Indiangrass and Eastern gamagrass. If he's not home when someone stops to inquire about the grasses, you can find Polly out there answering questions.

A stroll down their "nature trial" is another worthwhile adventure. The tall native prairie grasses and fields of wildflowers supply ample feed and habitat for birds and other wildlife. Their woodlands have been fenced off to exclude livestock and benefit wildlife such as deer, wild turkey and quail. A marsh pond area has also been established to attract waterfowl.

Each year the Cedar County SWCD puts on a meeting with district cooperators. The whole Shipley Family helps to make this meeting a success. With Jim's hard work and influence, they have drawn the biggest crowds ever. Why? Because the entire Shipley Family spreads their love and concern of the land county-wide.

Nominator: Kim Ehlers, SCS district conservationist, Lamar, Mo

CENTRAL REGION NOMINEES

Roger Eckstein, Seymour, Ind,

Harry Sheets, Eaglevill, Mo.

Scott & Carol Shively, Pleasant Lake, N.D.



PLETCHER BROTHERS FARMS

Crooksville, Ohio

Pletcher Brothers Farms, located in southeastern Ohio, has been in continuous operation since 1937. Although farming practices, crops and livestock have changed over the years, one thing remains the same — this family's willingness to use conservation practices and share their knowledge with others.

Don, Tom and Bob Pletcher work side by side to carry on their father's farm and dream. He taught them the importance of conserving soil, water and other natural resources to benefit the environment as well as their farming business.

The brothers began their full-time farming partnership in 1970. They manage 675 deeded acres and 393 leased acres. The beef operation consists of 160 brood cows, including 60 registered Angus, and 260 head of market cattle which are fed out each year. The crop operation consists of 300 acres of corn, 210 acres of alfalfa-grass hay, 80 acres of small grains, and 354 acres of pasture.

The farms are characterized as moderately rolling, with Westgate silt loam soil. It's a deep, moderately well-drained soil formed by wind blown silts.

The Pletchers were one of the first farmers in this Ohio region to use conservation tillage. This innovative approach to solve a resource

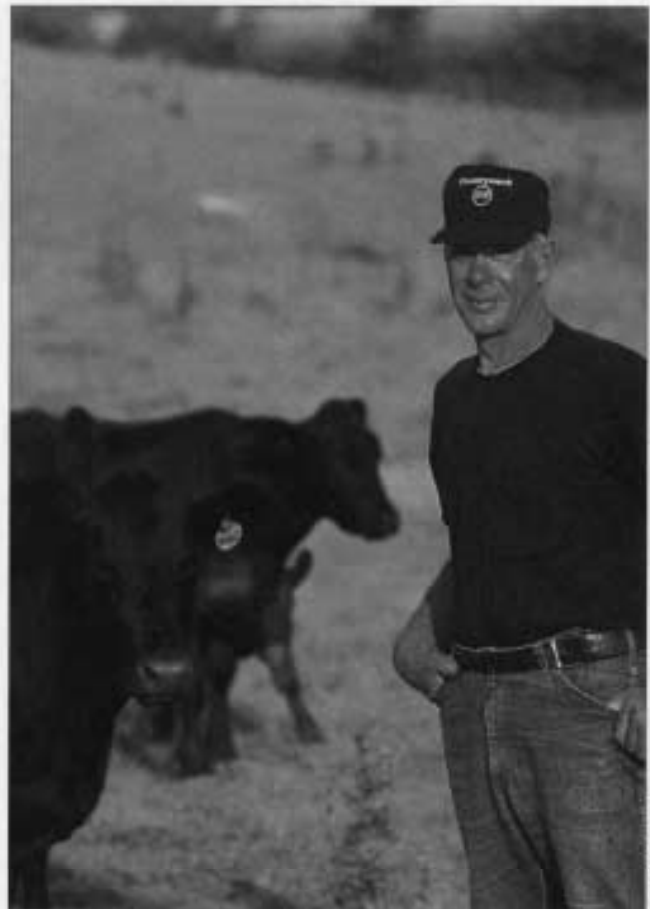
management problem was a bold move at the time. By 1979 the Pletchers were planting all of their corn using the no-till planting method.

The Pletchers have also addressed other soil erosion challenges on their farms by planning out and adopting a variety of common-sense conservation practices. Their steepest ground is maintained in permanent hayland. This allows them to more intensively manage the land for a single crop. They have also established new forage seedings by using no-till establishment methods.

Soil testing is done on a yearly basis for each field. This practice helps them identify fields where lime and fertilizer may be needed. It saves not only time and money, but also conserves energy resources by not over or under applying lime and fertilizer to their fields. This practice also reduces the possibility of ground water pollution from excess nitrates.

Special attention is given to their crop fields where corn silage has been harvested. A cover crop of rye is established on these fields to prevent soil erosion through the winter and early spring. Tritacale is another innovative plant material they have experimented with for cover crop protection.

This cover crop practice also controls wind erosion. Their soils were formed out of



Don Pletcher has made a commitment to conservation.



Waste storage areas have been constructed at two of Pletcher's farm feedlots. The structures are designed to hold waste from 200 head for up to 90 days.

windblown silts and the cover crops keeps these lighter soil particles in place. In the spring, corn is then no-tilled directly into the winter cover crop.



Grass waterways help minimize erosion on the farm's hilly cropland.

Grass waterways and wash cobs, which collect rain overflow, are in place in crop fields to minimize erosion on the farms' hilly terrain.

Pastures and forages are also given special attention. Lime and fertilizer are applied on a regular basis to maintain vigorous sod growth. This practice promotes optimum forage production and prevents excessive soil erosion on the steep slopes.

Several seep areas in Pletcher Brothers Farms' pastures have been developed into livestock watering facilities. This prevents erosion problems and increases livestock productivity. By providing fresh, clean water in different pastures, they are able to more effectively manage the cattle. This flexibility allows them the option of rotating the cow herds to different pastures based on forage conditions and seasons.

To prevent water pollution and to recycle livestock waste into cropland fertilizer, the Pletchers have installed two livestock manure storage structures; a third one is in the planning stage by the Soil Conservation Service.

This is a big advantage because manure can be stored up to three months, depending on crop field conditions. Spreading manure on the fields helps reduce surface crusting and soil compaction, which, in turn, aids in better nutrient management.

Conservation efforts go beyond the Pletcher Brothers Farms. They have hosted area farmers and FFA students at conservation field days sponsored by the Morgan County Soil & Water Conservation District.

Past accomplishments, future plans and a strong willingness to share their success and knowledge of soil and water conservation with others qualify them as true stewards of the land.



J. O. "BO" CREIGHTON

*Creighton Ranch
Paris, Texas*



Bo, Whiz and Quint Creighton are good stewards of their land and cattle.

J. O. "Bo" Creighton is a classic conservationist — whether of water, soil, time, money or material goods. It comes naturally to one born and reared in West Texas where water is a rare and valuable commodity.

In 1964 Bo and his wife, Whiz, purchased a dry and remote area ranch and began a water and soil conservation program with the Upper Colorado River Soil Conservation District in Borden County, participating in all phases of the program. After contending with near-drought conditions for 10 years, Creighton began

looking for an area with more predictable weather and heavier rainfall.

In 1974 Creighton moved his family to Paris, Texas where they purchased 700 acres of rough, undeveloped land and entered a program with the Lamar County Soil Conservation District. Almost 20 years later, the Creighton Ranch consists of just more than 2,000 acres.

The Creighton name is synonymous with good cattle, good land and good people. The good people were always evident; the good cattle were developed carefully; and the good land is a result of much

Nominator Scott Miller SCS district conservationist, McConnelsville, Ohio

E A S T R E G I O N N O M I N E E
William Elkins, Coatesville, Pa.

hard work and dedication to soil and water conservation Bo Creighton is a steward of the land in every sense of the word. He loves the land—the sight of it, the smell, and the feel of it. He is vigilant in carrying out soil conservation practices and planting grasses which improve forage production and replenish grazing.

Use of conservation practices has always been an integral part of the Creightons' long-term plan. With a combination of upland and bottomland, black and gray soils, the ranch looks different than in 1974. Some 780 acres have been planted to bermudagrass, much of it overseeded with a clover-ryegrass combination. This provides grazing when bermudagrass is dormant. Legumes have been overseeded on the entire ranch, and cross fencing is utilized to facilitate rotation grazing.

A grade-stabilization structure, constructed in 1991, is one of two large erosion control projects installed by Creighton to stabilize gullies along Aud's Creek. Nine ponds have been built for livestock water, erosion control, and recreation. A bottom water trickle tube was installed in one pond with the riser placed at the back of the dam to pull stagnant water off the bottom of the pond, contributing to better fish pond management.

The Creighton cattle herd consists of 75 head of registered Angus, 75 head of registered Charolais, and a 350-head Charlais-Angus cross commercial herd. They implemented artificial insemination (AI) into their program and are doing some embryo transfers.

In addition to being named the 1990 Food and Fiber Producer in Lamar County, the Creightons have also

received the Farm Family of the Year Award. Bo received the Friend of 4-H Award and is an FFA Honorary Chapter Farmer. He has served on the Junior Livestock Show Board, and is a member of Texas Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, American and Texas Angus Associations, American and Texas Charolais Associations, and the American Paint Horse and American Quarter Horse Associations.

He served 12 years on the local school board (seven as president) and 10 years on the Paint Stallion Breeders Association (six as president). He is currently a director of the Aud's Creek Watershed District, a member of the Lamar County Beef and Forage Committee and a life-long member of the Church of Christ.

The Creightons have given full attention to erosion control which resulted in soil loss being reduced from an average of 15-20 tons per acre to below 5 tons per acre. Because of this conservation achievement, the Lamar County Soil and Water Conservation District recognized them as the 1993 Conservation Rancher of the Year.

This resulted in the Creightons receiving the 54-county Area IV Conservation Rancher of the Year Award sponsored by the Texas State Soil and Water Board.

Being recognized as the Lamar County Family of the Year meant much to the Creightons since their son, Quint, is an active participant in all phases of ranch operations. Quint is following in his father's footsteps, being recognized as the 1991 Jaycees Young Farmer. The



Forages are the lifeblood of the Creighton Ranch.



Bo Creighton manages a registered herd of 75 Angus.

Creightons' daughter, Cristy, lives nearby and helps out on the ranch. Both Quint and Cristy are married and Bo and Whiz are grandparents as

well. The three grandchildren are quite active in daily ranch activities. Love of the land is evident in each family member.

Nominator: Lamar Soil and Water Conservation District

SOUTH REGION NOMINEES

Vincent Aiello, Live Oak, Fla.
Eddie Parker, Jefferson Co., Okla.
C. Bascum Smith, Russell Springs, Ky.

Fosters Win NCA Environmental Stewardship Award

Seldom Best Farms, owned and operated by Bruce and Scott Foster of Niles, Mich., have won the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) Region 1 Environmental Stewardship Award.

"The Fosters are yet another example of the sound environmental stewards who operate family farms," says Michigan Cattlemen's Association president Chuck Markley. "We were pleased to nominate Seldom Rest Farms for this national award."

The Fosters have a registered Angus cow-calf herd and raise Holstein heifers for use and sale as embryo transfer recipients and dairy replacements. In addition to the cattle business they also raise corn, soybeans, alfalfa hay, wheat, sweetcorn and fruit. Brothers Bruce and Scott are the fourth of five generations to manage the farms and care for the land.

The farms owned by the family are located in Berrien and Cass Counties in extreme southwestern Michigan. In these counties of moderate climate, the topography is mostly gently sloping moraines and till plains, with flat to nearly level lake plains and outwash plains. The soil is

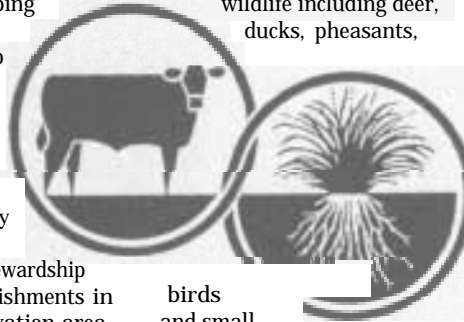
predominantly sandy loam and clay loam.

The Fosters' stewardship program accomplishments in the energy conservation area include using no-till and minimum tillage practices. This conserves fuel, tires and equipment. They sell corn to ethanol manufacturers and use ethanol in some vehicles.

Air pollution control is attained through managed chemical spray timing on fruit trees and changing to band

spraying on crop planter. They use no-till and minimum till cultural practices which reduces soil dust, and use ethanol fuel in vehicles.

On this 1,400-acre farm, wildlife including deer, ducks, pheasants,



birds and small animals are protected and controlled. Habitat is guarded, re-planted and improved. Manure is handled in a controlled and monitored system. All manure is returned to soil, nutrient testing of manure, soil, trees and crops is utilized. Liquid injection of manure is used to

reduce odor and attain quicker utilization.

Over the generations Fosters have improved their stewardship practices through cooperative efforts with the Soil Conservation Service, Michigan State University Extension, USDA Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Services and local Soil Conservation Districts.

The Foster Family is well known for its promotion of beef and agriculture in the farm and non-farm communities alike. "We are leaders not leaners. We feel it is essential to be very good stewards of the land in this growing area of cattle, crops and people. When we practice natural resource stewardship and management, we enhance productivity and profitability," the Fosters say.

AJ



If you know an Angus producer who qualifies as a true steward of the land, please write us for a nomination form. Our 1995 Stewardship Award program deadline is June 1.

For more information on this program, contact:

Jerilyn Johnson, Editor
Angus Journal
3201 Frederick Blvd.
St. Joseph, MO 64506
(816)233-0508