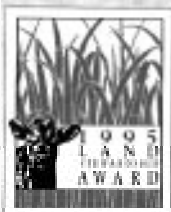


STEWARDS OF THE LAND

Throughout this great land, farmers and ranchers work hard every day to be good caretakers of their land and livestock. Tending the land, natural resources and livestock is a basic desire. You understand conservation practices not only benefit the environment, they are good for business and enhance the quality of your lives.

Still, the need to share our stewardship story has become increasingly important as citizens across this land lose their understanding of and connection to agriculture, and as stricter regulations are forced upon our industry.

Nominees in the *Angus Journal* Land Stewardship Award program are judged on their conservation practices, environmental awareness and educational efforts. Four winners representing the East, South, Central and West regions of the United States are selected each year to serve as spokespersons for our industry. Each will be honored Monday, Nov.



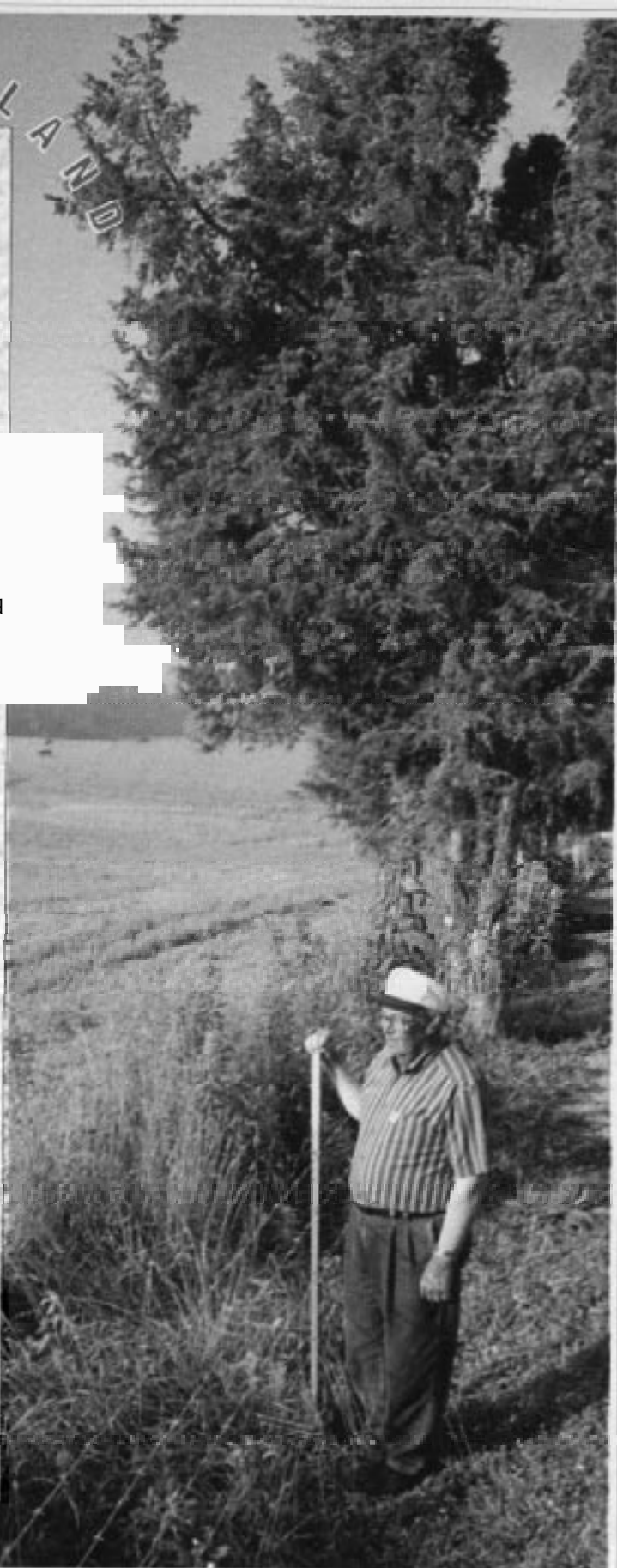
13 at the American Angus Association Annual Meeting in Louisville, Ky.

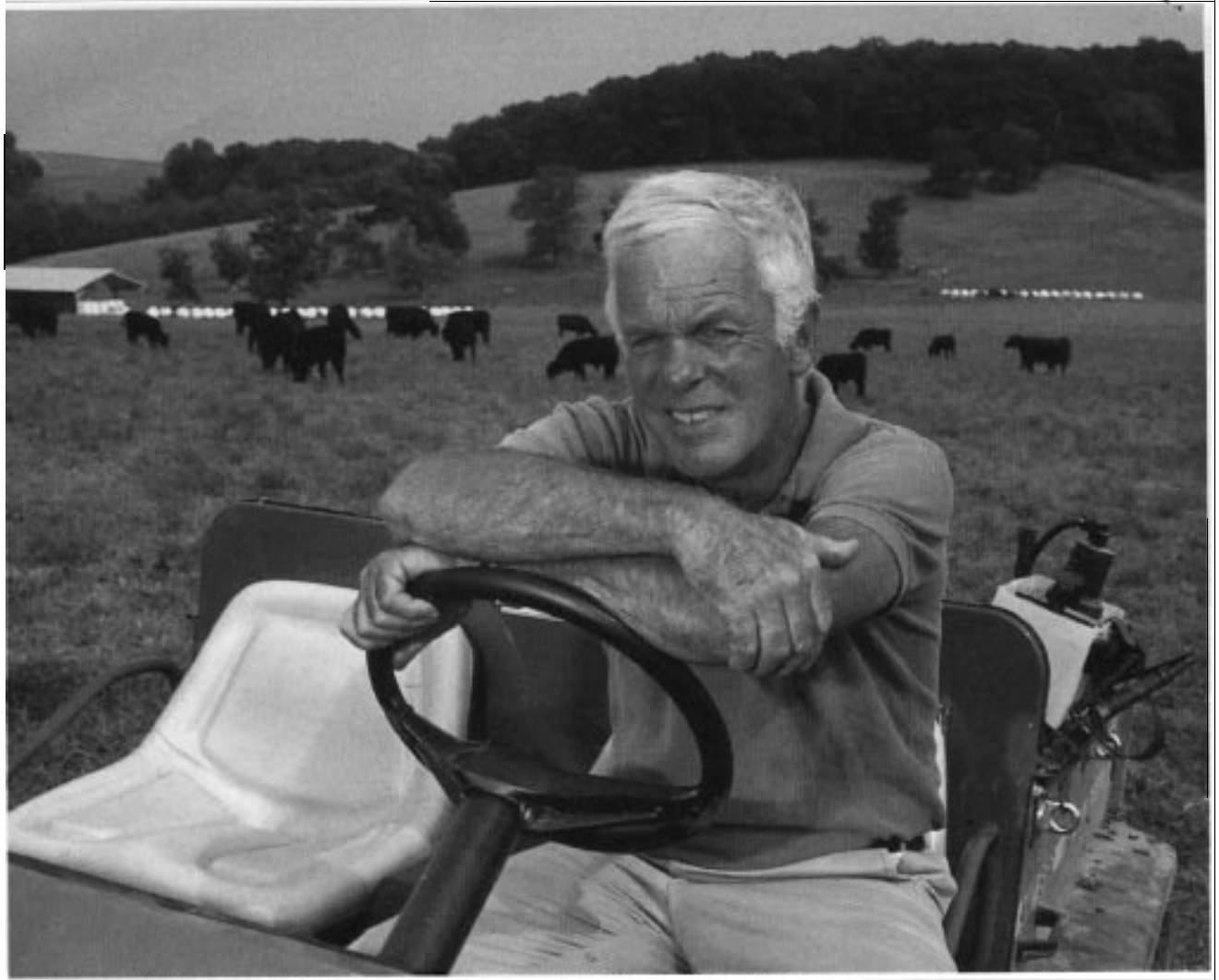
Serving as judges for the sixth annual award program were Fred Bryant, Lubbock Texas, 1995 president of the Society for Range Management; John Dawes, Alexandria, Pa.; and Jim Shipley, Stockton, Mo., 1994 Land Stewardship Award winner.

"These producers have good working knowledge of and sensitivity to the total ecosystem," says Bryant. "All in all, they were truly impressive nominations."

Shipley adds, "I admire and respect people who recognize and admit that there might be a better way and then set out to find it. It's apparent they deeply care for their land, livestock, wildlife and natural resources, and want to leave them in better condition than when they received them."

— Jerilyn Johnson





Inside Dr. William "Bill" Elkins beats the heart of a conservationist. Elkins strongly believes in preserving the natural beauty, foliage and wildlife habitat of the land.

It's his farm background and current Angus cattle enterprise, however, that keeps him conservation-minded. All cattle and forage management decisions are influenced by conservation practices on Buck Run Farm. After retiring from a career in medical research, Elkins purchased this farm in 1984 as much for its aesthetic beauty as for its beef cattle production capability. Through his efforts, nature and cattle production work in harmony here.

The first conservation

EAST REGION

DR. WILLIAM ELKINS

Buck Run Farm, Coatesville, Pa.



practice Elkins initiated was controlled grazing. This practice enabled him to go from grazing 50 cows on 300 acres to grazing 100 head on 180 acres. Pasture fertility and production has improved over the past nine years with minimal use of commercial fertilizers.

Another environmental project to address was Buck Run Creek, which flows through several pastures at Buck Run Farm. Elkins discovered cattle can damage and cause erosion of stream banks as well as pollute streams and kill aquatic life with nitrogen-producing waste. To prevent this, stream banks were fenced to limit access of cattle to only designated crossing and watering areas. Limited cattle

access has brought noticeable improvement to the stream and healthy populations of small mouth bass and trout.

Elkins is in the process of establishing a watering system which can pump water to designated drinking areas away from the stream via a solar pump and water storage tank. This project will further reduce the effects of cattle using the stream and give him more options for improved grazing techniques.

Solar electric fence chargers are also used to give Elkins flexibility in fencing projects.

Trees, trees, trees...

Elkins has been improving the farm over the years by adding trees. Saplings are planted along stream banks. Once they mature, they inhibit soil erosion and strengthen the stream banks. Trees are planted along ditches for the same reason. Many trees have been planted for natural shelter and windbreaks and for dividing fields.

Upon recommendation of the Brandywine Conservancy, Elkins is working to remove Norway Maples, which can take over a woodland area, just like multiflora rose can ruin a pasture.

Foraging cattle are an important part of Elkin's conservation program. The more cattle forage for themselves, the less erosion occurs from tractors, the less fuel and exhaust is expelled, and the more manure is evenly spread, which minimizes commercial fertilizer application. Elkins believes his farm should work as an ecosystem between the land and the cattle, with less interference by man.

Elkins believes cattle – registered or commercial – should be aggressive foragers and maintain good body condition on a forage-only ration. Calves receive no



Buck Run Farm is located west of Philadelphia in the historic Brandywine Valley area. It's home to Angus cattle and abundant wildlife.

supplementary creep feed. Cows are grazed or fed hay and/or haylage during the winter months to complete their nutritional requirements.

Replacement heifers are raised on grass and hay, with extra supplement of no more than 2 pounds per day of rolled corn during the winter. Bulls are also expected to perform on forages. Elkins believes in forage-based bull tests and sends several head to Edisto Bull Test each year.

To minimize nutrient transfer from pasture to shaded areas in eastern Pennsylvania's hot and humid summers, Elkins built a simple, 40x20 foot portable shelter out of steel pipe and shade cloth. Each shelter accommodates about 20 cow-calf pairs. It's moved every day to spread the manure around the field.



To prevent soil bank erosion, creeks are fenced off and cattle drink only at designated watering areas.

Elkins has been an active member and leader of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council; the Stroud Foundation; the Buck & Doe Association, a group which oversees preservation of Buck & Doe Watershed; the Natural

Land Trust of Philadelphia; and the World Wild Life Fund.

**Nominator:
Dale & Carolyn Stoltzfus
Coatesville, Pa.**



“M
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My father was the best conservationist I have ever seen,” were the words Bascum Smith used to describe how he learned to love the land. Bascum was a good student; his father would be proud.

This year the Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts honored Bascum for 35 years of active leadership in Soil and Water Conservation.

Often we tend to look at current events when reviewing a person’s accomplishments. That can surely be done when looking at Bascum’s activities, but more importantly, he has been practicing and teaching conservation his entire life. Seldom do we have the opportunity to recognize someone with these outstanding accomplishments.

Bascum had one of the first conservation plans written by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) in Russell County, Ky. He implemented every practice on the plan. That was easy, he was already using cover crops, cropping on the contour, and rotating his cropland with grass and legumes. With SCS assistance, he built terraces on his sloping land, diversions to protect the bottoms, and installed stripcropping systems in his corn fields. He was the first person in southern Kentucky to use wheeltrack planting, a forerunner to no-till cropping. He used wheeltrack planting until the mid 1960s, when he started no-tilling, and has been no-tilling ever since.

Sod waterways have been built in every valley; ponds and springs were developed to provide high quality livestock water and to protect the quality of the water that left the farm.

Bascum believes in leaving cover and food for wildlife. He

SOUTH REGION

BASCUM SMITH

Smithland Farms, Russell Springs, Ky.



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maintains habitat for deer, quail, rabbits and turkeys. An all-around conservationist, he loves the land and it shows. The Russell County District Conservationist says, "Bascum is one of the best conservationists I know."

In 1988 the Russell County Conservation District presented Bascum with their Master Conservationist Award, for developing and maintaining a complete conservation plan on their entire farm.

But there is more. Not only is Smith an active conservationist, he is a leader in his community. He has been chairman of the Russell County Conservation District for 30 years. He initiated programs like taking trees to school, giving every student a sapling to take home and plant. He was a promoter of a water well testing program to help local residents identify problems in well and spring water and then to help them improve the quality of the water they drink. He started a project known as "Swan Pond." This area, below a Corp of Engineers Dam, had gullies more than 50 feet deep. Bascum helped raise the funds to correct the problems. The national press was on hand when the project was completed.

This farmer works on Earth Day, helps the FFA seed wildlife food plots, provides educational materials to the schools, helps provide two scholarships to agriculture graduates, and continues to be an active community leader in the field of conservation.

Smithland Farms consists of 1,000 acres of rolling hills in southern Kentucky. They grow about 200 acres of corn and soybeans, all no-till for erosion control and to reduce pesticide run-off. They were some of the first to no-till



Pastures are rotated to prevent overgrazing and increase beef production.

alfalfa into cover crops instead of plowing to provide a seedbed. They maintain more than 200 head of registered Angus cattle and about 150 head of commercial cows.

Tobacco is grown in a rotation of grasses and legumes for erosion control. Bascum soil tests on a regular basis. Pastures are rotated to prevent overgrazing and to improve utilization. Grass strips are left near creeks to filter run-off and improve water quality Bascum tries to make this earth a better place for us to live.

When you tour Smithland Farms you will see the black cattle, you will see no-till corn and soybeans, you will see well maintained conservation practices, but you will not see gullies or muddy water in the creeks.

Bascum is a man that loves

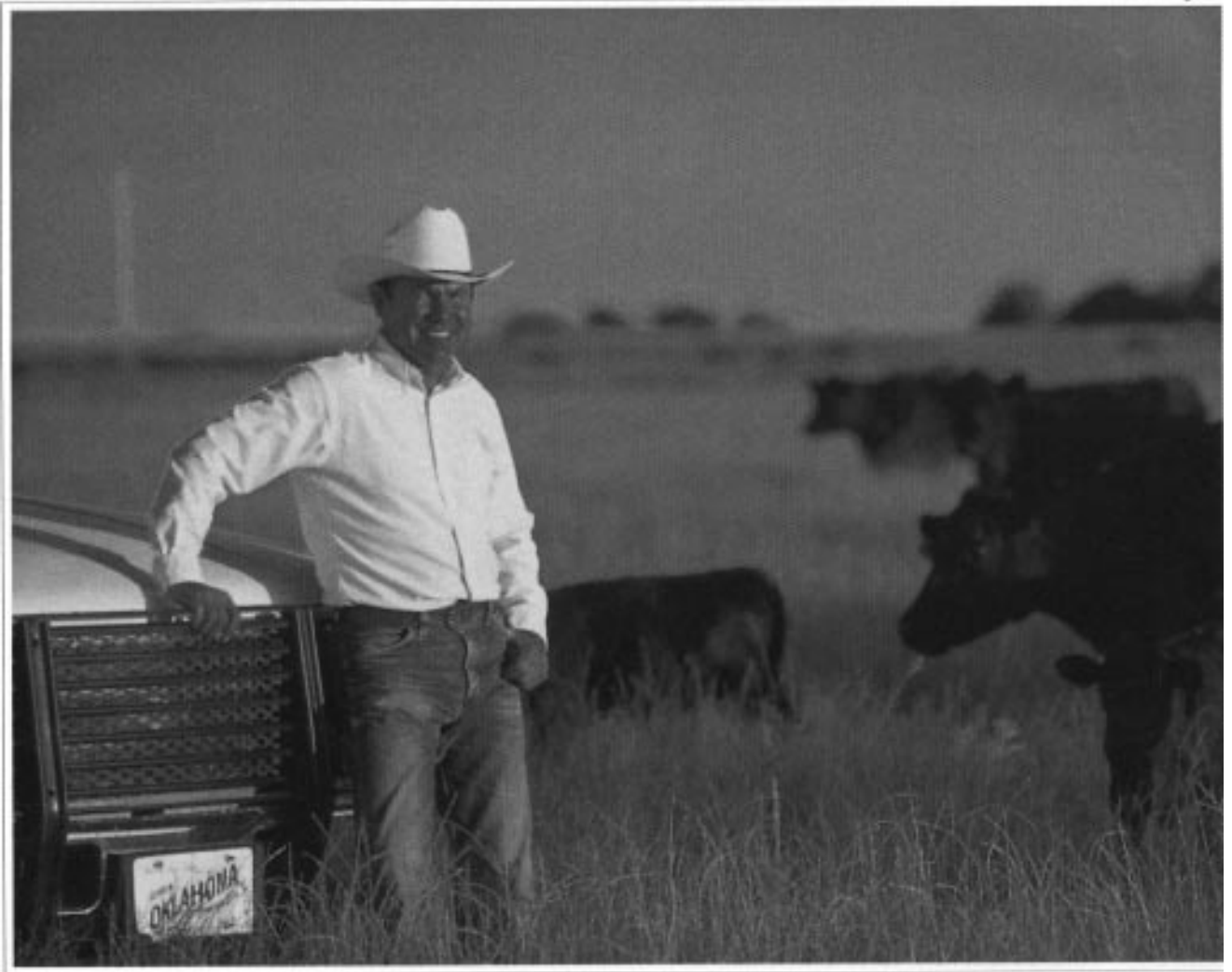
God, his family, and the land, and it shows.

"We could give our children all the money in the world, but it would do little good unless we give them the productive land and clean water on which to live," Bascum says.

**Nominator:
Kentucky Angus Association**



Stripcropping helps keep the soil in place at Smithland Farms.



In Oklahoma there is farming, and then there's Parker Farming. The latter is defined as farming without a tractor, or as Eddie Parker puts it, "put it into permanent grasses, rotate grazing units and let the cattle do the rest!"

Soil and water conservation has been practiced at Parker Ranch since it was established by Eddie and his wife, Karen, in 1976. Formerly tilled fields have been put in permanent forage or converted to minimum tillage crops. Now growing on this 630-acre ranch, with an additional 1,300 acres of leased land, are a variety of productive grasses and legumes, including Jose tall wheatgrass, big and little bluestems, switchgrass, Indiangrass, buffalograss,

CENTRAL REGION

EDDIE PARKER

Parker Ranch, Waurika, Okla.



grammagrass, and Bermudagrass.

Over the past seven years, the Parker Ranch has hosted many educational range and forage tours with Eddie acting as host and teacher. He always demonstrates how environment friendly ranch and pasture management practices can be economically advantageous.

Conservation and future implications of farming and beef production practices are high priorities for the Parkers. Eddie has served on the Jefferson County Environmental Protection Association board of directors and is a past president of the Jefferson County Livestock Association. Currently, he serves as vice president of the Oklahoma Angus Association.

In the early start-up years (1976 to 1984) of the ranch, Parker set stocked all the pastures and used conventional farming practices on all the cropland.

That all changed when, in 1984, he had the opportunity to attend Stan Parson's "Ranching for Profit" school in Albuquerque, N.M., which teaches ranchers about holistic resource management. He returned to Oklahoma with a whole different approach to ranching.

Parker soon built a rotational grazing paddock cell, utilizing both his crop and pastureland. He also put several hundred acres of cropland back into permanent warm-season pastures and overseeded these with cool-season annuals to produce almost year-round grazing.

The remaining acres of cropland are minimum-tilled or no-tilled to cool-season re-seeding annuals, Marshall ryegrass and Arrowleaf clover. This provides high quality winter pasture for weaned calves, yearling bulls and heifers, and fall calving pairs.

All gullies on the Parker Ranch have been shaped and re-seeded to permanent vegetative cover to stop soil erosion. Several reservoirs have been constructed to provide stock water control erosion and provide fishing and hunting.

The wise use of conservation practices and controlled grazing have dramatically reduced farming input costs at Parker Ranch. Compared to his management in the early 1980s, Parker has reduced insecticide spray 100 percent, herbicide spraying 95 percent, and commercial fertilizer applications 60 to 70 percent. This is accomplished while simultaneously increasing beef and forage production and carrying



Eddie Parker considers himself a grass manager first.

capacity of the land.

Parker has worked with the Soil Conservation Service over the years on many conservation projects and has established a good working relationship with agency personnel. Even during times when cost-share funds were not available, he did not let that stop him from proceeding with an important conservation project. He has found that nearly all sound conservation projects are economically feasible, even if you have to pay 100 percent of the cost.

"Many people say that environmentally sound management practices and good land stewardship are not compatible with maximum economic returns." Parker says. "I've found the exact opposite to be true. Those

people who abuse and rape the land may reap a very short-term gain, but they have sown the seeds of financial ruin. What my dad told me as a child has proven to be true . . . "if you take care of the land, it will take care of you."

"To acquire a piece of land that has been abused or neglected and to be able to improve it and make it productive again gives me a great feeling of accomplishment," he says.

Nominator:
Oklahoma Angus Association



Daughter Rosalyn Parker finds the fishing fine at one of the Parker Ranch, bass-stocked ponds.



WEST REGION

ALLEN & PATSY GRIMES

Echo Valley Ranch, Scranton, N. D.



Echo Valley Ranch was homesteaded in 1908 by Allen's grandparents. He and his wife, Patsy, took over the operation of the ranch in 1960 and have been making substantial improvements ever since.

The Grimes are very aware how their farming and ranching practices affect the environment and they try to incorporate conservation practices whenever possible.

The ranch, which consists of 3,500 acres of gently rolling hills, produces wheat, oats, barley, alfalfa and hay on varying soils from sandy to clay loam. Strip farming practices conserve their soil and adds to crop production.

The Grimes raise registered Angus cows and manage a 200-head commercial Angus/Charolais crossbred herd. They also raise hogs and Quarter Horses.

These conservation-minded ranchers are involved in the Bowman-Haley Dam Watershed project, a project started to help reduce water pollution. Under their watershed contract, they have put erodible farmland back into native grass, installed water pipelines and tanks, and built cross-fencing to create smaller pastures for rotational grazing. Over the years, many dugouts, dams and wells have been built on the ranch to improve water access.

Shelterbelt tree plantings have been planted around the ranch house, buildings and barns. These are a great help in reducing wind and other effects of winter weather during the calving season. They also serve as good wildlife habitat protection.

Back in 1976 Allen tried something new he had heard about-tall wheatgrass barriers. These are narrow strips of grass planted across

the fields at five-rod intervals. The wheatgrass reaches a height of 2 to 3 feet. They are effective as wind protection and are useful in catching snow during the winter, which helps retain soil moisture.

These grass strips also appeal to wildlife. Cattle can graze the fields during the fall and won't do any damage to the wheatgrass strips, as it gets unpalatable and they don't like to graze it.

Echo Valley Ranch straddles the North and South Dakota borders — with some acreage in Harding County, S.D., and some in Bowman County, N.D. As a result, the Grimes are involved with two separate conservation offices. Each year both offices conduct a tour of local ranches to see new practices and innovations. The Grimes Family regularly attends these tours and have hosted several over the years.

These extra conservation and educational efforts were recognized in 1987 when the Grimes Family earned the top Conservation Award from the Harding County SCS.

In 1991 the Grimes Family became involved in hosting young adults on their ranch through the Communicating for Agriculture Exchange Program. This program allows the student to live and work with a ranch or farm family from three to 18 months. The Grimes have had youth from Australia, Sweden and Denmark stay with them and learn the ways of American agriculture. Their daughter, Allisen, also had the opportunity to be an exchange student in Australia during 1989-90. In return, they've learned a lot about agricultural and conservation practices of other countries.

Allen and Patsy Grimes have a positive outlook for



Echo Valley Ranch has built many dugouts and dams to improve water access and prevent erosion on its rolling hills.



Tall wheatgrass strips in crop fields prevent wind erosion and make good wildlife habitat and feed.

agriculture and for their family's future on their Dakota ranch. They are dedicated to the conservation cause, to the land and to their way of life.

Nominator:
Kent Belland
Bowman Co. N. D.
Conservationist

Sitz Family Improves Water and Wildlife on Montana Ranch

Protection of wildlife is a high priority at Sitz Angus Ranch, Harrison, Mont. The Sitz Family's efforts to improve wildlife and fish habitat, along with rangeland and water quality, on their ranch helped them earn the National Cattlemen's Association (NCA) Environmental Stewardship Award for the northwest region.

Good environmental practices are part of good management in the cattle business. The Sitz Family and six other regional winners of NCA's 5th annual Environmental Stewardship Awards have shown that good care of natural resources pays off in improved farm and ranch productivity as well as in benefits to the environment. The Sitz Family was an *Angus Journal* Land Stewardship Award winner in 1991.

Working with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks, the Sitzes improved an important trout-spawning area. They have introduced pheasants and improved habitats for eagles, deer, elk, fox, bear, bluebirds, swans, sandhill crane, geese and other wildlife.

Protection of water quality also is a priority. They diverted a creek, which ran through a feedlot, back to its original course. Cattle now have limited access to certain stream areas, and the Sitzes have planted thousands of

trees and shrubs along stream banks.

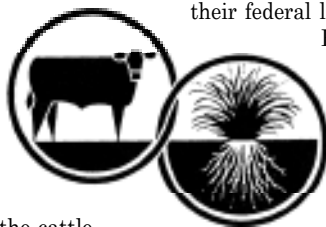
Grazing management steps have maintained and improved both federal and private rangeland. When Donna Sitz and her husband, Bob (who died in a tractor accident in 1989), moved to the ranch in 1969, there were minimal amounts of water on their federal lands lease.

Bob built a pumping system that pumped water to higher ground and helped spread cattle over the

vast rangeland.

"Whenever you distribute water over a larger area, you reduce the chances of overgrazing around stream banks and other areas," says Donna. "Increasing your grazing area also increases cattle weight gain."

"The Sitzes personify strong environmental stewardship," says NCA president Bob Drake, Davis, Okla. "With a few meager belongings, the family moved to Montana and took over a run-down ranch. They turned the ranch into a productive and profitable cattle business and a haven for wildlife."



Past Angus Journal Land Stewardship Awards

1990

George & June Crenshaw, Manhattan, Kan.
Earl McKarns, Kensington, Ohio
Russ & Mardy Schulz, Sheridan, Mont.
Carl Turner, Covington, Tenn.

1991

Richard Christy, Scott City, Kan.
Al Pedigo, Fountain Run, Ky.
* Lawrason Sayre, Churchville, Md.
* Donna Sitz & Family, Harrison, Mont.

1992

Tom Elliott, Grass Range, Mont.
* Bruce & Scott Foster, Niles, Mich.
W.B. Herrington, Mt. Calm, Texas
Ralph & Henis Veenema, Deposit, N.Y.

1993

William Ausley, Nokesville, Va.
Cecil Davis Sr., Marshfield, Mo.
Gregory Gould, Ulm, Mont.
Ken Johnson, Tompkinsville, Ky.

1994

J.D. Creighton, Paris, Texas
Pletcher Brothers Farms, Crooksville, Ohio
Jim & Polly Shipley, Stockton, Mo.
Martin Viersen, North Platte, Neb.

* Have also been recognized by NCA Environmental Stewardship Award program.

If you know an Angus producer who qualifies as a true steward of the land, please write us for a nomination form. Our 1996 Stewardship Award program deadline is June 1.

For more information on this program, contact:

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