

1997 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

For over 50 years, the Iowa Master Farm Masters program (IMFH) has recognized women who provide leadership in agricultural organizations.

While these women are outstanding volunteer activities, they feel a first priority to their families. An emphasis on education is always evident as these homemakers teach their children about responsibility, respect for human beings, animals and the environment, and honest and basic values.

To spotlight the exceptional contributions of Iowa Master Farm Homemakers, Wallaces Farmer, and the IMFH Guild is developing a pictorial display of Iowa farm women and farm life.

The IMFH Guild has received a grant award of \$14,098 from the Iowa Humanities Board, a state-based affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, in support of a project called "Bidding the Generations: The Lives and Contributions of Rural Iowa Women."

This project is an historical, educational display that will document through pictures and narrative rural women and rural life-past, present, and future. The traveling display will serve as a window to life on the farm from the early 1800s to the present, and will enable audiences to consider how the role of farm women has changed.

People who view this exhibit will learn about the struggles of pioneer families and the important roles Homemakers program (IMFH) has recognized women that women played in the settlement period. They will also gain an appreciation and understanding of rural culture and values. Farm women have been the historic carriers, through both words and actions, of the values that characterize rural culture.

The IMFH Guild hopes people who see the project will learn about historic contributions of early Iowa farm women and understand how rural Iowa women have always had a strong sense of civic responsibility and volunteerism. Take home booklets will provide additional information.

Wallaces Farmer and the IMFH Guild hope to introduce this exhibit next spring, in conjunction with a conference for farm women.

Ruth B. Sayre (1896-1980) was an Iowa Master Farm Homemaker and exemplified the qualities that are still important today. She once said, "Let out the seams of your thinking and develop an international mind in the interest of freedom and peace. Freedom first, then peace will follow."

Her challenge is as relevant today as it was 50 years ago.

Judy Anton - IMFH Class of 1997

Black Hawk County

Judy Anton has a special talent for making her guests feel right at home. From the moment you step into their spacious living room, Judy and her husband Larry, are offering friendly greetings, getting you a cool drink and inviting you to sign their guest book.

They've had lots of practice. Through the years, the Antons (pronounced an-tone) have hosted many international guests and farm tours for foreign visitors. Their lovely home has also been the site of family reunions, including an especially happy one this summer that brought families from all over the United States back to Iowa when their daughter, Nancy, was married.

Judy's affection for her family has led to several interesting customs. One charming practice is a visitor's guest book. Judy was given her first guest book when she and Larry were married 36 years ago. Through the years several books have been filled and now offer wonderful memories of people and events. "The guest book is a bit of history.

It's a nice reminder of our family, friends and foreign visitors who have stayed with us or toured the farm," says Judy.

She has also developed an interest in genealogy and is becoming her family's "archivist" of special occasions. Judy jots down daily happenings on the calendar and has kept every one since she and Larry were married. She has scrapbooks and albums of photos, newspaper clipping, announcements and other mementos of her family and their ancestors. For each of her children she keeps a folder that contains recent events as well as written history and photos of the past generations. Eventually, she'll give an album to each family. That's what I'm trying to keep for my kids," says Judy.

The Antons have a long tradition in northeast Iowa. Judy's family (Sickles) farmed near Janesville, about 30 miles from the Antons. The Anton family has farmed northwest of La Porte City since 1863. Larry and Judy first met at the Iowa State Fair as 4-Hers. The Antons are part of a family farm corporation with Larry's parents, Irving and Thelma Anton, and his brother Dane and his wife, Thelma Anton, and his brother Dave and his wife, Theresa. The Antons feed out 1,500 cattle annually and grow corn, soybeans and hay.

Larry and Judy have three children. Bryan and his wife, Lori, live in Windber, Pa., where Bryan is an instrumental music teacher. Paul and his wife, Shelly, and their daughter Monica, live in Fredericksburg, Iowa, where he is a banker. Newlywed Nancy is a high school English teacher in Ames, where she lives with her husband, Brice Jensen.

Judy's warmth as a hostess extends beyond her family to her church and community. She juggles helping on the farm as needed with family, church and community tasks. Judy is an active member of St. Paul United Methodist in La Porte City. She has held several UMW offices, locally and on the district level, and is currently church financial secretary.

The Antons have been involved with Farm Bureau for many years and have recently worked with the "Ag in the Classroom" program to educate others about beef.

Although Judy has held many offices at local, county and regional levels, her first priority was to her family. She served as 4-H leader, Cub Scout den mother, Sunday school teacher and homeroom mother for all her children.

Judy has always placed great value in education. She and Larry graduated from Iowa State University and their children are all university graduates. Her commitment to education prompted her to serve for several years as a trustee of the Northeast Iowa Regional Library Board. "All Iowans, especially those in rural areas, need convenient and free access to information. Well-supported local community libraries are the key to the free access to books and information," says Judy.

Anton's interest in traveling has led to many trips throughout the United States with their family and foreign guests. They have made several trips to Europe, Africa and a spring 1997 trip to Australia and New Zealand. They have hosted dozens of international acquaintances and their families, opening their home to anyone interested in learning about agriculture.

Larry's involvement with foreign farmers and others began in 1960 when he stayed with a French farm family as part of the International 4-H Youth Exchange (IFYE) program.

Judy balances her regularly busy schedule and extra company by simply including visitors in her activities.

"One busy weekend we had as guests Larry's IFYE host brother and his wife from France. They went with us to a wedding shower, choir party, family reunion and two graduation receptions. I was worried they would be bored, but they loved being a part of our 'normal' lives," laughs Judy.

Her wonderful ability to help people feel at ease by welcoming them to her home and community makes Judy Anton exceptionally qualified to be an Iowa farm ambassador.

Kathryn Burt - IMFH Class of 1997

Marshall County

Just north of Marshalltown is a farm family that contributes to agriculture, church, community and society in general. Kathryn Burt is chairman of Gov. Branstad's Commission on the Status of Women where she offers gentle but steadfast guidance. Her husband, Donald, an Iowa Master Farmer, is also very community-minded. Both are active in the Iowa Farm Bureau, serving in many leadership positions. Between the two, they donate their time and efforts in numerous ways.

Kathryn learned at an early age how to overcome difficulties. She was only 17 and the eldest of four children when her mother died unexpectedly. Much of the family responsibility fell on Kathryn's shoulders before she started college the following fall. She believes, however, the loss weighed heavier on the younger siblings, since they were still home. In addition, she had Don to lean on. They had known each other for years and were dating at the time of her mother's death. Four years later, her father married Rachel, a lady whom Kathryn admires very much.

This soft-spoken, articulate farm woman graduated from Iowa State Teachers College. Although she taught school for just one year, the experience left a lasting impression.

"There were 35 students in that sixth grade class," remembers Kathryn. "I had the school board president's daughter, the superintendent's son and a state senator's son!"

She evidently left her mark on the students as well. They recently invited Kathryn to their 35th class reunion.

Although Kathryn hasn't taught in a public classroom since that time, she continues to work in education. She has tutored illiterate adults, exchange students and other students who just needed a little help. One individual wrote a touching letter of how Kathryn helped her son during his formative years: "During the time of tutoring, Kathryn would never take anything for her help. She did it because she wanted to see a child grow up in the world with the skills necessary to become an intelligent, loving person."

Kathryn has also taught English as a second language to Laotian refugees. She was a 4-H leader and has given her time as a Sunday school teacher for many years.

Church is important to Kathryn. She has attended the Gladbrook Chapel United Methodist Church her entire life and appreciates that three of her four ' children and their families attend the same church.

Kathryn has held many leadership positions within the church, both locally and on the district level. Among other responsibilities, she helped organize and was the first chairman of, "Volunteers," a church group that cares for senior citizens and assists with church activities.

"I think so often how fortunate I am to have our family close by," says Kathryn. She enjoys seeing her grandchildren develop a Christian education and working with her children and their spouses during church functions.

Kathryn and Donald helped ensure their children would live in the area. Their son, Allen, came home after graduation from Iowa State University (ISU) in 1984 and joined the farming operation. He was interested in pork production, so the Burts expanded, pasture farrowing up to 600 sows. After the floods of 1993, they built a 600-sow farrow-to-finish confinement operation. Allen is married to Dee, who was responsible for the farm recordkeeping prior to Barbara's return. They have three children: Andrew, Matthew and Michael.

The Burt's youngest son, Darrel, graduated from ISU in 1989 and joined the family farm corporation. He is primarily responsible for the cattle operation and farming enterprise. He and his wife, Tammy, live on the farm where Don's father grew up. Their three children are Morgan and twins Logan and MacKenzie.

Daughter Barbara is also an integral part of the farm corporation as bookkeeper. She graduated from Central College and taught school for 15 years, including a teaching position in Japan, before returning to the farm. In the beginning, Kathryn did all the recordkeeping. She still oversees the farm reports. "The kids are 'go-getters.' They want to stay on the farm and we want to keep it in the family," says Kathryn.

Their daughter, Carol, lives in Des Moines. She is a graduate of Central College and serves as vice president for Investments and Trust Service at the Mercantile Bank.

Kathryn admits she has always had high expectations of her children, but she wanted them to strive for their best.

"I wanted them to learn responsibility. If they have a job to do, do it well," she says. "I wanted them to know we'd love them no matter what, and that this was, and is, a place they could come. I've always tried to be there for the kids."

The family legacy is proof that Kathryn Burt is effective in teaching these valuable lessons. She also sets a sterling example for her children to follow.

Mary Ann Drish - IMFH Class of 1997

Washington County

No task is too small, or too great, to keep Mary Ann Drish from rolling up her sleeves and going to work. She sums up a job, organizes the supplies and crew, then digs in to complete the project. Whether it's helping with field work, keeping the books or volunteering at church dinners, Mary Ann gets the job done right.

Mary Ann and her husband, Leonard, farm south Brighton, Iowa. Their 750-acre grain and livestock operation includes a 100-head cow herd. Mary Ann helps with the cattle and feed work, especially the cultivation each spring.

To supplement their farm income, Mary Ann and Leonard started Drish Construction in the late 1950s. The soil conservation business is now a family corporation that employs four of the Drishes' sons. The company consists of ag-related services such as ponds, terraces and tiling, as well as municipal work renovation sewage lagoons and water mains.

Mary Ann is bookkeeper and accountant for both the farm and soil conservation businesses. Through the years she has gained considerable knowledge about soil conservation practices and structures.

"Sheer necessity forced me to learn about soil conservation," laughs Mary Ann. "I'm the one who picks up the phone and has to answer all the questions."

A woman of modest words, her matter-of-fact style belies a deep commitment to helping others. When Mary Ann speaks, others listen. She is highly respected for her ability to identify the facts, and find fair, objective solutions.

"It's been a learning process for me," says Mary Ann, sharing part of her philosophy. "I try to listen to what people say and how they say it, then evaluate their concerns. To communicate well, you must present ideas in ways people understand."

The Drishes are members of the Land Improvement Contractors Association and Mary Ann served on the Land Use and Zoning Committee for Jefferson County. During the farm crisis, Mary Ann served on the county committee for the Farmers' Home Administration (then FMHA). For years she has attended and provided input at county and district USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service training sessions and meetings. For her effort on behalf of soil conservation, Gov. Branstad appointed Mary Ann to the State Soil Conservation Committee in 1992 and reappointed her in 1995 to a six-year term.

She has also received high marks from Jim Gulliford, director of the soil conservation division of the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship.

"Mary Ann came to the state committee with instant credibility, not only for her conservation beliefs, but also for her understanding of technical aspects. On policy issues, Mary Ann provides a practical, yet different, perspective that complements the other farmer members, and agency staff. When Mary Ann commits to an activity, it happens. She sets a remarkable example in work and deed," says Gulliford.

Mary Ann's family has always been her first priority. She and Leonard have eight children and now enjoy 19 grandchildren, all who live in Iowa. Their children: Dennis and his wife, Linda, of Brighton have four children: Debbie Swartzendruber and her husband, Dave, of Kalona have two children: Cyndi Redlinger, and her husband, John, of Washington have four children: Jeff and his wife, Sheila, of Brighton have three children: Phil and his wife, Tami, of Richland have two children: Janice Davidson and her husband, Bruce, of Des Moines have two children: Roger and his wife, Corrie, of Brighton have two children, and Ron of Brighton.

The Drishes are a close family, and not only because Dennis, Phil, Roger and Ron work in the construction business with their parents. They enjoy special occasions and holidays when they can gather at the Drishes' beautiful home overlooking timbered hills on their farm.

Mary Ann knows firsthand how greatly modern economics has changed the social fabric of rural communities. She has been an active member for 33 years of St. Joseph's Catholic Church in East Pleasant Plain, Iowa. She has served on the Parish Council, as secretary of Altar & Rosary, on several committees and as lector during services. She tries to help with most major church functions.

"With so many working outside the home these days, I always try to be available to help in the kitchen."

Her neighbor, Roberta Ledger, says Mary Ann is a rare gem. "At church we can count on her to help clean, guide us in the kitchen to feed 150 at a funeral dinner and

represent us on the council and lector, all with dignity. Mary Ann has deep, basic moral values and people truly respect her," says Ledger.

The trust that others place in Mary Ann is valid. Her love for family, community and the land is a sustaining force, part of the circle of life.

Beverly Schnepel - IMFH Class of 1997

Pottawattamie County

Upon meeting Beverly Schnepel, one would never know the path her life has taken. Like many homemakers, this energetic lady from Pottawattamie County is active in her church and community, plans frequent get-togethers with her grown children and grandchildren and volunteers her time to farm groups. But, unlike most, Beverly Schnepel owns and operates an 830-acre farm with her son, Doug.

Her decision to farm was not one she stopped to think about-it just had to be done. Her husband, Eldon, passed away in 1980 after a brief illness, and Beverly immediately took over the day-to-day operation of the farm, which at the time included 500 acres and 100 stock cows.

"Doug had just started college, but he came back to help run the farm," she explains. "Neighbors and friends helped a great deal during harvest the previous fall and planted everything the first year, but after that we were pretty much on our own. I wasn't ready to give up yet."

"I've done things I never thought I could," says Beverly. "We reduced the stock cows and expanded the crop operation. I combine, run the field cultivator with spraying equipment, plant and help make many of the management decisions.

"But Doug's the farmer-I'm the hired man," she quips. "Between family and farming, you don't have a lot of time to feel sorry for yourself."

This efficient farm woman has earned the respect of her peers. She became involved in Farm Bureau Women over 15 years ago. In every position and for every responsibility, Beverly can be counted on to follow through. She has gained support and confidence from others, as she became county chairman, then district chairman. She presently serves as state chairman of the Iowa Farm Bureau Women.

"Bev keeps herself well-informed on the serious issues facing agriculture and communicates them well to the public," writes Michael Gutttau, president and chairman of the Treynor State Bank in a letter of support. "She understands the livestock business and the crop operations to a degree that she can feel comfortable around the farmstead as she does in her own kitchen."

That neatly sums up this efficient farm woman's style--she adapts well to nearly any environment. She enjoys gardening, needlework and spending time with her grandchildren. Although she decorates cakes just for family members now, she had a cake decorating business for more than 25 years.

Beverly was Sunday school superintendent at the Zion Church in Treynor for 13 years and remains active in various leadership roles within the church.

When her children were in school, Beverly was supportive of their many activities, including 4-H, football, wrestling, band, cheerleading, and choir.

"I served as a room mother and got an education right along with my kids," she jokes. Family is an important priority to Beverly and she feels fortunate to have most of her children and grandchildren close by. She has four grown children: Dan is married to Jeri

and their children are Julie, Jill, Jon and Jeffrey: Karen has an adopted daughter, Megan: Sharon is married to Bill Wilson and their children are Brian, Shannon, Laura and Greg: and Doug is her youngest son.

When Karen decided to adopt a baby from China, Beverly supported her all the way. She even made the trip to China with Karen to bring her new granddaughter home.

Barbara Lykins with Iowa Farm Bureau had many words of praise for Beverly. She sums up: "Beverly is always ready with a helping hand and a great idea...I'm sure those in her community, church and other local activities find her to be a very willing participant when the call goes out for volunteers!"

"You owe a little volunteerism to your community, and I take that seriously," responds Beverly with conviction. She follows through on her convictions with dedicated action, to the benefit of others.