

## 2001 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

As Eileen Blom and I walked across the pasture to shoot photos, she asked her husband, Lyle, to check out the bleating of a ewe in the nearby barn. We soon learned a mother-to-be needed some assistance with the birth. Eileen swung into action and quickly had the lamb delivered.

Just another day on the farm for this busy homemaker. Eileen is one of four Iowa farm women being honored this month by Wal/aces Farmer as Iowa Master Farm Homemakers. We've been honoring farm women for their unselfish dedication to the farm, family, church and community since 1947.

Eileen and the three other women being honored are examples of the quintessential farm homemaker.

Eileen and Lyle manage around 800 acres of row crops in southeast Iowa. Besides helping Lyle, Eileen started her own sheep flock many years ago when the children were young. She still keeps a flock of around 45 head.

In off-farm activities, this lady with the contagious smile is active on the local school board, helps plan and host wedding receptions at her church, does touch-up work for a local photographer, creates dried flower arrangements, cares for a large garden and spends time with her grandchildren.

Becky DeTar wasn't raised on a farm but quickly learned the ropes when she married Vernon and moved to the family farm 1964. A typical spring day for her now might involve running to town for supplies, running them to the field, then back home to check on the livestock or mow the yard and back to the field with lunch.

Even with all these farm duties, she still finds time to help others. She's been a spark plug in helping organize the Monroe County Hospice program since 1991. She and Vernon are active in their church and each week Becky delivers audio tapes of the service to members who are ill or unable to get out.

Eleanore Lewis never dreamed of being a farmer's wife either. But after marrying Robert she became his "right-hand man." She's helped with everything except driving the planter and combine on their 600-acre farm.

But, like so many Iowa farm homemakers, what sets her apart is the amount of time she has devoted to helping others - substitute teaching, leading a 4-H club, teaching Sunday school or hosting foreign exchange students.

Marilyn Strothman has been dubbed the "professional volunteer." She and her husband, Frederic retired from active farming a couple years ago but they haven't slowed down. Most of Marilyn's time is devoted to her church-keeping financial records, maintaining correspondence and teaching Sunday school. She's also the one who opens and closes the church on Sundays.

Marilyn and Frederic are active snowmobilers and even use that activity to help others by raising money for the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa.

As you read more about these four women I think you will agree they are indeed Master Farm Homemakers.

-Frank Holdmeyer, Editor

Freshly canned jars of green beans stood shoulder to shoulder like little toy soldiers on the kitchen counter as Eileen Blom describes her life on the family farm.

With her infectious smile and bouncy personality it didn't take long to understand why one of the things that keeps Eileen busy is helping young couples plan and set up wedding receptions. Eileen makes all the arrangements as well as hosts the events at the Central United Methodist Church in Oskaloosa. She's been setting tables for wedding receptions for 12 years-hence the moniker "tablecloth lady."

Eileen and her husband, Lyle, manage around 800 acres of row crops near Oskaloosa in Mahaska County. Corn, beans, sheep and feeder cattle are the mainstays as the Bloms exited the hog business in 1994 and their cow-calf operation a few years later.

Eileen still cares for a 45-head commercial ewe flock she started for herself when the children were very young. With little or no experience, she learned as she went-improving genetics, feeding and nutrition practices, and recordkeeping, etc. To save trips to the barn at lambing time she installed an intercom system.

The sheep flock provided 4-H projects for the children. Many young farm girls and boys have looked up to Eileen in the years she served as a 4-H club leader and on the 4-H Executive Committee. Eileen has also been active in the county beef, sheep and pork organizations.

Gardening has always been a big part of her summer activities-canning countless fruits and vegetables. Now, with the family grown, she doesn't can quite as much.

"Most of the garden is taken up with flowers now," she says. But that's another passion as she enjoys growing a variety of plants, creating dried and fresh arrangements for gifts, shows, funerals and weddings.

Eileen puts her talents to work as well for locals . photographers retouching photographs. "I clean up the negatives," she says, "taking out blemishes, scratches, etc."

Grandchildren and the local school board absorb much of her time. Eileen is serving her second term as a member of the Oskaloosa Community School Board "As one of the only two rural representatives on our board, Eileen's College in Nevada, Mo.," she explains.

With all of this she still finds time to deer hunt in the fall.

"Eileen's soft-spoken gregarious manner and her willingness to listen to all the facts have made her a much sought-after committee member in numerous county organizations spanning multiple decades," writes her friend Betty Johnson. "She serves her community and church with a strong commitment to uphold and improve the status quo. Her can-do, selfless attitude speaks to the values she brings to each organization."

The Bloms have three children. Jack is an electrician in Ankeny and a firefighter in Des Moines. Jay and his wife, Michelle, live near his parents with their 3-year-old daughter, Sandra. Janelle and her husband, Reggie Randau, also live nearby with their children Zacary, 4, and Alexis, 2. Jay and Reggie both work at Vermeer Mfg. in Pella.

Becky DeTar once said she wished there had been track for girls when she was in high school, because she liked to run. She may not have participated in high school track, but running of a different nature is a daily event for this busy farm homemaker.

A typical spring morning might find Becky running to town for seed, fertilizer or other supplies, then running it to the field, then back home to check on the livestock or mow the yard, and back to the field again with lunch. In early spring she's often out in the show helping deliver a baby calf or bottle feeding one that lost its mother.

Becky and Vernon DeTar believe it's important to work together and back each other up. Both in the management of their 850-acre grain and livestock farm and the raising of three sons, togetherness has been a must.

Becky was not raised on a farm, but quickly learned the ropes when Vernon's folks moved to a new home in 1964, and Vernon and Becky moved to the family farm.

"We had 250 ewes to start lambing in February and our oldest son was just 4 months old. All I did was fix bottles," she laughs, "either for the lambs or for our son. We had lambs in the kitchen, in the basement, and in an old chicken house. We had lambs everywhere."

While they no longer have a sheep flock, livestock care has remained a part of Becky's daily routine over the years. She had a hands-on role in their hog operation until they retired from the hog business two years ago. Becky continues to help with the 17-head cow-calf herd, and cattle finishing operation.

Even with her many farm duties, Becky finds time to help others. She's been a spark plug in organizing the Monroe County Hospice program since 1991, serving as volunteer coordinator for five years.

"Her 'caring and sharing' personality has taken her from changing bed sheets and holding a patient's hand, to setting up hospice classes for volunteers," says Doris Conger, hospice volunteer coordinator. Becky considers her work with hospice a personal mission and an honor to her mother, who died of cancer shortly before the Monroe County program began.

The DeTars are active members of Trinity United Methodist Church in Albia. Each week, Becky delivers audio cassettes of the previous Sunday worship service to church members who are ill or unable to get out. "Becky is very compassionate and caring," says Tom Kaldenberg, who teaches the Adult Sunday School Class. "She is very much in tune with people's needs, and is willing to take action to help meet those needs."

During the summers of 1978 and '79, the DeTars were hosts to brothers from France-Pierre (Peter) and Christophe Bachy. "The experience was delightful and educational," Becky says. "We continue to keep in touch with the family."

Vernon and Becky are parents of three sons and have eight grandchildren.

Their oldest son, Steven, and wife Niola, live in Longmont, Colo., with their two daughters, Erin and Susan.

Son Scott and wife Brenda live in Kelly, Iowa. Their three sons are Peter, David and Joshua.

Youngest son Stacy and his wife, Vicki, live near Albia and have Deven, Colton and Elizabeth.

"I was glad when we had three sons that we had a farm to raise them on," says Becky. "I don't think you could have a better place."

Eleanor Lewis - IMFH Class of 2001

Woodbury County

Whether it be substitute teaching, serving as a 4-H leader, teaching Sunday school, co-chairing the church turkey supper, hosting foreign exchange students or assisting her husband on the farm, Eleanore Lewis is devoted to helping others. She has spent her life giving back to the community with her many God-given gifts.

Growing up on a farm near Akron, Eleanore never dreamed of being a farmer's wife.

"When I was home, I was always afraid of the livestock and of gathering eggs," she says. But after marrying Robert and moving close to Correctionville, she's become his "right-hand-man."

Robert says she was a better tractor operator than many of the kids who helped on the farm. "I enjoyed driving the tractor more than doing paperwork," Eleanore adds.

She's helped Robert with everything except driving the planter and combine on their 600-acre farm. She's also helped with their flock of 500 Suffolk sheep and a 1,500 purebred Duroc and Hampshire business they once managed.

The couple currently rents out 300 acres and still has their own hay ground, oats, and 20 acres of com for livestock on their farm in Woodbury County.

Church involvement has always been rooted in Eleanore's life. She is co-chair for the turkey supper that feeds over 700 people each year at the United Methodist Church in Anthon. She is the circle chairwoman of the United Methodist women. Eleanore also has taught the preschool Sunday school class.

Eleanore has always had a love for children. She met Robert while teaching at Anthon Public Elementary. After taking time off for her family, she taught at Eastwood Community Schools for 13 years and for the past 25 years has been substituting at Anthon-Oto Elementary teaching kindergarten to eighth grades.

She has an interest in genealogy and has traced back lines that have connected her husband to Meriwether Lewis, of the Lewis and Clark expeditions.

She has also been writing a book for her grandchildren highlighting many of her childhood memories. Her elementary school students always enjoyed hearing her remembrances.

"She was our Grandma Dotting, always sharing stories with the kids," says Ann Bass, principal of Anthon-Oto Elementary. "She was a wonderful sub who would spend an extra hour after school correcting papers so they would be done for the regular teacher when they returned."

For the past 27 years, she has led the Anthon Advancers 4-H club, of which her children were all members. This past year she was presented with a No. 1 4-H leader award and plaque for her dedication to the country and the club at their awards banquet.

She is a worthy matron of the Order of the Easter Star, Thonna Chapter in Anthon and served as secretary for 20 years.

Eleanore and Robert have two sons and a daughter, Robert, Christi and Tracy. All three of their children are graduates of Iowa State University.

Robert has a farm management degree. His wife, Chris, is an individual and marital family therapist in Des Moines. They have one child, John, who is in the second grade.

Christi is a home economics major, married to Jeff Patterson, an agriculture banker. They live in Paulina, Iowa, and have four boys-Christopher, Justin, James, and Daniel. Tracy is the youngest son and is employed in the human resources department at the Principal Financial Group in Des Moines.

### Marilyn Strothman - IMFH Class of 2001

#### Henry County

My main job over the years has been to keep one automobile roadworthy so Marilyn could get to her meetings," chuckles Fredric Strothman as he settles back in his easy chair. He's referring to the many volunteer activities Marilyn has been involved in over the years.

Until they retired two years ago, the Strothmans raised corn, soybeans, hay, hogs and managed a Polled Hereford cow-calf operation near New London in Henry County. During that time Marilyn was the official "gofer," maintained the books, kept an attentive eye on the hog confinement building and raised three children. She has always loved to cook and helped edit a church cookbook.

Marilyn, a 4-H leader for 10 years, helped her own children as well as her grandchildren with their 4-H projects. Fredric describes Marilyn as a "professional volunteer."

"If you want something done at church, just call Marilyn." Carol Messer, also an Iowa Master Farm Homemaker says, "Our small rural church depends on her for so much. Not only does she keep the secretary-treasurer records and church correspondence for the Yarmouth Community Church of Christ, but she stays and teaches Sunday school after the rest of us leave.

"We remodeled an Old Methodist Church and have paid for everything with a food stand at the fair and church suppers. Marilyn has chaired many of these events and worked so hard, often being the first one there and the last one to go home."

Marilyn, who has taught Sunday school for more than 40 years, adds jokingly, "Yes, I'm usually the one who opens and closes the church."

Both Marilyn and Fredric are active in the Republican Party and serve on the precinct committee in the New London Township. Marilyn served as county secretary for 12 years and has been a district and state convention delegate.

Snowmobiling has been a favorite activity for the Strothman family and Frederic and Marilyn are leaders of the Southeast Iowa Ridge Blasters Snowmobile Club that takes on worthwhile projects.

The group has raised \$1,000 for the Spina Bifida Association of Iowa. Because of these and additional efforts to help others, the Strothmans were honored as the 1999-2000 Iowa Snowmobile Family of the Year by the Iowa State Snowmobile Association. Three generations of the Strothman family traveled to Nashua, N.H., to receive the USA Family of the Year award from the American Council of Snowmobile Association.

Fredric graduated from and Marilyn attended Iowa Wesleyan College. Marilyn has been involved with the Pi Beta Phi sorority since 1956. She has served on the House Corp. (responsible for taking care of the house owned by the sorority) for 25 years.

Marilyn is presently secretary for the Southeast Iowa Church and Ministry Committee for United Church of Christ. She is an enthusiastic member of Christian Women Fellowship and has been active in the Good Times Club-a neighborhood club-for more than 40 years.

The Strothmans have three children. Debra, a senior technical advisor Wausau Financial, is married to Mervin Grant and lives in Glen Allen, Va.

Susan, a vice president of Fleet Securities, is married to Todd Eiken and lives in Port Washington, N.Y.

Scott, a semitrailer driver, farmer and heavy equipment operator and his wife, Sue, live near New London, Iowa, with their two children, Corey 16, and Amy, 14.