

2002 Iowa Master Farm Homemakers Guild Inductees

Farm women have always been considered the foundation of the farm family. In addition to being an equal partner in the farming operation, they have to juggle household chores, family activities, church, school and other community service. That's why the Iowa Master Farm Homemaker Award was established in 1928-to call attention to those women who devote themselves unselfishly to these activities and more.

As you'll see when you read about the 2002 winners, the ideals and values of the Master Farm Homemakers have remained constant. Farm, family, faith and service are common threads.

For example, Mary Ann Bock's life can be summed up in one word: family. She and husband Ralph have raised 11 children on their farm near Glidden. But that didn't prevent her from giving to her community. She was a 4-H leader for over 25 years, active in Church, booster club, etc.

Even being hurt by a cow laid up for almost two months in the hospital didn't dampen Jeanne Hansen's positive attitude toward her family's dairy farm near Hudson. That's significant since she grew up in town. Besides a demanding schedule on the farm, she is active in dairy promotion, church, Farm Bureau, etc.

As an active farming partner with her husband Bob, Leah Maass of Ellsworth gets the ground ready for him to plant in spring and she harvests corn in the fall. She has a part-time off-farm job and yet is active in Farm Bureau and other groups.

Besides farm and family, Lile Petersen, Harlan, has held numerous leadership positions in her church, volunteers at the local hospital and been active in the Shelby County Pork Producers and Porkettes.

This Year's class brings the total to 296 women who have received the Master Farm Homemaker honor.

Mary Ann Bock - IMFH Class of 2002

Carroll County

Mary Ann Bock's life can be summed up with a word: Family. She's devoted her efforts to providing life experiences for the 11 children she and her husband, Ralph, have raised on their Glidden farm in Carroll County, Iowa. In the process, many other people have benefited from the generous creative qualities of this competent woman.

One might think that just the care and nurturing of such a large family would fully occupy a mother's time, but that is not the case with Mary Ann. She was a 4-H leader for over 25 years and remains very active in the Annunciation Church and Ladies Guild in Coon Rapids. She was, and still is, involved in the Glidden Ralston Booster Club, and helps with an oral reading assessment in the elementary school.

In her "spare time," Mary Ann enjoys quilting and judging in numerous project areas at county and state fairs. She will lend her services at 10 county fairs this year.

Most of all, Mary Ann and Ralph continue the loving relationship they've shared with each other and their family for so many years. Mary Ann's mother lived with the family for 13 years, and the Bocks consider that extended family relationship a blessing. "My mother baked all the bread-we never had to buy any," she remembers. "And she made rolls every weekend."

Now, it's Ralph, Mary Ann's husband of 52 years, who makes the chocolate chip cookies and grandkids clamor for when they drop by.

Mary Ann has had more than her share of cooking and baking over the years, but she enjoyed it at the same time, and still does. She often bakes goodies for neighbors and shut-ins.

The entire family tries to get together every Easter and Christmas, no small feat with all the married children, spouses, 28 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren! But it's when the family gathers that Mary Ann is the happiest.

She feels it's more of a challenge to raise children today than it was when her own family was young. "Kids are exposed to a lot more now than they used to be," she says. She suggests present-day parents try to keep their kids busy, and "know where your kids are and who they're with," she adds.

"Mary Ann is a role model for rural family farm values," says Dennis Molitor, Carroll County extension director. "She provided a loving, caring, family-centered environment at home. All of the Bock children grew up with a strong work ethic and their character is beyond reproach."

The Bock grandchildren feel their grandma is the very best. Ten-year-old granddaughter, Jaycie, writes: "If you meet her, you never forget her because she puts so much joy in your heart. She also makes the best spaghetti ever!"

Leah Maass - IMFH Class of 2002

Hamilton County

Spend a little time with Leah and Bob Maass and their four children and you come away feeling they're the kind of family you want living nearby. Neighbors and extended family are recipients of their generosity.

Friendly, thoughtful and down to earth, this clan is a bit eclectic. They're busy, have a variety of interests, yet take time to enjoy each other. Leah has a ready smile. "Thanks for visiting with my family," she said to me when I came to take her photo. "My life is about blessings and my children are what I am most thankful for."

Farming 1,100 acres near Ellsworth in north-central Iowa, Leah and Bob live in Leah's maternal grandparents' home that is somewhat of a museum. Books, photos, letters and heirlooms passed down from earlier generations of the family are cherished.

"I grew up near Webster City on the farm my great-great-grandfather first settled," explains Leah. "My grandfather wrote a book describing what the land was like and what they had to do to make it productive. Generations since have made a living on that land."

Leah is very interested in soil conservation and natural resource issues. She's an lowater volunteer and helps in the Southfork and Briggs-Wood watershed projects. Her grandpa's writings show how much farming has changed and the need to take care of our land and water. "Farming is always evolving," she says. "Nature doesn't sit still."

Neither does Leah. An active farming partner with her husband, Leah gets the ground ready for Bob to plant in spring. In fall, she harvests corn and he combines beans. "Bob doesn't want me picking up rocks with the bean head," she laughs. "I won't drive the semi truck. But I do haul with a tractor and wagons. They have names. I haul beans with Jean and Joan Triggysy."

One benefit of working in the field is she can collect rocks for her rock garden. "The ones

I can't pick up, I flag. My husband retrieves them for me, " she says. "I like gardening, and landscaping our yard. That's my therapy."

Leah has a part-time job with Iowa Crop Improvement Association, inspecting seed-com fields for certification in summer. She certifies soybean fields in the fall.

As president of Hamilton County Farm Bureau, Leah participates in many Farm Bureau activities. A couple of her favorites are the Ag Leaders Institute and the Ag In The Classroom. She has visited many schools and classrooms, telling the story of where food comes from and the importance of family farms.

"There are so few children living on farms anymore," she says. "Not just one generation away, but several. It's important for kids to understand what farmers are doing to produce food and to protect the environment. Kids need to learn the importance of agriculture and get the facts on the issues. They will be the voters someday."

Leah works part-time as a librarian in Ellsworth and substitute teaches, mostly middle school. Leah was a stay-at-home mom when her children were young. She went back to Iowa State University to finish her degree in ag education when her children were in junior high. This proved to be a good example as three of the four are now in college or have graduated. Oldest daughter Emily is in the National Guard, recently returned from a year in Korea and is enrolled in the nursing program at Iowa Central Community College. Daughter Amanda recently graduated from University of Iowa with a journalism degree. Daughter Jenny attended Iowa Central. Son Rob attends Des Moines Area Community College.

Leah has always encouraged the children to be who they want to be, says Bob. "As they've gotten older, the children have come to greatly appreciate all of the things their mother has accomplished, including the amazing feat of raising them."

Jeanne hansen - IMFH Class of 2002

Black Hawk County

Jeanne Hansen has always been tremendously involved with the family dairy business. Even being hurt by a cow and laid up for almost two months in the hospital did not dampen her positive attitude toward the dairy farm.

That's significant since Jeanne grew up in Ames. When Jeanne and Jay purchased their first 40-acre farm in Charles City, Jeanne, despite her city girl roots, dug right in raising vegetables to be sold at market. She continued a large garden until 1993.

Jay and Jeanne returned to the family dairy owned by Jay's father and mother, Jack and Lorraine, in 1975. Her first years on the farm near Hudson in Black Hawk County were filled with learning the skills of milking, feeding and calf raising-all of which she still does today. She also manages the farm financial accounts and cow records.

Today the Hansens maintain a milking herd of 150 registered Holsteins. The farm is in expansion mode. Two sons, Blair and Blake, left for a while after graduation from college, but have come back home to farm. They join oldest son Brent who runs a lucrative hoof trimming business in addition to participating in the family farm.

The Hansens are considering adding value to their dairy operation through bottling of milk and the possibility of opening a retail store to sell milk, cheese and ice cream products.

Even with the demanding schedule of a dairy farm, Jay and Jeanne still find time for recreation. The family's favorite pastime is racquetball. In fact, that's how Jay and Jeanne met. Jay participated in racquetball in college and Jeanne worked in the intramural office. Their love for the sport was passed on to their children and many

others as well. Jay and Jeanne started the Iowa Junior Racquetball Association. Racquetball took them to tournaments all over the United States. "That was our time away from the farm," notes Jeanne.

Daughter Lynn was a world champion and Blake and Blair won national doubles competition at age 10. Three of the four boys still play competitively.

"We taught the kids that you can work hard on a dairy farm and still have good times," points out Jeanne.

Dairy promotion has always been and continues to be a big part of Jeanne's life. She has been a member of the Iowa Holstein Association since 1975. She has always been involved in organizing promotions in grocery stores, creating parade floats, etc. She has been promoting dairy products at the local farmers market since 1995.

The Hansens' involvement in the Hudson Community School district, even though their children have graduated, shows they value the future of education. Jeanne volunteers at school serving holiday lunches, giving farm tours and assisting the FFA with annual cheese sales. She handles the Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom program as well.

Jeanne has been exceptionally active in the Hudson Community Church since 1975 in a wide array of activities, including every aspect of the children and youth programs, as children's choir director, Sunday School superintendent, etc.

Jeanne has always been a strong supporter of the Black Hawk County 4-H program. Four of her children have been nine-year 4-H members. She was a co-leader of the Black Hawk Stars 4-H Club from 1988-1999.

The Hansen children - the eighth generation on this family farm - include: Brent and his wife Amy, and their daughter, Sadie; Brad and his wife, Tricia, and their daughter, Morgan; Blair and his wife Suzi; Blake and Lynn.

Lile Petersen - IMFH Class of 2002

Shelby County

It's a well-known fact: If you want something done, call on a busy person. In the Shelby County area, one of those people is Lile Petersen.

Lile (pronounced "Lilly") Petersen of Harlan likes to stay busy. She and husband Richard ("Pete") have four grown children and nine grandchildren, and their schedule has not diminished over the years. Both are busy with community responsibilities.

Lile has been involved with Camp Aldersgate, a camp for mentally and/or physically challenged adults, for the past 25 years. The camp is a program sponsored through Petersen's church, Kirkman United Methodist.

"Lile always has a smile on her face for campers and staff," writes Sheila Goeltz, who worked with Lile at the camps. "She views the campers as fellow Christians who come to camp to worship, learn and enjoy each other. She is an exceptionally caring person."

Other local groups are blessed with Lile's involvement. Every Tuesday evening, you'll find her leading a Weight Watchers meeting. "We usually have around 40 people come to the meetings," she says. Lile develops the lesson and monitors members' progress. This is something she's done for four years.

Personally, Lile has lost a total of 40 pounds since 1998, and feels great: "My blood pressure and cholesterol are down, and I no longer need some of the medicine I was taking before," she reports.

Lile also has served as a leader and day camp director for Girl Scouts, totaling 30 years. She was a 4-H leader when her children were members. Now, she stays busy following her grandchildren's activities. The week before this interview, some of Lile's grandchildren were diligently making baked goods at Grandma's house to take to the county fair. Their efforts were rewarded with blue ribbons.

She obviously heeds the advice she would give to young parents: "Be a leader in a lot of the activities in which your children are involved. Keep the communication lines open," she continues. "It's harder now because so many young parents work, but our children were our life."

Beyond family gatherings, the Petersens give far more to their community. They have been active in the Shelby County Pork Producers and Porkettes. Both have held numerous leadership positions in their church and help with the Relay for Life. Additionally, Lile volunteers at the Myrtue Memorial Hospital, assisting in many different capacities.

"Lile is one of the most talented and creative people I have ever known," says Naomi Christensen, chairperson of the Mills County board of supervisors. "Her kindness and thoughtfulness encourage people of all ages. The world is not only a better place, it is a warmer and friendlier place because of Lile."