

Smouse ranch highlighted in soil conservation tour

Farming the dryland wheat country north of Ione has changed considerably during Ken Smouse's 50-odd year association with the area.

In the 1920s, Smouse remembers that it often took all winter through May to finish plowing his father's wheatland with teams and four-foot plows, to prepare for a crop that was considered successful if it yielded 15 bushels an acre. Today, he plows his fallow ground into 1,000-foot wide strips with a diesel-pulled 30-foot chisel plow, and has experienced yields as high as 56 bushels an acre, after a two-year fallow.

It takes special skill and planning just to keep topsoil from blowing off the semi-arid cropland of the Ione area plains, where annual rainfall averages only nine inches. Through the years, Smouse has proved his mastery of these arts on his 1,800 acre spread. In recognition, he was recently named Morrow County's Soil Conservation Man of the Year.

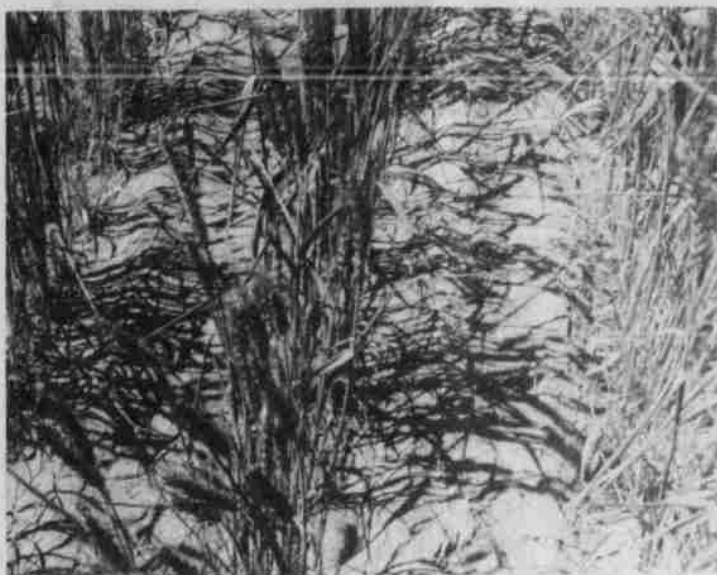
Smouse can recall the effect poor conservation practices had on the area's farmland in the 1930s. "A Standard Oil man was bringing out some gas along Baseline Road one time, and the dust got so bad he couldn't see," he said. "He got out of the truck to try to find his way, and he walked into a barbed wire gate. We went back to where his truck was supposed to be, and passed within a foot of it without seeing it."

During the Depression years, a number of area farmers were forced to move due to the poor economic climate, not helped in the least by local weather conditions that resembled the Oklahoma Dust Bowl. A number of area farmers who managed to stay with their land successfully lobbied the State Legislature for laws that would establish a wind erosion district, to allow conservation work to be performed on drought-stricken farms owned by absentee landlords. Both Smouse and his father have served on the wind erosion district board that was created in the effort.

Smouse left the family farm to attend Oregon State, where he studied engineering, then went on to work several years for the U.S. Department of the Interior.

After his father died in the early 1940s, Smouse returned to manage the family farm, where he has remained since.

A number of years back, the government was willing to subsidize farmers who laid out their grain land in strips of alternating fallow and crop land. Smouse thought it was a good conservation idea, "but I didn't like the requirement



Ken Smouse, Morrow County's soil conservation Man of the Year, stands knee-deep in wheat on his 1,800 acre dryland operation north of Ione in photo at left. Center photo shows wheat furrows growing on former "no-till" fallow land at test strip on Pat Cutsforth farm. At right, County Extension Agent Harold Kerr shows wheat plant affected by foot rot disease to area farmers, including Smouse, holding camera. The farmers' tour was held in conjunction with a visit to the Smouse ranch, to honor the Ione area wheat grower for his Man of the Year status.

that they had to be 200 feet apart—that was too narrow." He opted instead to go on his own, and make the strips 1,000 feet wide, laid out in diagonal

Grain Growers chemically test his soil to determine which variety and how much fertilizer to use. "I generally do just what they recom-

"I try to keep as much stubble as possible on top of the ground"

lines, edgewise to the soil scattering prevailing southerly winds, also providing protection from occasional freezing northerlies.

He has continued the practice ever since. After each harvest, the cropland stubble is turned partially under with a chisel plow for fallow, and the fallow land is drilled with new wheat. The land must be alternated annually, to keep the nitrogen and moisture levels of the soil at productive levels.

Smouse, like most other area farmers, uses chisel plowing, rather than full-bottom plowing, to "try to keep as much stubble as possible on top of the ground," in order to prevent erosion through the stubble's mulching action.

Smouse's operation is believed to be the largest strip farm in Oregon. Similar wide-strip grain crops are currently being raised in Montana, he said.

The Smouse operation has never been irrigated. This year, he has planted mostly the McDermitt variety of dryland wheat, with some acreage devoted to spring wheat. In past years, he has raised some barley, but wheat has always been his bread and butter crop.

For the past 15 years or so, Smouse has had the Pendleton

mend," he said. Since undergoing open heart surgery a couple of years back, Smouse has been aided in his farming by Leo Crabtree. Crabtree termed Smouse's farm "an almost ideal one or two man operation."

Last Friday, Smouse was honored for his Man of the Year status by a visit from nearly three dozen area grain growers and agricultural specialists, who stopped to pay their respects and tour his farm.

The Man of the Year Award is given by the Oregon Wheat League and the Morrow County Soil and Water Conservation District.

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Here's why you should vote "yes" on the Pioneer Memorial Hospital levy Tuesday, June 27.

Today the increasing cost of hospital care and service concerns everyone—and most of all, we who provide the health care. Different groups propose different solutions...reduce facilities, beds and equipment. Broaden insurance benefits. Cut insurance benefits. Decrease federal controls. Regulate physicians. And the list goes on.

We believe however, that first, it's important to understand the problem.

First, simple inflation. Just like everything else, hospital supplies, services and staff cost more each year—everything from bedpans to biopsies.

Secondly, regulation. You won't find it itemized on your bill but one of the most substantial and most rapidly increasing costs of hospital care is "red tape". Eight federal regulations alone add \$22 to every hospital bill.

Third, demand. Here in Morrow County we

live in an uncrowded, unpolluted and consequently, sparsely populated area. Still we provide top quality hospital services and medical care. The small population, however, means that we have an average bed occupancy of only 38 per cent and it takes about 48 per cent occupancy to break-even. Cutting back on a few beds won't cut back much on costs because you still need a basic staff and certain, complex equipment to treat the needs of those using the hospital.

There is yet another reason why Pioneer Memorial Hospital is asking you to approve our operating levy for one year. Included in the budget for 1978-79 is \$52,391 for capital outlay...that is, needed equipment throughout the hospital. From an equipment standpoint we have cut back over the past few years and now we simply can't afford to wait...without compromising health care.

What can be done to control the health care cost spiral?

Who's to blame for increasing hospital costs: Everyone...but here's what we are going to do about it.

Your hospital board of trustees and administration are asking that you approve our levy request of \$190,082, in order that we can keep Pioneer Memorial the fine hospital that it is.

Secondly, we are and will continue to formulate plans for a health care district that would benefit the entire county. The chief goals of the district would be to give responsibility to an elected board of directors (at the present time hospital board members are appointed), to provide a vehicle for people from both ends of the county to use to get their health care needs taken care of and to provide a much better system of

administration.

You the people will have the last say because in order to form a health care district, it has to be voted in.

We'll hold numerous public meetings and provide you with a bevy of information on the hospital district, but first we have to pass our operating levy for the 1978-79 year.

We're concerned and need your help.

We, like you are concerned about rising hospital costs—and we're doing everything possible to keep them under control. But not at the cost of good patient care and service—for our profit and loss is measured in longer lives and stronger bodies. And when it comes to your good health, we know you don't want to go back to the so-called "good old days" either.

We're concerned and need your help. Pioneer Memorial Hospital of Morrow County

This advertisement paid for by Citizens for the Pioneer Memorial Hospital levy.

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