

Many years of Thresher Queens

By Karen Krien

Since 1973, a Thresher Queen has been selected to reign over the Tri-State Antique Engine and Thresher Show and throughout the year. The show did not begin having a queen until Adda Koden, Bird City, was selected in 1973. Since then, a queen has been selected each year.

The queens are someone who had been involved with threshing at harvest time. They may have cooked for a thresher crew or helped in other ways.

Her identity is a secret with clues being announced in an article in the *Bird City Times* and *The Saint Francis Herald*. There is also a photo of her when she was young or, some have been when she was a child.

Most of the time, the queen's identity is a mystery until she is announced at the show on Thursday.

Last year's queen was Lucille Query Wright.

Mrs. Wright and her husband, Maynard, have been active in the Thresher Show since its beginnings in the 1950s.

Upon accepting the honor from the outgoing Queen, Millie Glasco, Mrs. Wright spoke about what it was like growing up in northwest Kansas.

She was just 6-months-old when her older brother, Elmer, and her mother moved from Stromsburg, Neb., to Bird City. Her father, Roy Query, had been a day off his calendar and failed to meet them at the depot. When they finally met up, he took them to their new home 14 miles southeast of Bird City and farmed with horses until 1925, when they got their first tractor, a new John Deere.

Her family raised chickens, turkeys, cattle, horses, hogs and a bountiful garden.

"It was a very labor-intensive environment," said Mrs. Wright.

She attended Center Country School and rode with her brothers, Elmer, Lowell and Virgil 2 miles everyday on a pony.

"My brothers gave me the privilege of sitting on the part of the pony nearest the tail!" said Mrs. Wright.

She helped her mother, Ethel, with canning, churning butter, gardening and gathering eggs. She learned the basics of mending and embroidery from her mother.

After she passed the eighth grade exam, Mrs. Wright was admitted to Bird City High

School.

Mrs. Wright began teaching in the fall after spring graduation with no other education required, except for a curriculum called "Normal Training" in her last year. It qualified a student to teach country elementary school after graduation. After three years of teaching at Mount Pleasant 29 and Center 17, she had around a dozen students each year.

She and Maynard were married May 14, 1939, and moved to their first home about 8 miles south of town. They began farming with a new W-40 International tractor and it is display at the Thresher Show.

They had a second-hand light plant and were able to have lights and a radio. She could iron and wash clothes from that power source. They had a pitcher pump at the sink and an outhouse!

Less than a year later, they moved to another farm and stayed until they moved to their home in Bird City. They raised three children, Gerald, Eileen and Donald on the farm.

The equipment that the family could not procure frequently was built by Maynard. He was innovative in welding, mechanical and carpentry skills. He and their sons made farm and home equipment they could not otherwise have. All of their children were integral members of their farm life. It was truly a family farm, she said.

This year's queen

This year's queen was born in Nebraska and now lives in Cheyenne County. She grew up on a farm comprised of cattle, hogs, chickens and milk cows.

Cobs that she carried were used for the cook stove and heater. Later, she carried the ashes out.

Evenings were spent around the table with the kerosene-burning lamp furnishing light for studying, reading and playing games.

She remembers the Dust Bowl Days. Hard work, she said, was required of every family member which contributed to their way of life.

Who is she???

Come to the Thresher Show on Thursday and her identity will be revealed.

On Thursday at noon, the new queen is announced and last year's queen donates her doll to the collection.

Former queens

Other queens are:

1974 - Minnie Henry, Bird City.

1975 - Anna Busse, Bird City.

1976 - Lillie Erickson, Bird City.

1977 - Florence Forsythe, St. Francis.

1978 - Winnie Sawyer, Bird City.

1979 - Vera Gorthy, Benkelman.

1980 - Clara Loyd, St. Francis.

1981 - Lillie Burke, McDonald.

1982 - Sophia Boll, St. Francis.

1983 - Laura Rudder, St. Francis.

1984 - Gertrude Harris, Bird City.

1985 - Hope Bressler, Bird City.

1986 - Bertha Stunkel, Bird City.

1987 - Vivian Lanham, Bird City.

1988 - Blanche McDowell, Benkelman.

1989 - Lillian Gorthy, Bird City.

1990 - Nellie Burr, Bird City.

1991 - Irene Kehlbeck (Ernie), Bird City.

1992 - Amelia Banister, McDonald.

1993 - Thelma Hendricks, Bird City.

1994 - Helen Brubaker, Bird City.

1995 - Claribel Bell, McDonald.

1996 - Myra Miller, McDonald.

1997 - Viola Wright, Bird City.

1998 - Evelyynn Harvey, St. Francis.

1999 - Arlene Busse, Bird City.

2000 - Velma Goodell, St. Francis.

2001 - Meta Dankenbring, Bird City.

2002 - Minnie Busse, Bird City.

2003 - Norma Wright, Bird City.

2004 - Irene Kehlbeck, Bird City.

2005 - Eva Ann Murray, Bird City.

2006 - Agnes Burk, Bird City.

2007 - Millie Glasco, Bird City.

2008 - Mildred Wright, Bird City.



LUCILLE WRIGHT tells about her life at the 2008 Thresher Show.

See you at the Thresher Show



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