

Farmer was taught to conserve as child

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press
sdieter@nwkansas.com

When he was just a year old, Dr. William L. White started living on a farm his parents bought north of town.

His father, Lloyd White, showed him where the water ran downhill near the farmhouse, forming small ditches. He built several terraces through that field to keep the water from washing the soil away.

“He told me he was doing this to conserve the soil,” White said. “I’ve always just grown up believing that soil conservation was very important.”

White recently won the annual Kansas Bankers Association Soil Conservation Award from the Thomas County Conservation District for efforts to conserve the soil on his 6,000 acre farm. He moved to Phoenix in 1970 to complete his residency as a neurosurgeon and still lives there, working as a neurosurgeon for much of the year. In 2003, he bought the farm from his parents. About a half dozen people, including his wife Nancy and 11-year-old daughter Maya, live on the farmstead, and his brother Larry and sister Shirley Bourquin live nearby.

“I always dreamed of owning it,” he said.

He still has terraces, rows of soil about three feet high, running through the field by



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Dr. William White posed with his horse Norman at his farm north of Colby. The Arizona resident comes back part of each year to the farm, first homesteaded by his great-grandfather, Samuel White.

his farmstead. The terraces are built in a winding fashion, because the row is built at the same elevation along the hillside to prevent

runoff and hold water.

“That’s why the terraces are zig-zagging,” he said. The land isn’t flat.”

The fields between them are tilled following the line of the terrace, so the furrows hold in water as well. About seven terraces his father built flattened out, he said, so he built three new ones, wider but with a ditch around them that wasn’t as deep, using a GPS unit to trace an accurate path for the equipment.

White said he also planted wild grass around a “playa,” or small depression in the ground with no outlet, giving up a quarter of one of his circles where rain and irrigation water always pooled up, ruining the crops.

Much of the farm is planted with no-till or strip-till methods, which help protect the soil from wind and water erosion. He has grass borders around the field by his house, and has planted wild grass in four draws to slow erosion, including one by a granary where his great-grandfather, Sam White, first home-

stead.

He is not sure how often other people use these methods, he said, but to him, preserving the farm is a goal itself.

“I grew up with that philosophy,” he said. “For me, it’s just normal, just the normal thing you do.”

The vegetation planted in the playa and the draws makes good habitat for game birds, he added. It provides both protection and food.

“There’s a little difference between what the soil conservation people want you to plant and what the wildlife wants you to plant,” he said.

Roots from grass holds the soil together, he said, but it crowds out weeds, whose flowers attract insects that pheasant chicks need because they cannot eat grain. Still, lots of pheasant can be found on his farm, and ducks and cranes show up at the playa part of the year. He hopes to see quail and prairie chickens there soon, too.

Stewards of the Land



Your productivity, efficiency and dedication to the business of farming and ranching have made American agriculture the envy of the world.

Farm Credit of Western Kansas salutes you and knows you will always be equal to the challenges of being the best in the world.

Congratulations Conservation Award Winners!

Farm Credit of Western Kansas, ACA

1190 South Range

Colby, Kansas

1-800-657-6048

www.farmcreditkansas.com



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE 2012 SOIL CONSERVATION AND POSTER WINNERS!

• YOUR MULTI-PERIL INSURANCE SPECIALISTS •

Stop by and visit with John or Janet!

Call us for your all your crop insurance needs!



JOHN C. TWEED AGENCY

John C.
Tweed

135 W. 6th • Colby
785-462-7366