Celebrating 75 Years of Conservation

By Deb Bigelow; the article appeared in the August 15, 2017 edition of the Coshocton County Beacon.

Vernon Mizer served as a SWCD board member for 21 years, from 1981 through 2002. Vernon shared how much he enjoyed meeting other people on the board; both from Coshocton County and across the State. Vernon commented, “Gerald Findlay and I played basketball against one another in school and ended up working together when we served on the board.” Vernon also shared that it was important to him that serving on the board was not a paid position; he enjoyed being a volunteer for the SWCD program. He continued, “Hiring Teresa Bradford was the best thing we did and I always enjoyed seeing the work plans of what the staff was doing.” Vernon remembers finances for the SWCD being a challenge but said the Commissioners were always supportive of our program and we always made it. No-Till drills and seeders were also rented through Finton Equipment to assist people in the community.

Vernon and his wife Diane live on the family dairy farm in White Eyes Township where Vernon has lived all his life. His Dad’s Cooperator Agreement is number 10 so it was completed very early in the history of the SWCD.

I also had the pleasure of talking with Fred Zimmerman at his beautiful family farm in Adams Township recently. Fred served as a SWCD Supervisor from 1991-1993. Fred shared that he enjoyed getting to know other board members and learning more about the SWCD program. He shared that he was not familiar with all the regulations that had to be followed to get conservation practices installed until he was a board member. Fred commented, “I was on the board when we celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the SWCD which was held at Riverview High School. I especially remember this because the day after the annual meeting my wife Nancy went into labor and had our daughter Tiffany!”

Fred reflected that he lost a good friend last week with the passing of Dean Wyler; a true ambassador for the agricultural community. Fred shared that he had a farm accident 9 years ago in April when he fell off a ladder and ended up in the hospital for 5 days. When he came home from the hospital, he was not able to do anything for over a month. Fred commented, “Dean came and talked to me about how I needed to follow the doctor’s instruction and take it easy. Dean and Johnny Wyler and Jeff Garber came and planted my corn for me that spring and you don’t forget things like that.”

Fred uses No-Till to plant all their corn and still uses contour strips, alternating hay and corn. Conservation practices he remembers staff working on during his tenure included manure storage facilities and grassed waterways. An outreach event he enjoyed was the Official’s Tour and taking a bus around the county to see recently installed conservation practices.

The Zimmerman farm has been in the family for many years with his Dad buying the farm right after World War II. Fred farmed in partnership with his father and took over responsibility for the dairy when he was 25 after his father’s sudden death. Fred and his son Tyler operate the dairy farm today, milking approximately 75 cows.

Coshocton SWCD 1993 Board of Supervisors

Front (L-R) Vernon Mizer and David Gilmore; Back (L-R) Fred Zimmerman, Knox Porteus, and Gerald Finlay