

# Children cherish a father's legacy



## Farmer's Daughter

By ANNA ZIEGLER

**D**RIVING the tractor rather than just riding along with Dad is a rite of passage farm boys eagerly anticipate.

"As a kid, I was always hounding Dad to let me drive," says Jeffrey Butler, who farms along with his brother Matthew near Blandinsville. "I learned how to drive a tractor sitting between Dad's legs steering."

Jeffrey was pretty young when he got to drive the tractor solo for the first time in the field. "Someone drove by on the road and thought the tractor was driving itself because he was so small you couldn't see him," Matthew says.

Both brothers have fond memories of learning from their dad.

"I can remember riding in the combine with him and reading the combine manual as he drove," Jeffrey says. The cab became a classroom as the father taught his son about the mechanical workings of the combine.

### Like father, like sons

Jeffrey, 29, and Matthew, 33, would have liked to have learned from their dad longer. He passed away in 2003. But the legacy of faith, family and farming he left behind continues to have an impact.

"In the back of our minds, we always think about how Dad would have handled a certain situation," Jeffrey says. "He taught us to do everything with honesty and integrity."

Their dad gave them the opportunity to farm, just like his father before him.

"He never pressured me to farm. I could tell he wanted me to, but he never came out and said it. He let me decide on my own," notes Matthew.

As a farm girl, I value the same sort of subtle guidance from my father.

If there is a pause in the conversation, you can pretty much bet that my dad will start talking about farming.

"Well, I tore into the 4430 the other day," he says and then goes on to tell me about the bearings that needed replacing on the worn-out clutch.

His love for farming is evident in the way he talks about it.

When I spoke to my dad on the phone a few days ago, we talked about cash rents, grain elevators, rain and corn prices. At times, his enthusiasm and his uncanny ability to weave farm topics into any conversation make me laugh out loud.

### Love runs deep

Ask any farmer why he likes farming, and you might not get an answer for a moment. As his gaze drifts off to one side, he will probably talk about the satisfaction of producing a crop, the freedom of being his own boss and the joy of working outside.

In truth, I don't think farmers themselves fully understand what it is about farming that appeals to them so strongly.

A love of agriculture passed on from one generation to the next runs deep. You might say it's in the blood.

"I always thought I would come back and farm," Matthew Butler says, "I can't imagine doing anything else."

My dad would say the same.

Farming is as much a way of life as it is an occupation. Something about it speaks to the soul and tugs on the heart in a way words cannot fully express.

Whatever that something is, I feel it, too.

So thanks, Dad, for passing your love of agriculture on to me. I am proud to be a farmer's daughter, and not just any farmer's daughter, but yours.

*Ziegler grew up on a family farm near LaHarpe and is a recent graduate of the University of Illinois.*

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## State fairgrounds upgrade completed

**T**HE Illinois State Fairgrounds electrical repair is complete and power has been restored to all areas of the fairgrounds nearly three weeks before the targeted completion date of May 16.

B & B Electric of Springfield began the electrical repair and replacement work at the fairgrounds March 13. The company's bid of \$1.86 million was the lowest of five submitted.

Workers found collapsed underground concrete and other undiscovered conditions after the project began, and this cost an additional \$277,000 for necessary repairs to stay on schedule. A total of \$578,000 was spent earlier to identify the cause of the widespread electrical failures at the fairgrounds, design a solution and make some initial repairs. The \$2.71 million total project cost is less than the original estimate of \$3 million.

The project involved replacing approximately 120,000 feet (22.7 miles) of underground 12,470-volt copper cable, which is the main source of electricity for the entire 366-acre fairgrounds.

HDR Engineering, a nationwide firm with offices in Springfield, was called in Jan. 31 to determine the source of electrical problems at the fairgrounds that had caused power outages and damage to electrical equipment. HDR's high voltage system experts discovered that most of the underground electrical cable was nearing the end of its recommended service life and was experiencing insulation failures at numerous locations around the fairgrounds. They determined that additional, potentially hazardous electrical failures along the high-voltage lines were possible and recommended installing new cable and a new grounding system at the fairgrounds.