

Farm, family and church

By MICK KREIDLER

HER motto perfectly describes her busy life: "It is better to wear out than to rust out." Yet no matter how hectic her days might be, she always makes time for family and friends.

Doris Ringelspach Johnson of Fairfield in southeast Iowa was a farming partner with her husband, Don, for many years. About 20 years ago, a family farm corporation was established with Don, Doris, son Doug and daughter-in-law Lynne as stockholders. After Doug's untimely death in July 2007, and Don's passing in July 2008, many changes were made. Doris and her daughters, Dian Johnson and Dee Johnson Sandquist, continue to manage

the 700 acres Doris owns.

While Don and Doug handled the daily farm work, Doris was the bookkeeper who kept detailed records. She worked closely with bank loan officers, who were impressed with her accounting skills, financial decisions and knowledge of agriculture.

Dian and Dee praised their mother for her leadership in the family farming operation and in community organizations. "The saying, 'Behind every successful man is a woman,' describes our mother. She is the woman behind two Iowa Master Farmers — our father, Donald, and our brother, Doug," says Dian.

Lynne says Doris is a major reason for the success of their farming operation. "She is one of the best-natured, friendly, mentally sharp, positive and enthusiastic people I've ever known. I've been blessed to have her in my life," she says.

Busy farming years

Besides keeping farm records, Doris helped Don with the

farming by driving tractors, herding cattle and providing daily meals, often delivered to the field. Doris wanted to be at home when the children came from school, so she raised laying chickens for extra income. For 10 years, her flock of 2,000 hens kept her busy raising and feeding chickens, along with gathering, washing, candling, boxing and selling eggs on contract.

After the children left for college, Doris worked at the Jefferson County assessor's office for 25 years, where she tallied the results of survey information collected from taxpayers on crop production, livestock statistics and farm equipment.

Besides her work on and off the farm, Doris volunteered as a 4-H leader and was a member of the county 4-H committee, president of the Jefferson County Republican Women, board member of the Iowa Federation of Republican Women, and member of the county Farm Bureau Women. She served on the Jefferson County Board

for the Agency on Aging and was a delegate to the Silvered Hair Conference representing Iowa for the American Association of Retired Persons for two years.

Doris and Don supported each other's activities in community involvement. Don was active in several organizations at local, state and national levels. They shared an interest in travel. Don, Doris and the children often spent family vacations traveling to annual Soil and Water Conservation Association meetings.

Hosting foreign visitors

Don and Doris traveled the U.S., Europe and China. They were on the first ag tour to China in the 1970s. They also hosted exchange students and held farm tours for visitors from foreign countries.

"Don and I often remarked about how thankful we were for the opportunities we had to travel. It widened our scope of understanding about agriculture and people," says Doris.

A lifelong member of First Lutheran Church in Fairfield,



Doris Johnson

Doris had great-grandparents, Charles and Sarah Wendling Schmidt, who were founding members of the church in 1856. Doris has served in many ways including as a Sunday school teacher for 20 years. She's served on her local church council and with Lutheran women's organizations in which she has held offices at local, district and state levels. She was an active member of the ecumenical Church Women United for 45 years.

Doris has lived her exceptional life dedicated to the creed: "My life is a gift from God; what I do with this life is my gift to God." Still active and involved in agriculture, she has given her family and her community the wonderful gift of her time and talents.

Kreidler is from Indianola.

Master Profile

Doris Johnson

Spouse: Donald (deceased), married 65 years.

Children: Dian, Dee and Doug (deceased)

Interests: Family, church, travel, community service

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