

Statlers find that conserva



In recognition of their long-standing concern for soil, water and other natural resources, M. Dice and Roberta Statler were named one of 10 nationwide finalists in a conservation award program sponsored by the National Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation and the DuPont Company.

BY JACK HUBLEY
CHAMBERSBURG — The Statler family's roots are planted deep in Franklin County soil. Maybe that's why the clan is so intent on keeping that soil on the farm.

The year was 1869 when Dice Statler's great grandfather began farming near Chambersburg after returning from the Civil War. Today Statler Farms consists of about 600 acres of cropland and a 240-cow dairy operation run by Dice's son, Ronald, and the family's partner, Ray Burkholder.

Although about 270 acres of the total is rented ground, Dice emphasizes that proper soil and water conservation is practiced on all Statler-farmed acres, owned or not. "My father was conservation-minded," Dice recalls. "He always said, 'I'd like to leave this land better than I got it.'"

The list of conservation practices employed by the Statlers is indeed extensive. Literally miles of tile drainage, diversion terraces and sod waterways have been constructed, and wide buffer strips between roadways and the 80-foot strips of corn and alfalfa-grass fields keep Statler topsoil from hitching a ride downstream.

Minimum tillage techniques are employed in cornfields, and manure is incorporated within hours of application. A gravity operated manure storage system with five months capacity ensures that manure is not applied on frozen ground when incorporation is not possible.

Land deemed poor for agricultural production is maintained as cover for wildlife, and two ponds have been constructed

to ensure a supply of surface water for irrigation, rather than drawing on water table reserves.

The family's commitment to the environment has not gone unnoticed, and Dice and his wife, Roberta, were recently named among 10 finalists in a conservation awards program sponsored by the National Endowment for Soil and Water Conservation and the DuPont Company.

The Statlers were selected from 49 state nominees, and recently returned from Ennis, Texas, where the 10 finalists were honored in award ceremonies conducted on the farm of 1984 award recipients Larry and Rebecca Sullivan. Later this year, three national winners will be selected from the 10 finalists, and each will receive a cash award of \$1,000.

Though environmental awareness is a popular issue these

days, the Statler's involvement stretches back more than four decades; long before soil and water conservation was in vogue. Only three years after its creation in 1935, the Soil Conservation Service selected the three farms then under Statler ownership as demonstration farms for conservation techniques. Diversion terraces were built, a tile drainage system was installed and strip cropping was implemented. Nearly half a century later, much of the original SCS work—including most of the locust fenceposts installed—is still intact.

In 1953, notes Dice, the first trench silo east of the Mississippi was built on the Statler farm, designed by the late Henry Warner, a Franklin SCS technician. The original silo is still in use, and the family has added several others since then. Dice finds this design preferable to the upright

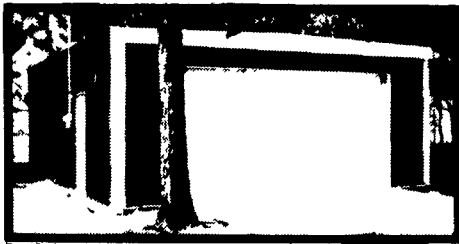


Father and son pose along one of the grass buffer strips that keeps Statler soil on the Statler farm.

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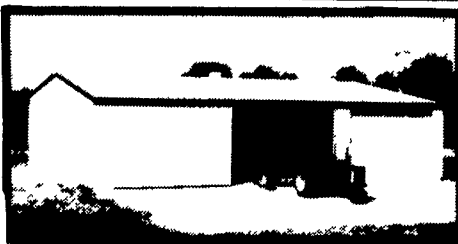
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