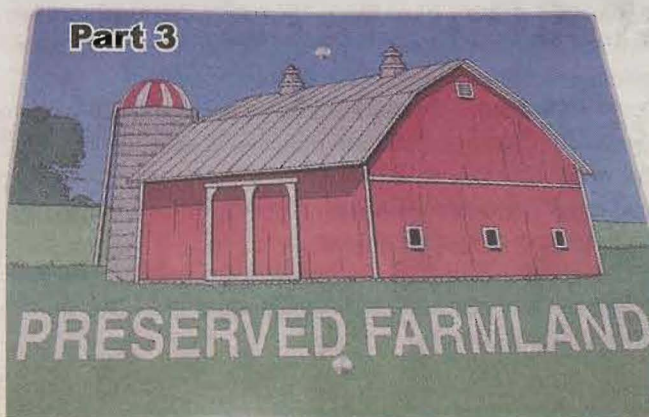


Grattan farmer preserves land to continue farming cycle



by Emma Palova

With a mile of frontage on Murray Lake and 4 Mile roads in Grattan Township, retired farmer Lloyd Flanagan could have raked in a nice chunk of cash if he had parceled off the family farm for development.

Having a health condition since 20, Lloyd Flanagan could have also used the cash. After all, his uncle Irwin Flanagan had sold large parcels of land for development south of Lally Road.

Instead Lloyd Flanagan embarked on a long journey to preserving the farm forever through the Kent County farmland preservation program. He found out about the program from preservation pioneer Tim Howard. Not being able to drive since 1993, he did most of the administrative work over the phone.

He got help from Kendra Wills, staff assistant to the preservation program and Dennis Heffron, Grattan Township official.

"I didn't even know where to start," said Lloyd Flanagan. "I made 100-some phone calls. I just couldn't see selling it."

Moreover son Dave has been farming the land since he graduated from Lowell High School in 1985. Dave believes there are places for housing in the township, and that farmland should be left alone.

Dave worked with his dad to get the farm into the preservation program. That meant also entering a conservation program to protect the waterways from erosion.

Buffers of sod had to be created between the

agricultural land and the waterways. Dave grows grain for ethanol fuel, which comes back as distillers grain to be fed back to the livestock.

"It's an entire cycle," Dave said, "it's the future trend for farming so we are less dependent on oil."

Indeed dad Flanagan has been approached several times to sell off some land. He never gave in, and the process cemented his belief that farmland preservation should have been done many years ago.

"I encourage everyone to preserve farmland," said Lloyd Flanagan, "farms and acres are getting gobbled up for development and commercial."

Lloyd Flanagan too believes, that there is already enough development in Grattan and Vergennes townships.

"Uncle's farm has been developed, and they built a new school," said Lloyd Flanagan.

As a former farmer dependent on equipment, Lloyd Flanagan says schools located all in one complex with a bus garage have to be more energy efficient.

"My folks would have been proud to see the farm preserved all in one piece,"

said Lloyd Flanagan.

Lloyd and wife Kathleen with son Dave continue to live on the farm.

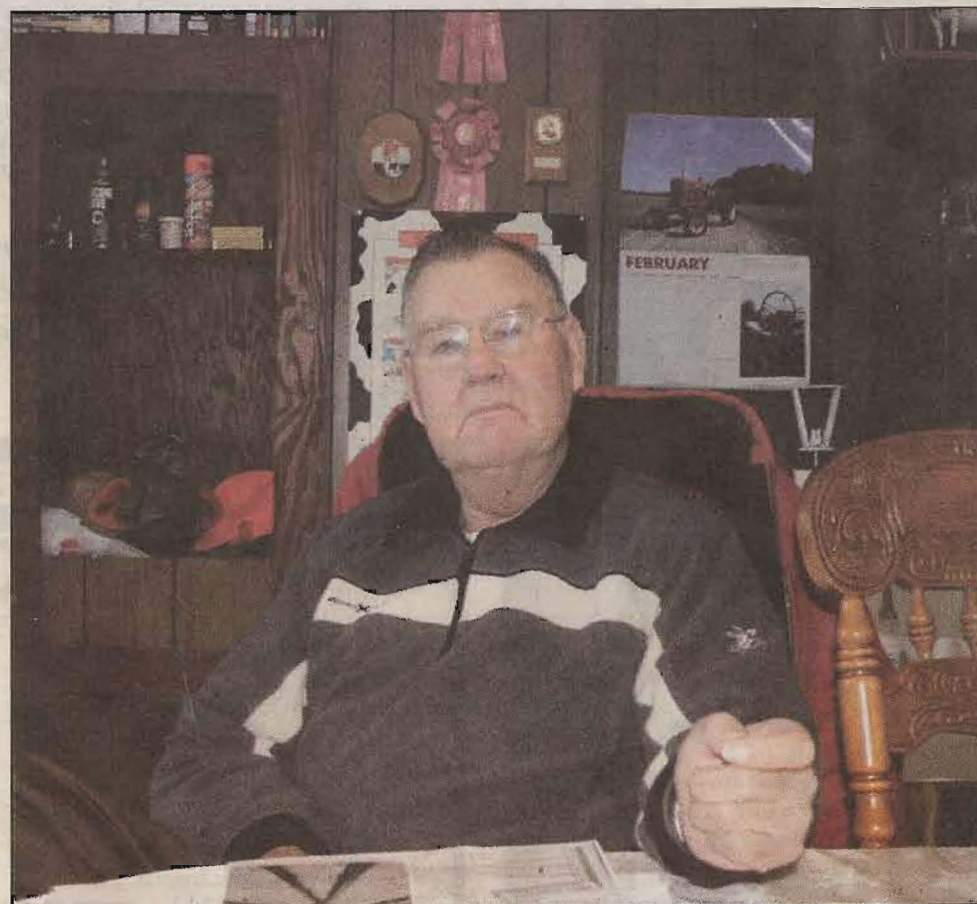
"I never regretted it," said Lloyd Flanagan, "I'd

do it all over again."

Interest in farmland preservation seems to be growing as more and more farmers enter the program. Flanagan's farm was the first one preserved

in Grattan Township, and the second one in Kent County.

"People are getting more knowledgeable about it," said Lloyd Flanagan.



Lloyd Flanagan preserved 145 acres of farmland in 2006.