



May 11, 2009 - Curt Twedt and Colleen Babcock enjoying Griffith Prairie.



September, 2009

A Fond Farewell to Prairie Plains Co-Founder Curt Twedt

Curt's sudden departure on Friday, September 18 created a shock wave that hit not only his family and close friends, but the entire Great Plains natural resource community. We lost not just a co-founder, but a beloved friend, mentor and perpetual source of valuable information. As it was stated during a celebration of Curt's life in Lincoln on Monday evening, Sept. 28, "Before the Internet, there was Curt Twedt."

All of us that evening wondered just how many people Curt had been serving in this way for so many years. He was considered a "walking library" to his co-workers at the Nebraska Game & Parks Commission, where he was an "Environmental Analyst" - called at times by different titles, all of which amused him - from 1972 to 2003. Several mentioned that when they would ask him about a certain topic, he may respond that he didn't know, but he'd see what he could find out. Invariably, there would be a stack of clippings and articles stacked on the inquirer's desk the next morning.

Curt did not restrict this service to the Commission, however; one only needed to have met Curt at some point to have gained this privilege. As soon as he honed in on a person's interest - whether in natural resources or anything else - he'd store it in his infinite memory bank; then little bundles of collected information on that topic would periodically find their way to the person who'd had the good fortune to cross his path.

Born in 1934 in South Dakota, Curt grew up in a large family on a farm outside Volga (near Brookings). He attended South Dakota State University for both his undergraduate work (natural resources/wildlife) and for his Master's, with his research on Merriam's wild turkey food habits in western South Dakota. He earned his PhD from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, his thesis being "Characteristics of Sharp-tailed Grouse Display Grounds in the Nebraska Sandhills" (1974). But Curt never talked about his credentials. He was the epitome of modesty, often described as an unassuming gentle man and gentleman. His friend and colleague Carl Wolfe borrowed from Garrison Keillor in describing Curt as a "Norwegian bachelor farmer."

The cultural and natural history of the Great Plains, especially the Nebraska Sandhills, was Curt's greatest interest. But he certainly wasn't limited to that, being a collector of literature of all kinds, from a favorite science fiction novel (*A Canticle for Liebowitz*) to the works of Norris Alfred to the comic strip "Shoe." And he was a huge fan of pie and other pastries - just good food in general. He had a "pie map" in his head, having carefully noted all the great culinary finds along the back roads of the Plains. Always accompanying him was his trusty old beat-up Thermos (with cork stopper) filled with strong, black coffee.



January 17, 2009 - Curt chatting with Ernie Ochsner at the Prairie Plains annual meeting of members in Aurora.

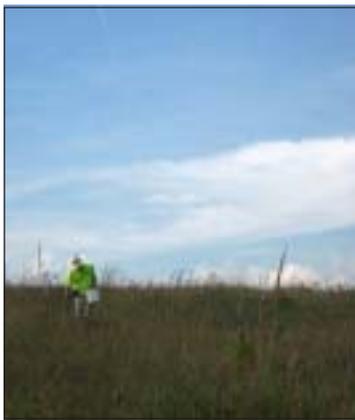
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Our gifts from Curt include books and other literature, bundles of shrubs and trees, seeds and acorns, bags of pancake mix from the Humboldt Mill and jars of honey and wild plum jam. Best of all are our memories of some 25 years of shared Arbor Day and Columbus Day field excursions followed by dinner in our home – always topped off with pie or apple dumplings and coffee.

Mitzi Fox commented on the manner in which Curt left us, which involved his rental car's collision with a building on UNL's east campus, no doubt preceded by a lethal medical event: "Although he left us with more fanfare than he would have liked, I think he did go 'quietly into the night,' without bother or fuss as he would have wished." All of us that knew and loved Curt are grateful that he was able to escape in a flash, as he tolerated medical facilities about as well as he did stuffy formal gatherings or superstores.

Those left mourning Curt's passing are special friend and neighbor Carla and her son, Jeremy; four sisters, two brothers, many nieces and nephews and countless friends.

We are compiling a more comprehensive memoir, including the transcript of a DVD recorded at Curt's life celebration. It will be made available at our 2010 annual meeting of members. JW



Beautiful fall weather throughout most of September allowed for lots of great days in the field. Left to right - It was a month packed with seed harvesting days - this one on Sept. 15 at the Frank L. and Lillian Pokorny Memorial Prairie near Schuyler; Steve Winter (third from left) led part of our Sept. 17th restoration tour group through a 2008 planting at his parents' place near Lincoln; a few insect netters amongst the 95 Aurora 7th-graders that had a wonderful outdoor learning day at Griffith Prairie on Sept. 18th.

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September Thank-yous:

- to Nanette Whitten for assistance with seed harvesting;
- to everyone who participated in the restoration tour Sept. 17th;
- to Steve Winter for more seed and assistance on the restoration tour;

and to
Curt Twedt
for decades of service
beyond measure.

Nanette Whitten has been a volunteer for The Nature Conservancy for the past several months, and has also assisted with our seed harvest. She is soon to return to Texas, but we hope she'll be back. We'll miss you, Nanette!

