

The following is a letter I received from John White, MASWCD Media Award Winner on Monday evening, Dec. 9th. John was ill on Monday at the convention and therefore did not take the opportunity to express his appreciation and thoughts with us. He has asked me to forward this written statement to the MASWCD.

Karen Flom
Renville SWCD

My deepest apologies to all those attending the Award Luncheon in St. Paul this afternoon. When Steve Sunderland gave me an offer to express my thoughts, I had to decline. I've been fighting a severe allergy attack and probably shouldn't have driven into the cities, let alone exposed my health to so many. That said, I want to thoroughly express my appreciation to the Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts for their kind recognition of our little newspaper in the prairie. And, to the Renville County SWCD for nominating me for the award. I told Karen Flom that I was incredibly pleased by the recognition, although our coverage of soil and water conservation issues (and successes) are part of what I consider highly important news and information - part of the job, if you will.

If I had been of clear mind, I would have told the gathering that the real "heroes" -- which has become such an overused word of late -- were those sitting in front of me, the men and women who are bringing these many soil and water conservation programs to life in our rural areas. Without their dedication, foresight, energy and responsibility to our little corner of the world, we would still be stuck in a generational mind-lock that considered every rivlet a ditch, every field and its wetlands things that must be drained, every field and waterway a tract to be intensively farmed at the expense of an incredibly delicate ecosystem. Now we are beginning to see value in our land, in our wetlands, and our waterways. We are seeing past the rows of commerce with an eye on saving our soil by keeping it on the land; on cleaning our tributaries of human and livestock waste and of washed-off nutrients such as phosphorus and nitrogen; and of partially restoring a naturally thriving eco-system that will hopefully provide us with a more balanced diversity of life. We are no longer NYMBYs, but people who are proud of our backyards and doing something about them. And the people in that large room in St. Paul are the people who are restoring that pride. One day we will hope to have cleaner water and a farming system that is created with a balance of a natural eco-system and a thriving agricultural economy.

My father proved many, many years ago that those two spectrums are mutually rewarding and have synergy, and in so doing was twice recognized as a state soil conservationist in the state of Missouri. Now in his 90s, he was incredibly proud that his son was honored for his work by a sister organization. Being so honored while he is still alive means so much.

But it was he, farmers like him, and you who are doing the work. I am simply one of the messengers. Today a very proud messenger. Again, thank you all so much for honoring me and our little newspaper. I would have liked to have spoken these words this afternoon, but I simply didn't have the energy. When I told my wife I turned down an open microphone, she said, "You are sick! Tomorrow you're going to the doctor." Again, thanks.

John G. White
Editor, Clara City Herald