

Comments by Jim Penney
Presentation of the 2003 Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture to
David, Diane and Dresden Petty
August 9, 2003

As chair of the Leopold Center Advisory Board, I am pleased that the Leopold Center was asked to administer this award. The Leopold Center's success depends on people who are willing to take our research one step further -- and adopt sustainable agricultural practices on their own farms and in their own communities.

David and Diane Petty and their daughter Dresden are an outstanding example of what it means to put sustainable agriculture to work.

The Petty family owns and operates the Iowa River Ranch that follows a scenic portion of the Iowa River in Hardin County. Their farm enhances that natural beauty, yet is a productive part of the wider community. To do this, the Petty family turned marginal cropland and overgrazed pastures into a series of connecting paddocks, on which they rotationally graze a commercial Angus herd. They've built holding ponds, dug wells, installed underground water lines, and reseeded with quality forage. Whether they own the land or lease it, they've invested in conservation for the long term.

The same is true of their corn and soybean operation. The Petty family has built 13 miles of terraces, reshaped more than 11 miles of waterways, and seeded three miles of buffers to control soil erosion, improve water quality, and establish wildlife habitat. I am told their farm is home to literally hundreds of deer, wild turkey and waterfowl.

In 2001, the Petty family received the National Environmental Stewardship Award from the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. In 2002, the Environmental Protection Agency gave Dave Petty its top environmental excellence award in the Kansas City region, the first given to a farmer.

I could go on. Many people in this arena also could tell you many other ways that the Petty family have been leaders in sustainable agriculture and in the Iowa Cattlemen's Association. For these and many other things I do not have time to describe today, I am honored to recognize David, Diane and Dresden Petty as recipients of the 2003 Spencer Award for Sustainable Agriculture.