

*Desert isn't sand, Ruggles finds*

# Arizona trip reward for district's efforts

It was a trip to Arizona with a purpose other than fun in the sun.

Not that there wasn't sun and that the trip was boring.

Albert Ruggles of Kingston and John Findlay of Reese went to Litchfield Park, Ariz., as representatives of the Tuscola County Soil Conservation District, recipient of the Goodyear Conservation Award designating it as the top district in the state.

There were only 106 persons from across the country at the awards program, officials from first place districts and individual co-operators.

The tire company has sponsored the competition for 32 years in cooperation with the National Association of Conservation Districts.

The usual practice is for one member of the district's board of directors, usually the chairman, to go, along with the district's outstanding cooperator of the year.

Findlay is the board chair-

man. Ruggles, a board member, got to go when the 1979 outstanding cooperator, John Foley of Millington, couldn't go.

Goodyear paid for both men's trip. At their own expense, they took their wives, Glennadine Ruggles and Kay Findlay.

The four departed Dec. 7 and returned Dec. 11.

Headquarters for what was billed a vacation-study program was the Wigwam resort in Litchfield Park, about 20 miles west of Phoenix.

LITCHFIELD PARK IS also headquarters for the 12,360-acre Goodyear Farms.

Ruggles' first discovery there was that "the desert wasn't sand." It's more like clay.

All crops grown in Arizona, he also discovered, are irrigated. In fact, rain isn't very welcome as when it does come, it usually is in such heavy amounts it causes flash floods. Irrigation is easier to control.

Goodyear Farms, the vis-

itors were told, was started before World War I for purposes of growing cotton, the fibre being needed for tires.

Cotton is still the main crop at the farm, but lots of fruit (mainly citrus) and vegetables are also grown.

The 106 conservationists also toured a beef and a dairy farm.

As a dairy farmer -- he and brother Arlo milk 80 cows at their farm just east of Kingston -- Ruggles found those of special interest.

The main difficulty for livestock in Arizona, he learned, is coping with the extreme difference between daytime and nighttime temperatures.

Overhead shelters protect livestock from the intense heat but there are no enclosed buildings for them.

In addition to the farm tours, the participants also went on a scenic tour of the mountains.

With two representatives from each state, Ruggles said, the program presented

an opportunity to "get lots of different ideas on how people farm and how they're doing their conservation work. It's always interesting when you get people from different areas."

Other nice things about the trip were the food -- "They fed us well," -- and the weather. The weather was nice, Ruggles said, but the weather was also nice back in Michigan, considering the month. "It would have been nicer (in Arizona) if we had known there was a blizzard back here," he joked.

THE TUSCOLA COUNTY Soil Conservation District won the award because of its numerous activities in furthering water and soil conservation.

It promoted and now assists with the county soil survey, a five-year program. It has sponsored land judging, scrapbook and poster contests and conservation tours for school students. Surveying and setting of its priorities in conjunction with the national Resource Conservation Act was a consideration.

The number of co-operators and conservation practices in the county was another factor.

The judging period was for

the year that ended in March, 1979.

It was the first time the district had entered the contest in about 10 years, ac-

ording to District Aide Mary Lou Earl. It didn't enter again until this year because of the large amount of work involved in filling out the contest forms.

Although it was a joint effort by staff, district directors and co-operators which resulted in winning of the award, it was Mrs. Earl who had to do most of the contest paperwork and that took her about a month.

Selection of the state winner was made by the Michigan Department of Agriculture.

The district won't get its award to hang on the wall until the Michigan Association of Soil Conservation Districts meeting later this month in Midland.

Each of the directors and cooperator of the year John Foley will also get a small plaque or some other award.

## Soil district meets Jan. 16

The Tuscola County Soil Conservation District will hold its annual meeting Wednesday, Jan. 16, at 7 p.m. at Caro High School.

Speaker will be Walt Rummel of Sebawaing, who will present a program on agriculture in Communist China. Cooperator of the year award will be presented to Carl and Ed Mantey, owners of Mantey Pedigree Seed Producers of Fairgrove.

Awards will be presented for the poster, scrapbook and land judging contest winners.

The terms on the board of

directors of Dave Loomis of Cass City and Albert Ruggles of Kingston, filling out the term of his late father, Bruce Ruggles, will be expiring.

Nominated for new three-year terms are Ruggles; Loomis; Randy Hampshire, Kingston; Gerald Hicks, Deford, and Lee Voss, Deford. All directors are elected at large.

Maynard McConkey of Cass City will be in charge of the election.

Tickets are available from all directors and at the district office, 852 S. Hooper Street, Caro.

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DESERT DELIGHTS -- Albert Ruggles (left) and John Findlay inspect a variety of the fruits and vegetables grown at Goodyear Farms in Arizona, which they visited in conjunction with the Goodyear Conservation Awards Program in early December.

## Record yields of oats and wheat in 1979

There were record yields of winter wheat and oats in 1979, according to the Michigan Agricultural Reporting Service.

The winter wheat yield of 43 bushels per acre broke the previous record of 40 bushels. Total winter wheat production was 33.8 million bushels, up 88 percent from last year's

small crop. The 785,000 acres harvested is 74 percent above the 1978 crop.

The record oat yield of 61 bushels per acre topped the previous record by one bushel. A 25 percent drop in harvested acreage to 270,000 resulted in a 20 percent decline in total production.

Total U.S. winter wheat production for 1979 was 1.61 billion bushels, 29 percent above last year and the second largest crop ever. Oat production was 534 million bushels and is the smallest crop since 1881.

Seedings of winter wheat this fall rose 10 percent from the previous crop, according to the reporting service.

Growers planted 880,000 acres. If no unusual conditions or problems arise this coming spring, Michigan wheat farmers could produce about 35 million bushels.

Nationally, winter wheat seedings rose 9 percent to 56.8 million acres. Based on the condition of the crop as of Dec. 1, total winter wheat production is forecast at 1.57 billion bushels, 3 percent less than 1979.

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