

Darell Sarff: Connected to the land

From farming to hunting to assisting house hunters, it all goes back to the land for Sarff

For Darell Sarff, a 2018 Master Farmer from Chandlerville, Ill., every instance of his life's work goes back to the land – from growing specialty crops in the sandy soils of Mason County, to helping folks hunt the Illinois River flyway, to managing a farm real estate business.

He and wife, Rosanne – marriage and farm partners since 1970 – say their farm is not unique in the area but is unique in the

Midwest. At one time, they operated 3,500 acres over 30 miles, growing green beans, peas, cucumbers, sweet corn, popcorn, pumpkins and more for processors, but have downsized to 900 acres within 5 miles, concentrating on popcorn, soybeans and corn.

Today, with neither of their children, Eric Sarff and Rachel Schultz, involved in the farm, the Sarffs have brought their nephews into the operation with flexible rent leases and a lease to purchase equipment. They've begun transferring management, retiring partially in 2018.

A long-time hunting enthusiast, Darell has managed three different hunting clubs since the 1970s, bringing duck hunting enthusiasts to the Havana area, and man-

aging water, habitat, food plots and more.

He got into real estate after helping a local realtor market a tract back in the '90s. He bought her business when she retired in 2000 and Kennedy Sarff Real Estate was born, with offices in Havana and Mason City. He and Rosanne run the business and Darell says there's a lot of satisfaction in helping someone get the house they want or the farm they always wanted to buy.

"It's really a pleasure to see that," he says. "I love to try to help people out like that."

Darell served on the Illinois Agricultural Association board of directors from 1986-1996, was appointed to the AFBF Vegetable Committee, and represented Illinois and Indiana farmers on the ProFac Cooperative Board of Directors – a publicly-traded company that owned Comstock Fruit, Birds Eye Frozen Foods, Hunts and its own popcorn label.

For Darell, those meetings proved profitable in other ways. "I got to know people really well," he recalls. "And I got to understand what they do and why and how it works. That's the value."

Darell was nominated by 1996 Master Farmer Rollie Moore.

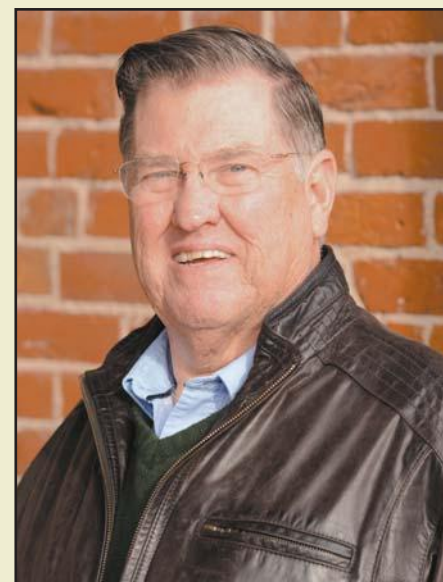


Photo by Holly Spangler

Darell Sarff and his wife Rosanne farm near Chandlerville, where they raise 1,000 acres of corn, soybeans and popcorn, following a long career in specialty crops. Darell was nominated by 1996 Master Farmer Rollie Moore.

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