

Love of Trees Spans Four Decades

Trees have always played an important role in Jack Miner's life. The Corydon, Iowa resident has been involved in planting and harvesting trees for over four decades and in two different states.

"I started planting trees in Florida 40 years ago, when I decided trees were the best use of the land there," Miner said.

A native of Wayne County, Miner returned to Iowa in 1969, after working all over the United States. He worked in the aerospace industry in cities that included Denver, Tampa, Long Island, Little Rock, and Los Angeles.

"I'm an electrical engineer by training," Miner said. "I worked with the Air Force and NASA on the Thor and Saturn missiles and B47 bomb site."

Trees Increase Land Value, Improve the Environment

Illnesses in their families brought Jack and his wife, Marilyn, back to Iowa. It wasn't long before Miner decided there was another important program he had to work on.

"I wanted to get trees growing again here in Iowa," Miner said.

Tree planting fit well into Miner's new venture at the time—developing and selling country acreages. The Miners purchased twelve different farms, then developed and sold five to ten acre lots as acreages from them.

"I wanted to improve the environment and increase the value of the land," Miner said. "So, I planted a lot of trees on the unsold land."

Trees have been a big part of the Mattco Land Corporation ever since. The corporation and Jack and Marilyn still have three farms in Iowa planted to trees and another in Florida. The Iowa farms have 196 acres planted to trees on land in Warren, Wayne and Madison Counties. The Miners also have 84 acres of natural trees.



Jack and Marilyn Miner, right, talk with IDNR forester George Warford about their bottomland hardwood tree planting in Madison County.

In Florida, Miner planted 60 acres of slash pine and longleaf pine and has another 32 acres of natural trees.

"I've harvested and replanted there several times," Miner said. "I also sell the pine straw from the trees."

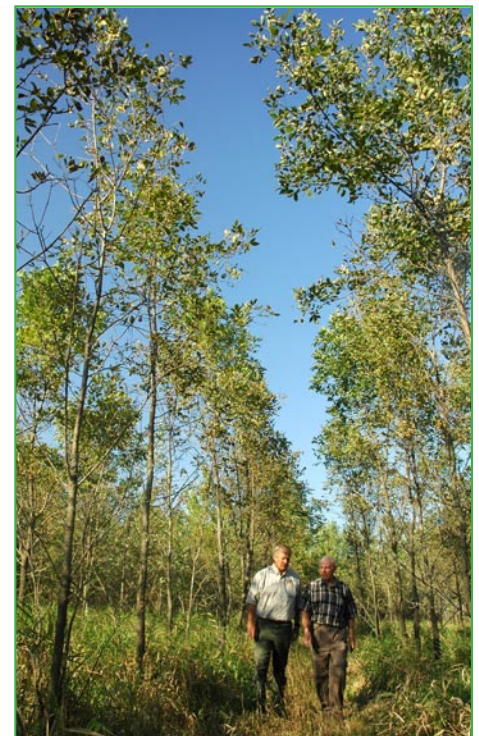
Hard Work Early On

There is a lot of work that goes into the tree farms, from planting to controlling competition to releasing trees to grow straight and tall. Miner hired most of the tree planting, but he mowed and maintained the plantings himself. Miner invested a lot of time and effort for the first three to four years after the plantings, in order for the trees to become established. He had help from Marilyn, who did some of the planting in Florida.

"I'm a tree person," Marilyn said. "Oaks are my favorite."

According to Iowa Department of Natural Resources Forester George Warford, there were tough hurdles for the Miners to clear when they planted trees on bottomland in Madison County.

"Reed canarygrass and flooding were challenges in the bottomland



A perpetual easement established in the Wetlands Reserve Program guarantees Jack Miner that silver maple, black walnut, green ash and other trees he planted will be a part of the Madison County landscape for a long time to come.



plantings,” Warford said. “Some had to be replanted when standing flood-water drowned out young trees. And reed canarygrass is a very aggressive competitor. Once the trees develop a closed canopy over the competing grass, they become dominant and the grass disappears. You can see that in parts of Jack and Marilyn’s plantings.”

Government Programs Help

Being a charter member of the Iowa Woodland Owner’s Association, and later serving on the board of directors, Miner was always looking for programs that encouraged and aided tree planting. While he likes trees because they increased land values for acreages, Miner also planted trees because he likes them and wants the land to remain in trees.

He found help for both goals through the Conservation Reserve Program and Wetland Reserve Program.

“The CRP and WRP programs are

On part of their bottomland plantings, the Miners have reached their goal for strong tree growth where the trees have formed a canopy that shades light to eliminate grass and weed growth (right). Their bottomland had a very heavy stand of reed canarygrass so there are trees that haven’t reached that stage yet (above).

both good for tree planting,” Miner said.

He established a bottomland hardwood stand of black walnut, green ash, silver maple, red oak, black locust and hackberry along the North River in Madison County with help from the CRP. He later converted the CRP contract to the Wetlands Reserve Program.

“That land has a perpetual easement in WRP,” Miner said. “It will always be trees.”

