

You elected me a Director at Large at the annual meeting on April 5th. Thank you for that honor. I was soon informed that writing an article for this Newsletter is one of my new duties. I asked Gail Griffin, our Executive Director what I should write about. Gail said there was no particular topic list but she suggested that I consider writing something educational. I assume she meant educational relative to bison. That right there might have identified a weakness in the association's process for selecting Directors. I have raised bison for a few years but I seriously doubt that I know much that would educate you folks. I suppose I could just tell you how we do things on our farm. Maybe next time.

My wife, Gail Wilkinson, suggested that I write a few words of self-introduction. The Gail thing could get confusing quickly, couldn't it? From now on I'll refer to my wife as Gail W and you can decide whether the W is for Wilkinson or Wife as you prefer.

The self-introduction part follows. I was born in Elk River and raised on a dairy farm in Wright County. I have farmed all my life but the economics of farming being as they are I raised my six kids based on an education in engineering and business. The kids are long since grown and we enjoy grandkids a lot. Gail W and I live on our 225-acre farm east of St. Cloud. I've been here for about 40 years. In those years I have at various times raised cattle, raised hogs, irrigated corn and planted dry land crops. We are in the Anoka Sand Plain. I chose my words carefully when I wrote that I "planted" dry land crops. In this sand, you can plant all you want but many years you don't have to spend much time harvesting. Our farm is about half open land with the remainder, oak savanna, wet meadow and tamarack swamp. The open land is now all back to tame and native pasture.

We have about 40 bison, 20 beef cattle, a dozen horses and a few hogs. The farm is now fenced for rotational grazing. The herd sizes above seem to be about right for the carrying capacity of our farm.

I'll try to come up with something more interesting next time. I promise. Tom