

Lloyd Field grows freedom acre by acre



"It's so peaceful here...And it's that way all the time. Birds singing...bright moon at night...nature...just right in the midst of it." www.410.com —Gertrude Tucker

Lloyd Fields is doing today what he has been doing most of his 82 years: plowing, planting and reaping his harvest. He may say he grows vegetables or tobacco, but when he gets down off his tractor and you hear his laugh, you know what he really sows...freedom.

"I've never done anything else," he said last week, responding amiably to the unfamiliar questioning about his life. He didn't see himself as being anything special. But people who know him do—and his family does.

His daughter, Gertrude Tucker, who came home to her parent's farm on Route 616 when she retired, was amazed and very proud to find that everywhere she went people praised her father; "Lloyd Fields, is that your father? He's one of the finest men.."

His wife, Florence, knew he was special when she married him in 1931. He was different from the boys she had met: "He had a new car...The others were walking!" Fields also had a small piece of land, which he had bought at the age of 14 with money he had saved since he went to work...at age 10!

With no father to raise him, Fields had to work instead of going to school. He earned \$7 a month plus board on a nearby Rawlings farm. "And I had to give my folks three of that!" he laughed.

But he was still able to "lay some down" and buy land. He was the first member of his family to ever do that. After 26 years on the Rawlings farm, he had enough saved to buy a 75 acre farm and a pair of mules. "The most money I ever owed was \$1,500. That's when I bought this place...and I paid for it in two years." To Field being in debt was being in slavery.

Looking around his farm you see a one story house, several outbuildings and a shed with a table full of tractors. "Everything you see here I built," he said proudly, easing onto the well cover where his daughter was washing greens from the garden. Arthritis has slowed his body, but not his smile: "Oh, yeah, I cleared a lot of land, too," he grinned.

As he planted and saved, Fields was able to buy more small farms. Now with his son to help, the land continues to provide a living for his family...and vegetables for his neighbors, who frequently come to his garden upon his invitation. "Whatever he has he shares," said his daughter.

"It's so peaceful here," she said. "And it's that way all the time. Birds singing...bright moon at night...nature...just right in the midst of it..." She had left home and gone to Marland to build a career with the YWCA. Like her father, she saved and when she retired, had enough to build a brick home on the acre of land her parents gave her.

She said her parents were always here for the children to come home to. "This would be our vacation and we'd do the same thing I'm doing now, jump right in and help on the farm...It's just a joy being here." The fields had five children. One son was killed in Vietnam

Fields applied the same principles he used as a farmer to grow children. "He will advise you but he will also give you the opportunity to do what you think is best," his daughter continued. That's the way a good farmer works. He prepares the soil, plants the seed, provides the nutrients, and then lets the plant grow.

But the light that makes children grow to their full potential is the shining example of the parents. And for the Field children, it was easy to grow straight.

"All of my strengths come from my mother and father," she said. "Seeing my Dad accomplish something with his limited education...I just felt the same way...and I started to save because I wanted a home."

It was good to stop at the Field's farm for awhile and watch the garden being harvested. It had been a perfect spring and the early vegetables were in abundance. Soon some neighbors would drop by...for at Lloyd Field's farm there was always a surplus.