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Remembering Everett Gross and Lee Morris

Everett Gross, NOU member since 1966, passed away on March 5, 2008, at the age of 88. Mildred, his wife of 65 years, preceded him in death by only a few months [see June 2007 *NBR*, p. 62]. Both were regular participants at the NOU spring and fall gatherings until about two years ago, when failing health began to keep them home.

Everett was born in Burwell and graduated from Ord High School at the age of 15. He earned a BS in education from Nebraska State Teacher's College in 1957, and masters degrees from UNL in physics (1960) and economics (1978).

He served in the Army Air Corps during WWII, being discharged as a 1st Lieutenant in 1944. Everett's varied jobs across his life included farming, television repair, air



Everett Gross

traffic control, bricklaying, and teaching. In the career he held for most of his life, he taught courses at in physics at Doane College in Crete.

Everett and Mildred raised three children, Daniel, Donna, and Damon, while teaching and continuing their own education.

Everett's interests and hobbies included music, woodworking, physics, and economic theories concerning poverty and taxation. He played several musical instruments, especially the flute and piccolo. A tinkerer and inventor, he was the architect of numerous challenging brain-teaser puzzles made with metal, wood, and rope. He was known to NOU members for his quiet sense of humor and could always be counted on for a joke or two.



Lee Morris

Lee Morris of Benedict was another loyal, longtime member of the NOU. Lee was 86 when he passed away on July 14, 2008. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, sons James, Steve (also an NOU member), and Tom, and daughter Linda. Lee was an NOU officer in the 1960s, and he and Shirley hosted the fall NOU meeting at Harlan Co. Reservoir in 1964.

Lee was a World War II Air Force veteran, but for most of his life he was a farmer. It was this occupation which allowed and encouraged him to observe birds on his farm in York County, as the following note dated May 2, 1961, shows:

"It has been so dry that most of our ponds are dried up so the shore birding hasn't been nearly as good as usual. Jim and I took a drive last Sunday to the Shickley ponds and saw quite a lot of things (including) an American (Great) Egret. We hadn't seen one before. It flew up and sat on a muskrat house while we watched. I also saw my first Yellow-crowned Night Heron last week. It was an adult in full plumage. I usually carry my binoculars while running the tractor in the spring and they really come in handy at times. Yesterday I saw eight birds light close by and they turned out to be (American) Golden-Plovers." (NBR Vol. 29 No 3 July 1961)

In the 1970s, Lee reported that he was seeing large numbers of Buff-breasted Sandpipers as he went about his spring field work. It had been known previously that "Buffies", cryptically-colored and preferring uplands rather than wetlands, stop over in the Eastern Rainwater Basin of Nebraska during migration, but until this time, researchers had no idea how pivotal the area was for this species. Thanks to Lee's careful observations and reporting, studies were initiated, and it was eventually determined that nearly the entire population of Buffies visit Nebraska each spring.