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Friends of the Maxwell Arboretum Tree Planting

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Friends of the Maxwell Arboretum Tree Planting
Friday, April 27, 2007
John C. Owens
NU Vice President and IANR Harlan Vice Chancellor

"Each generation takes the earth" as trustees," J.

Sterling Morton, founder of Arbor Day, once said, adding,

"We ought to bequeath to posterity as many forests and
orchards as we have exhausted and consumed."

As for me, I'm all for bequeathing posterity "a few more"
than those we've exhausted and consumed – to provide just
a little breathing room in the tree department. I'm pretty
sure Cyril Bish, in whose memory we plant this tree today,
would have agreed with me.

Cyril's passion for trees – his knowledge of and his
interest in nut trees -- has benefited nutgrowers in ways
that long will be remembered in Nebraska and beyond.

For 35 years Cyril served Nebraska as an extension
agent – we now call faculty with the vital job of carrying the
research developed here out to the citizens of our state to
teach them how to put that new knowledge to work

extension educators. Cyril served in Lancaster, Hamilton, and Adams counties. He retired in the late 1970s – at least, he retired from that job.

Sometimes when people leave a job we say they “left to pursue other interests.” We are all the richer today because of the other interests Cyril Bish[^] pursued[^] after his retirement from his extension position. He had a wonderful and profound interest in trees. Nut trees. After his retirement, he became an active volunteer for the Nebraska Nut Growers Association and the Northern Nut Growers Association. He served as president of both groups. He helped create hybrid nut trees and black walnuts with large kernels. We named the nut-tree orchard here on East Campus after him, in recognition of his important and valuable work.

We have the Cyril Bish Professorship in horticulture on this campus because of the wonderfully generous gift Cyril and his wife LaVerne gave the NU Foundation to fund a professorship to strengthen the UNL agronomy and —

horticulture department's research and instruction.

Professor Terry Riordan, an accomplished scientist and dedicated teacher, holds that professorship, and does credit to it. In that way, also, Cyril's work carries on.

We in the Institute recently received a study of our work conducted by an independent organization that found the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources conservatively returns \$15 for each one tax dollar the state invests with us. Returning a good investment for our state is a long-established precedent for the Institute. It is people like Cyril Bish, retired extension educator, ~~professor~~ professor emeritus of agronomy, strong supporter of the Graduate Research Fund enabling graduate students to do research on northern nut-producing plans, man of vision, friend, and colleague to so many, who grew and strengthened that heritage throughout their lives.

Many of us here in the Institute, in cooperation with Nebraska green industry organizations and associations, are beginning a comprehensive statewide tree planting initiative

called ReTree Nebraska. It aims to raise public awareness of trees' value, to reverse the decline of Nebraska's community tree resource, and to improve the diversity and sustainability of trees in communities across the state for generations to come. We hope to see one million new community trees properly planted and maintained in the next 10 years – trees that are high quality, large growing, and long-lived. I know Cyril would have liked ReTree Nebraska a lot.

A woman named Lucy Larcom once said, and I quote, "He who plants a tree plants a hope." It is an honor today to plant this tree – and to plant a hope – in Cyril Bish's memory. Thank you.