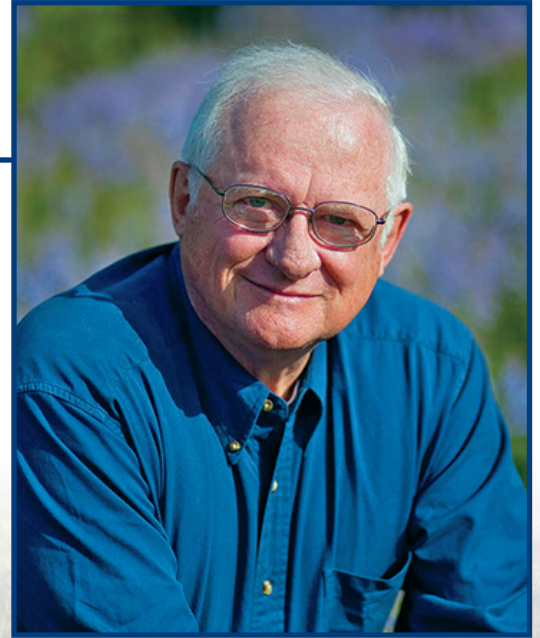


An Interview

with

Jerry Apps



Old Farm A HISTORY



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Wisconsin Historical Society Press How has the landscape of Waushara County, where you grew up and continue to spend much of your time, shaped your personality? How has it shaped your writing?

Growing up on a Waushara County sand farm profoundly influenced me. As a farm kid, I am sure I wasn't aware at the time, but I was developing a relationship to the land that can only be acquired by following the seasons of a farming year—planting in spring, cultivating and hoeing in summer, harvesting in fall,

and preparing for the next season in winter. A cycle of life, repeated and the same each year, repeated and always different each year. I learned some important lessons: patience, moving past disappointment, believing in hard work, hope (next year will be better), helping others, never bragging, standing up for what you believe, staying open to surprise, always trying to do better, doing the best you can with what you have—those sorts of things. Interestingly, those values and beliefs have served me well in my writing.



WHS Press *Old Farm* is your most personal book. How did the writing experience differ from that of your other work?

Several of my books are quite personal, *Old Farm* is just more so. In *Old Farm* I've included many personal things about my immediate family, my wife, and my three kids. I've shared several of the children's adventures at the farm when they were little guys, sleeping in a ratty old tent, helping me with the garden,

enjoying the pond. I even have a few tales about my grandchildren as they became acquainted with the place.

Also, I share some of my feelings about solitude, about the need to care for the land, along with some of my environmental perspectives which combine the practical with the philosophical. For instance, I enjoy the sunrises and sunsets, my hikes along my several trails. But I also harvest and sell timber and pulpwood.





WHS Press In your introduction you refer to *Old Farm* as a story. In what ways does a piece of land tell a story? Who are the characters in this story?

Every piece of land, small or large, has a story to tell. Of how it was shaped and formed and became what it is through various geological forces, how it continued to be changed, for better or worse by the people who lived on it, walked over it, farmed it, and raised families on it.

The land itself is the main character

in my story. Other characters include the weather and the seasons, the wild animals, birds, wildflowers, and trees. And of course, the pond and the valley where it resides.

The people characters interact with the land characters—the American Indians first, then the early settlers starting with Tom Stewart and followed by a parade of land owners and renters, most of whom failed at farming. Then my family appears in the mid-1960s, four generations now, my parents, my wife and me, my three children, and their children.



WHS Press *Old Farm* features the photography of your son Steve. How does it feel having both your names on the cover of this book?

Steve has progressed far in his career. He's made a name for himself nationally as a

professional photographer. In 2008 he was named National Sports Photographer of the year by the Football Hall of Fame. I'm proud to have his name on the cover, and more than pleased to have his photos throughout the book. We've teamed up on several projects over the years, this one the most extensive.

