

July 2005 - Honoring the Life of Ina Mae Selfridge

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Given on the Floor of the U.S. House of Representatives

by Congressman Jerry Moran

July 20, 2005

The Speaker recognizes Mr. MORAN of Kansas:

This evening I rise to recognize and celebrate the life of a constituent and friend, Ina Mae Selfridge. Ina passed away suddenly on Sunday, July 17, at the age of 76. Her death is a tremendous loss to her family, her community and to the many individuals who were fortunate enough to call her a friend.

Probably the greatest compliment I could give Ina is that she was a great farm girl. In truth, she embodied much of what is good and decent about the family farm and the way of life we enjoy in Kansas. Ina is one of those people you meet and you think to yourself, I am in the presence of an extraordinary human being.

I have known Ina through her many years of service to the organization Women Involved in Farm Economics, otherwise known as WIFE. Most recently, Ina was the national president of WIFE and has served in this position for the past two years. Ina was also the state president and member of the Gold Waves Chapter 76 of WIFE located in central and southwest Kansas.

It would not be fitting to talk about Ina and not bring up the ideals and accomplishments of WIFE. Ina truly cared about agriculture and about rural communities. On her many visits to Washington over the years, Ina joined other WIFE leaders to advocate on behalf of the family farm. From health care to energy policy to emergency drought assistance, Ina knew what was going on in farm country because she lived it each and every day.

In fact, Ina's trips to D.C. were usually scheduled so they would not interfere with harvest. In written testimony she gave in 2003 on credit availability in rural areas, she wrote that she would have preferred to be here in person, but it was wheat harvest and "all hands are on deck for the entire family." Indeed, Ina was an integral part of her family farm, even at age 76.

Ina farmed in true partnership with her husband Elmer, and several of her sons. Their farm in eastern Hodgeman County included wheat, forages and grains for their 1,000-head feedlot. She is survived by her husband; her four sons, Randy, Tyler, Brad, and Wade; and nine grandchildren.

Ina would want me to use part of this time to talk about agriculture. Today I wear a domino on my lapel that she gave to me. It represents WIFE's theme that agriculture has a domino effect on America. Like dominos standing next to each other, when the farmer suffers economic loss, so do local businesses, schools, communities, churches and local government. Today, however, I wear the domino to show how Ina's life had a positive domino effect on the many lives of everyone who came in contact with her.

Ina had an enthusiasm that few possess. You could not be around Ina and not feel a sense of excitement about what the future might hold. The pioneer spirit of optimism and hard work that established farms across Kansas was alive and strong in Ina. An insight into the life she lived can be derived from her email address, which was simply "happy." However, this is not to say there were not hardships on the farm. Many parts of Kansas are just now recovering from five years of drought, but Ina's can-do personality is an inspiration to us all.

The last time she was in my office she said, "I may not be the WIFE president next year, but I will be back again to remind you about the importance of agriculture." Today I bet she would say, "Time to get back to work. The wheat harvest is in, but we must get ready for the fall crops."

Our thoughts and prayers go out to Ina's family in this time of difficulty with the knowledge that their loss on Earth is God's gain in heaven. It is my absolute privilege to have known Ina. The world is a better place because of her, and she will be greatly missed.