



Herald & Review photos/Jim Bowling

Three generations of Noland family farmers are pictured here including, from left, Blake Noland, Grant Noland, Duane Noland, Dennis Noland, Erma Noland and Neil Noland.

# Roots run deep

## For generations, the Noland family has worked the land

By **BOB FALLSTROM**  
H&R Community News Editor

**B**LUE MOUND — Neil Noland has been a farmer since he was a boy. At age 83, he's still at it.

He took time out to graduate from the University of Illinois with a degree in agriculture. He then returned to work with his father, Charles.

"My grandfather, Sam, lived to be 101," Noland said as he mowed down rows of corn with a combine two miles west of Blue Mound. "Maybe I'll do the same."

He's the director of Noland Farms Inc., a family enterprise consisting of his sons, Dennis and Duane, and grandsons, Grant and Blake.

Dennis Noland, 49, is the company president. Grant Noland, 27, is the treasurer. Involved in the planting and current harvesting is Duane Noland, the company secretary, a former Illinois state legislator and now president and CEO of the Association of Illinois Electric Cooperatives. Blake Noland, 24, works full time on the farm. Grant and Blake are Duane's sons. Neil's oldest son, David Noland, helped out on the farm until he died in 2007.

The Noland corn and soybean holdings, about 3,000 acres, date from 1833 and will soon reach the 150-year milestone.

"I'm fortunate to have boys interested in farming," Neil Noland said. "They do whatever

needs to be done. Dennis, the youngest son, is the mechanical one. Grant does the financial stuff. And don't forget my wife, Erma. We've been married 61 years." The Noland's daughter, Dianne, has a gardening show on WILL-TV.

Dennis Noland said: "I would be hard-pressed to identify a more exciting industry." He is dedicated to continuous learning and has been to Brazil to check on soybean farming.

"I'll keep on farming, although this is a disappointing year," Neil Noland said as the combine kept clipping the corn rows. "We usually get about 200 bushels of corn an acre. This time it's 132 to 133. Too much water in the spring, then too hot. It's valleys and peaks in farming, I've had some good years in the past."

The combine Noland is driving 5 mph is a technological marvel, steering itself while compiling all sorts of pertinent information on global positioning satellites (GPS). After the corn harvest comes the soybean harvest, finishing up late this month. Then Neil and Erma will head to Bradenton, Fla., for the winter. Farming and piloting an airplane have been his life-long passions.

The farm will be in good hands. Dennis grew up with a wrench and screwdriver in his hand. He has a degree in farm machinery technology from Spoon River College in 1982. He and his wife, Dani, enjoy vacation rides on their Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and he also is an airplane pilot.

"I drove a tractor when I was a boy," Dennis Noland said. "I didn't enjoy combining until air conditioning was added."

Grant explains: "This is my third year of farming. I worked as a commodity trader and

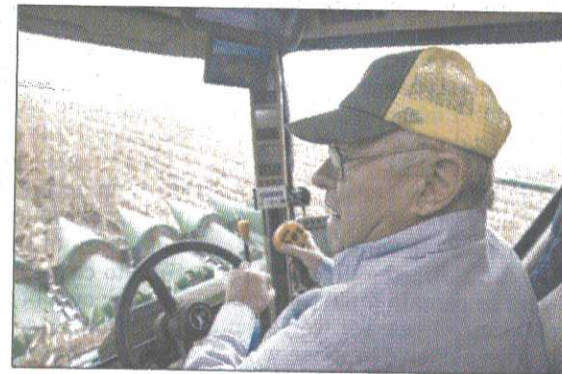
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— Neil Noland, 83



83 year-old Neil Noland maneuvers a combine while harvesting corn in a field in Blue Mound.



Neil Noland is a sixth generation farmer who has been farming for 60 years.

elevator manager for ADM at Mound City, Beech Grove, Ind., Curran and Mount Auburn. I found out that the farming business is just as complex as the grain business." He and his wife, Logan, are remodeling a 100-year-old farmhouse five miles northwest of Blue Mound.

The Noland's excel at progressive farming.

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