



By Carolyn Lee
The Imperial Republican

When Vilas Smith's family got together for harvest this year, they were doing more than picking corn. They were celebrating four generations involved in the harvest on land held by the family for about 200 years.

Smith said actually two more generations should be recognized. His grandfather, Henry Bressie, homesteaded on the South Divide in the early 1800s, and some of that land is still farmed by the Smiths.

Other land was acquired southeast of Enders, and in the Champion Valley.

Smith's father, Bryan Smith, moved his family to land north of Enders, where Smith, 87 next month, resided from 1929-1952. He then moved to his present location near Champion.

The Smiths, including son Lloyd, grandson Nick and great-grandson Allan, 12, farm corn, wheat and soybeans.

They began picking high moisture corn Sept. 29, then laid off for three weeks to wait for the corn to dry down.

The Smiths completed harvest Dec. 3. Lloyd's wife Rhonda drove a semi to transport corn.

Vilas Smith began farming when he was 10 years old, helping his father and a hired man. He drove a four-horse cultivator. "I can still hear those horses clopping," he laughed.

When he first began harvesting corn, horses were still used. Then tractors came into play.

Smith remembers the steamer and thrasher used for harvesting wheat. It took a lot of time to cut wheat.

He also remembers the corn pickers attached to a tractor or pulled behind one. The corn was harvested on the ear, then stored in a rick. It was scooped by hand into a sheller to remove the kernels from the cob.

The big difference these days, Smith said, is the machinery.

Most of the Smiths' crops are irrigated by pivot, with just a little gravity irrigated.

Smith said he first installed gravity irrigation on the Champion Valley land, using siphon tubes connected to ditch water. Gated irrigation pipes followed, and then sprinkler pivots.

What does Smith like most about harvest? "Putting the corn in that wagon!"