



Our author (with Grandpa Rice in 1968) traces her love of agriculture to six generations of family farmers.

# I'm Part Farmer

People ask why I'm so passionate about farming.

I finally figured it out. By Rhonda Ross, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA

I travel to fairs and farm and ranch expos all around the country putting on the Ag Magic Show, in which the "magic" words are always, "Thank a farmer!"

Ever since I started doing this, people have asked me why I'm so passionate about agriculture. I come from a farming family, but I don't personally farm. I didn't even grow up on a farm. So most folks have a hard time understanding my obsession for educating the public about farmers.

And I have to admit I struggled to explain why it's so important to me. Then last fall when I was performing at the River City Roundup/Ak-Sar-Ben in Omaha, Nebraska, it all became very clear.

After one of my programs, a little girl about 6 years old ran up to me and proudly announced, "I'm part farmer!"

"Oh?" I replied, "What part is that?"

"My grandpa is a farmer!"

All the adults who were listening got a big kick out of that, but I totally understood what she meant.

When I attended Iowa State University in the 1980s, I saw the farm crisis up close in

the eyes of my fellow students and their families. It was a personal devastation I will never forget. Many of the town students would say, "Oh, they'll find another job."

I tried to explain that farming isn't a job to most farmers. Farmers don't farm for the same reasons most people take jobs. Farmers farm because it's who they are. Farming is about love of the land and everything that comes with it. Farming is a 24/7 commitment and a risk they share with God.

As farms continue to consolidate, each new generation of Americans has fewer direct ties to the land. And educating the public becomes absolutely crucial.

I come from a six-generation farming family. Even though I don't till the soil, I'm a farmer in my soul. I feel my commitment to explaining the importance of agriculture 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. I don't care how difficult it is, how many miles I have to travel or even how much money I make.

So, when people ask me today why I'm so passionate about promoting agriculture, I answer just like that little girl in Omaha. "I'm part farmer!"

