

But Hoover remembers thinking that Munsen would not stay in Marion. When the young coach ranted and raved, there was something extra in those eyes.

"He was truly enthusiastic about basketball," recalls Hoover, who remains Parker's athletic director. "And I figured he didn't want to stay at a small school. But I don't think Gary knew exactly what he wanted at that time."

After three seasons, the decision was made for him. A school board member, unhappy with his son's playing time, pushed through an unpleasant ultimatum.

"They basically said, 'Do it this way or you'll be the assistant coach,'" says Munsen. "A lot of people in the community wanted me to stay, but that really wasn't much of a choice."

MOVING TO MITCHELL

Whether classified as a resignation or a firing, Munsen's departure was basically a beginning.

In 1969, he was hired to teach business at Mitchell's middle school—which included ninth-grade coaching duties in basketball, football and track.

He also served as an assistant to varsity basketball coach Tim Fisk, whom he met during a brief stay at Wesleyan in 1961.

"The tough part was getting the people in Mitchell to hire him after what had happened in Marion," says fellow White Lake native Jerry Miller, who was Mitchell's wrestling coach at the time.

"But once he started coaching, Gary was destined to be a good one. He's got a real knack."

When Fish left coaching in 1972, Munsen inherited the program. That first season, the Kernels introduced their new coach to what would become familiar territory.

"I had never been to the state tournament—and we got there," says Munsen, whose 18-7 team took third and watched Huron beat Yankton in the finals.

"The kids we had that year really played above their level of capability. Our biggest kid was 6-foot-4 and we had a 5-5 guard, but somehow we found a way."

Still, Munsen did not enjoy sudden success at the state level. Yankton had some powerful teams, and getting past the semi-final round became a constant struggle.

"It wasn't all roses during the first seven or eight years," says Munsen, who saw championship-caliber teams stumble at the 1976 and '78 tournaments.

"We had some tough times where it seemed like we couldn't get over the hump. I don't know if my job was ever in jeopardy, but maybe people were saying we couldn't win the big one. I was given a good chance to succeed, though, and I hung in there."

TIME FOR SUCCESS

Munsen finally broke through in 1984, when all-state guard Kyle Adams led the Kernels past Washington 54-48 for the school's first title in 20 years.

"We were so thankful to finally get there that we made the most of the opportunity," says Scott Munsen, who was a backup point guard on that team. "I think (Munsen) felt like if he stuck it out long enough, something good was going to happen."

Once Munsen had conquered the state tournament, his appetite for victory became voracious.

The Kernels, sparked by Bart Friedrich and Chad Andersen, went 27-0 the next season to forge their reputation as a perennial postseason power.

When Mitchell rose again in 1986—the first year of the three-class system—it became the first South Dakota school to win three straight boys basketball titles since 1924.

"Maybe it's easier to get to the state tournament now, but it's not always easy to win

it," says Munsen, who rose again with a dramatic double-overtime win over Lincoln in 1990 and added titles in '91 and '94.

"We always talk about getting back to the tournament and trying to finish higher than the year before. If we won it the previous year, we talk about doing it again."

Munsen calls tournament time "the most exciting part of the game," and he speaks from experience. His Mitchell teams—boys and girls—have reached the postseason party 25 times.

His boys teams have compiled a 37-17 record in 18 state tournaments and have finished lower than fifth only twice.

"There's something unique about what happens to Gary's teams at tournament time," says Miller, now the athletic director at Roosevelt.

"And it doesn't happen by accident. It's got to be a mental edge at that point, and what he does to get those kids ready is really something."

HANGING TOUGH

As magnificent as Munsen the coach has been, his mystique has been marred by the real-life struggles of Munsen the man.

His father, Charles, died of cancer in 1987. And his first wife, Cheri, was diagnosed with the same illness in 1989.

All the hard work in the world couldn't erase that reality, so Munsen looked to escape.

"That's when the drinking became heavy," he told the Argus Leader in December 1991. "I had some struggling moments, some tough times. I knew it was a problem, but I just wasn't able to cope."

In the fall of 1990, Munsen underwent a month-long alcohol rehabilitation in Aberdeen. He was separated from Cheri when she passed away in 1991.

"I didn't handle that very well," says Munsen, whose youngest son, Sam, is a Mitchell freshman. "But it's over and done with. I never, ever lost focus of the program during that time."

But problems with his second wife, Pam, also arose. Munsen was arrested for misdemeanor assault Oct. 3, 1994, after she accused him of striking her and knocking her to the floor.

Daivison County State's Attorney Doug Papandick dropped the charge on the condition that Munsen seek counseling, and the couple has reconciled.

Though this side of Munsen's reputation has been wasted by weakness, a person without strength could never have survived. Even those with frailties can fight, and sometimes they even win.

In the very near future, Munsen will win for the 500th time and solidify his status as one of the finest coaches in the history of South Dakota basketball.

It is a status that has grown sturdy through the years, so sturdy that restless rumors and rival reputations cannot possibly steal it away. Munsen knows how sturdy the vision of victory can be. He couldn't even destroy it himself.

"He is a strong person," says Scott Munsen. "Whenever he has struggles, he becomes convinced that you have to believe in yourself and become more committed to what you're doing."

Until retirement comes, Munsen will commit to the cause that has defined his existence over the past 30 years. After a while, you become accustomed to carrying on.

"When someone has a bumpy road but still hangs in there, that's a pretty good quality," says Jerry Miller.

"Maybe only a guy from White Lake, South Dakota, could do that. When you've been in a small town and lived through some trials and tribulations, you learn how to bite the bullet. You learn to hang in there."

SOUTH DAKOTA: SPORTSMAN'S SANCTUARY

Mr. PRESSLER. Mr. President, When I was growing up on a farm in Humboldt, SD, I knew and participated in one of my home State's best kept secrets: hunting. Almost every year I have returned to my State to hunt pheasants in the fall. I did so again, with great success, just last fall. South Dakota is a sportsman's sanctuary, a heaven on earth. It's becoming less and less a secret. Hunting-related tourism has boomed in my State. People from around the world travel hundreds—even thousands—of miles to experience a special piece of South Dakota. The tourism industry has become an integral part of South Dakota's continued prosperity and economic growth.

I have many fond memories of growing up in South Dakota. A recent article in the Wall Street Journal articulated many of the sentiments I feel about South Dakota hunting. Sun-filled, crisp blue skies; fields thick with pheasants—indeed, South Dakota is filled with many such days of splendor. I encourage my colleagues and all Americans to share in this unique South Dakota experience. I extend a warm invitation to visit my State.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the full text of the Wall Street Journal article, "Where Pheasants Swarm as Thick as Locusts," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the text of the article was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

WHERE PHEASANTS SWARM AS THICK AS LOCUSTS

(By Michael Pearce)

GETTYSBURG, SD.—A half-dozen gunners and a pair of dogs, we quietly eased into a grassy field that was the picture of prairie tranquility. During the first few minutes signs of life were rare, save the occasional flushing meadowlark and the lone redtail hawk that rode the same gentle wind that pushed rippling waves across the grass and rattled the skeletal remains of wild sunflowers.

But the serenity vanished one-third of the way through the field when a gaudy rooster pheasant flushed inches in front of a pouncing golden retriever. And within seconds pheasants were rising like popping corn; first one, then another, followed by a pair, another single and then a trio. Throughout the rest of the hike pheasants rose in numbers that rivaled swarms of locusts of biblical proportions.

The result was a pleasant pandemonium. Hunters fumbled to reload as rooster after rooster lifted skyward, towing tails as long as their brilliantly plumed bodies. There were countless shotgun fusillades, shouts of "good shot," "rooster coming your way" and "hen, don't shoot" amid the roar of beating wings.

Though no exact count was taken, estimates of pheasants flushed from the field ranged from 200 to 400. Days, weeks and months after the final flush of the one-hour hunt the gunners would use every superlative imaginable as they vainly tried to describe the experience to family and friends. But to a true wingshooting aficionado they only needed to say "a good day in South Dakota."

First introduced in the waning years of the last century, the varicolored Asian imports

have thrived in this state, creating an autumn tradition as popular as gridiron rivalries and the World Series for many. Long-time locals still talk of Depression-era days when they flushed rising clouds of ringnecks from weed patches to feed their families through the long winter ahead. It was about the same time affluent sportsmen from around the world began coming to the prairies to experience the incredible sport.

But as with much of America's wildlife, South Dakota's pheasant population has risen and fallen at the whims of Mother Nature. Worse yet, it suffered at the hands of modern agriculture, which steadily replaced needed nesting and winter cover with sprawling inland seas of corn and wheat. But the tide has turned. South Dakota's pheasant hunting has been nothing short of phenomenal lately.

"Thanks to several things—mild winters, the cover of the Conservation Reserve Program, and private habitat programs—our pheasant population has been incredible the last few years," said Paul Nelson, president of Paul Nelson Farm, the Gettysburg outfitter who hosted the hunters mentioned above. "Most of our guests have simply never seen anything like it, or compare it to the glory days of the 1950s. It's not uncommon for our guests to flush 200 pheasants from just one field."

Not surprisingly, the mind-boggling bird numbers have again brought sportsmen from around the world to the place where pheasants outnumber people many, many times over. "Pheasant hunting is really, really big in South Dakota. People come from all over the world," said Mark Kayser, outdoor promotions manager, South Dakota Department of Tourism. "We estimate we had 100,000 hunters afield on opening day. A lot of them have been coming for years. It's like a homecoming for them."

According to Mr. Kayser, the visiting hunters come from all walks of life. Air strips are lined with private jets, and parking lots hold everything from new Suburbans to rusted old pickup campers that seem to spew low-income sportsmen like clowns from a tiny circus car.

But no matter how they arrive, the visiting sportsmen are spending much-needed money in pursuit of South Dakota's state bird. "Our Game, Fish and Parks Department estimated that pheasant hunting adds about \$55 million to the South Dakota economy," said Mr. Kayser, a lifelong resident and avid sportsman. "Some think that's on the conservative side. But there's no question that it's very big for a lot of small-town economies that are otherwise just dependent on agriculture."

So it appeared during a recent trek through the central part of the state. Every convenience store held a full selection of ammo, orange hats, gloves and licenses. Signs advertising church-sponsored dinners and bird-cleaning services were as common as mile markers on some highways.

Accommodations ranged from tents, back bedrooms in the homes of landowners who allow hunters to roam their land and bunk for a nominal fee. In recent years a number of businesses have blossomed that cater to sportsmen who want the *creme de la creme* of wingshooting action and worldly accommodations, such as Mr. Nelson's legendary establishment.

Picked up in a nearby Pierre, guests are taken along a back-road maze that soon places them at the huge lodge that features a country opulence and is rated among the best in the nation. Served by a hand-picked staff from across the state, Mr. Nelson's guests feast on five-star cuisine as they talk business or simply relax.

But there is no time for total relaxation when taken afield by Mr. Nelson's guides and

dogs. Proof that agriculture and wildlife can coexist, Paul Nelson Farm's thousands of acres spew birds like bees from a shaken hive. The wingshooting is indeed so good that Mr. Nelson had to seek special regulation that allows gunners to take more than the state-regulated three-bird-per-day limit.

Still, the action is hot enough that most guests are back at the lodge by late afternoon, where they can bang a round of sporting clays or simply sit quietly on a balcony, favored drink in hand as they watch scores of gaudy cockbirds sail into a small sanctuary just yards from the lodge. Mr. Nelson reports that few who depart fail to leave a deposit for another all-inclusive hunt, which will cost around \$2,000 for three days.

After a morning at Mr. Nelson's, I joined Bob Tinker, of Tinker Kennels, near his home in Pierre. Walking upland prairie pastures toward endless horizons, we followed his stylish English setters as they found, pointed and retrieved prairie chickens and sharptail grouse.

The next morning I traded walking boots for waders and made a predawn trudge into a marsh that actually smelled of ducks with Mike Moody, a guide from Herrick. The first flock of mallards that passed over our decoys was easily 100 yards from first duck to last. Never were there not ducks in the air. Totally addicted, I was with Mr. Moody the following morning for another incredible day. At one point some 200 beautiful mallards landed amid our decoys, like leaves cascading from an autumn maple.

As we walked from the marsh at mid-morning, bags of decoys on our backs and limits of tasty ducks in our hands, I learned the best duck hunt of my life could be just the beginning. "A lot of times we'll take our ducks, then walk the C.R.P. [Conservation Reserve Program grasses] for pheasants in the afternoon," said Mr. Moody. "And if the geese are in and you fill out on pheasants in time, you could even . . ."

HONORING THE JACKSON'S FOR CELEBRATING THEIR 50TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, these are trying times for the family in America. Unfortunately, too many broken homes have become part of our national culture. It is tragic that nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce. The effects of divorce on families and particularly the children of broken families are devastating. In such an era, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of "til death us do part" seriously and have successfully demonstrated the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity, to build a strong family. These qualities make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor Woodrow and Billie Dove Jackson who on February 23 celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. The Jackson's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized. I wish them and their family all the best as they celebrate this substantial marker on their journey together.

HONORING THE LETTMAN'S FOR CELEBRATING THEIR 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. ASHCROFT. Mr. President, these are trying times for the family in America. Unfortunately, too many broken homes have become part of our national culture. It is tragic that nearly half of all couples married today will see their union dissolve into divorce. The effects of divorce on families and particularly the children of broken families are devastating. In such an era, I believe it is both instructive and important to honor those who have taken the commitment of "til death us do part" seriously and have successfully demonstrated the timeless principles of love, honor, and fidelity, to build a strong family. These qualities make our country strong.

For these important reasons, I rise today to honor William and Stella Lettman who on February 14 celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. My wife, Janet, and I look forward to the day we can celebrate a similar milestone. The Lettman's commitment to the principles and values of their marriage deserves to be saluted and recognized. I wish them and their family all the best as they celebrate this substantial marker on their journey together.

IT FINALLY HAPPENED: FEDERAL DEBT BURDEN EXCEEDS \$5 TRILLION

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, on January 8, 1835, in the 58th year of our Republic, a distinguished native of North Carolina, Andrew Jackson, hosted a banquet to celebrate the Nation's deliverance from economic bondage. The national debt had been paid. There was cause for great celebration, because the payment of the national debt was considered to be a triumph of republican government.

President Jackson delivered the following toast: "The Payment of the Public Debt—Let us commemorate it as an event which gives us increased power as a nation, and reflects luster on our Federal Union, of whose justice, fidelity and wisdom it is a glorious illustration."

Fast-forward 161 years, Mr. President: Today it is my sad duty to report that on this past Friday, February 23, 1996, the Federal debt passed the \$5 trillion mark—a new world record. Never before in history had a nation encumbered itself with a debt so enormous.

The sheer arithmetic of the Federal debt is so immense that it boggles the mind. Consider these figures: As of the close of business this past Friday, February 23, 1996, the Federal debt stood at \$5,017,056,630,040.53.

Let me run that by once more a bit more slowly—5 trillion, 17 billion, 56 million, 630 thousand, 40 dollars and 53 cents. The enormity becomes more clearly in focus when one bears in mind