By NEVA NESTOR

John Schaeffer, Erie County Commissioner, and a past member of the Erie Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors for 12 years, was honored December 13 at the District's 24th annual meeting as their "Cooperator of the Year."

Schaeffer and his wife, Alvina, who live one mile west of North Monroeville on S.R. 113, have 3 sons and one daughter.

THEIR OLDEST son, Bill, lives next door to them and helps with the farming.

Karen, their only daughter, is married. She and her husband own and operate the Buck Creek Farm Nursery in Clyde.

Dan, their second-oldest son, is married. He and his wife have a daughter, which makes the John Schaeffers grandparents, they proudly note.

Kevin, their youngest son, is a senior at Bellevue High School.

THE SCHAEFFERS farm about 550 acres of corn, soybeans, sugar beets, wheat, and oats. Up until 1961, the Schaeffers also milked cows on a rented farm.

Schaeffer, this past year, has been kept very busy as an Erie County Commissioner. The two county commission meetings that the commissioners attend only represent a small portion of the time involved.

Schaeffer estimated that he spends 80% of his time working as a commissioner. He averages three days a week away from his farming, and they usually are the three nicest days in the week weather-wise.

SCHAEFFER SAID that he originally became interested in becoming a commissioner after he had served on the Erie Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Supervisors. This gave him the desire to do more to help Erie County physically.

Schaeffer's "pet" project is the ditch maintenance program. Adequate drainage, he notes, should be every landuser's first priority. Without adequate drainage, land is never in its best condition.

Schaeffer cites the English respect for their land as an ideal. In England, the Schaeffers noticed when they

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JOHN SCHAEFFER STANDING ON THE BANK OF A DITCH ON HIS FARM
This ditch, dug over two years ago, has never been mowed. Spraying was the only form of weed control used. Trees were pelleted if they sprang up. Schaeffer also observed that wildlife in the ditch is abundant.

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a landowner misuses his land, visited there two years ago, if he is taken to court and ordered to either correct the abuse or sell the land to someone who will take care of it. There are virtually no bad ditches in England.

BOB MAURER, chairman of the District Board of Supervisors and a member of the committee that picked Schaeffer, offered two of the many reasons why Schaeffer was chosen as the Erie District Cooperator of the Year. (The decision is based on a specific number of items, each item worth so many possible points).

Schaeffer, Maurer stated, "has a deep concern for adequate drainage and for the county ditch maintenance program. He has done a lot of work on his own farm, as well as with the county program."

One conservation point that Schaeffer always stresses is the fact that trees in a ditch are not desirable. Trees prevent the grass from growing and then they lose their leaves. This leaves the land exposed and causes erosion in the winter.

Grass, Schaeffer added, also promotes many ground species of wildlife. It does not harm the wildlife population. Trees are only advantageous on the top of ditch banks, not in them.

One of Schaeffer's goals for the future is to build a livestock barn.

Schaeffer's hobbies include collecting odds and ends, antiques, and paintings. Schaeffer and his wife also enjoy traveling and would like to do more of it.