

## Houses of Bales

By Karen Ann Bland, Gove, Kansas

I KNOW that there was a time when farmers made sheds out of loose straw stuffed between fence wire. But my husband, Boyd, and I came across a more modern application of straw in construction.

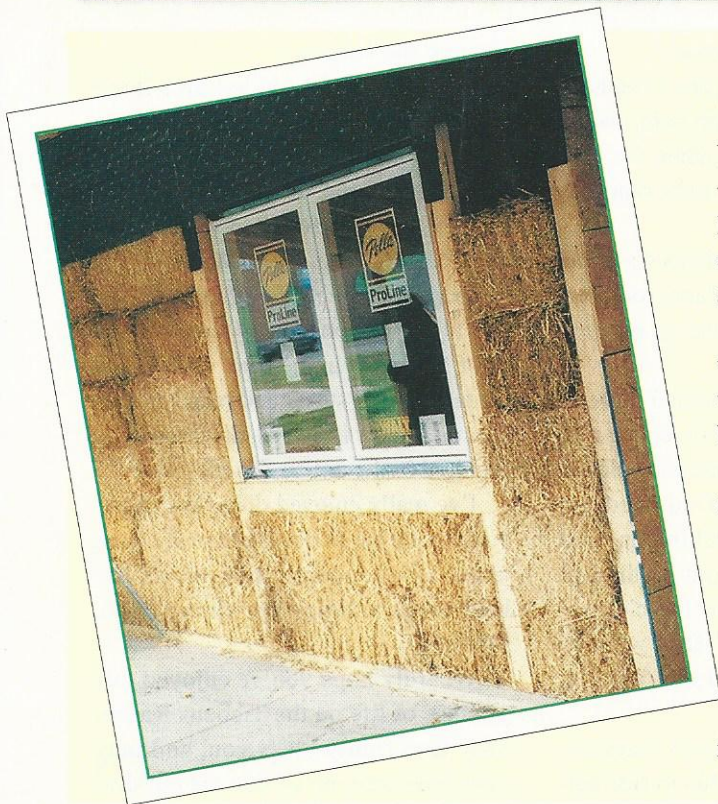
As farmers, ranchers and custom harvesters, Boyd and I are always interested in innovation. When we were in Wilson, Kansas, we came across a development called Czech Cottages. It is being built as affordable housing for seniors.

Each house has walls constructed of rectangular wheat straw bales (left). The builder, David Criswell, says they are the only such houses in the country. The bales are supposedly not only extremely energy efficient, they are inexpensive and block out noise.

They are also a renewable resource, of course.

The outside of the cottages receive three coats of stucco, the last being the greenish-yellow color of the area's limestone.

Boyd and I wondered whether anyone knew of other interesting ways in which straw is—or has been—used.



### SCHOOL'S OUT They Got Time Off For Farm Work

Over the past year or so, folks have been writing in to tell how schools they went to sometimes let students out to do farmwork. Says **Edward "Jack" Deckerd** of Perryville, Missouri: "Back in the '50s, my cousins got 2

weeks off in the fall to pick cotton. They lived in the Boot Heel of Missouri. I was jealous—but then I didn't realize how hard cotton picking was."

**Frank Kochendorfer** of Portland, Oregon writes that when he was a teenager living on a farm 16 miles northwest of Yakima, Wash-

ington, his school gave students 2 weeks off in the fall to work in the apple harvest. Frank says this was between '38 and '41.

### TWIN CALVES Similar Markings

I've noticed the stories recently about farm animals having twins. I had a heifer

that gave birth to twins 3 years in a row. All 3 years, the twins were a bull and a heifer. Each time, their markings were almost identical (bottom left). They sure were pretty calves, and the heifer was a good mother.

—**Erik Markegard**  
*Flying M Cattle Company*  
*Woodside, California*

### REIN HOLDER A Way to Keep the Lines from Falling

A couple issues back, **Clyde Miles** of Martin, Tennessee asked if anyone knew what the wooden figure-eight on the front of a two-horse wagon was called. Those who answered agreed that the item was used for holding the reins, or lines, from a team. But several readers knew of different designs

