

Hazel Grange's passion undiminished at 91

State Journal 8-5-96

By Jeremiah Gardner

Associated Press

LANGDON, N.D. — Hazel Grange has held conversations with a crane, taken walks with a fox, even scolded a skunk.

She loves animals. "To me, they're something like people, only better," she says.

At 91, Grange lives in a nursing home, where she hoards bread crumbs to feed the birds. Nurses chuckle at her dry sense of humor — it's hipper than most. They smile at her jovial spirit.

Recently, the talk of Maple Manor turned to Grange's new book, "Live Arrival Guaranteed: A Sandhill Memoir."

"It's really interesting," says Joyce Jones, the home's director of nursing. "It's not every day you have a person in a nursing home writing a book."

Except, Hazel Grange is more than just a bird-lover who might appear eccentric to strangers.

Grange kept a journal for 14 years, beginning in 1932, while she and her husband, Wallace, lived on wildlife farms in Wisconsin. Her memoir, published in June by Lost River Press of Boulder Junction, Wis., recounts the struggles and rewards of establishing wildlife sanctuaries on dry "wasteland" during the Great

Depression.

Grange's book is richly layered, says Wisconsin outdoor writer Don Johnson, who wrote the introduction. "It's a story about a partnership between a man and a woman that surmounted all kinds of obstacles."

"It's a love story," Johnson adds.

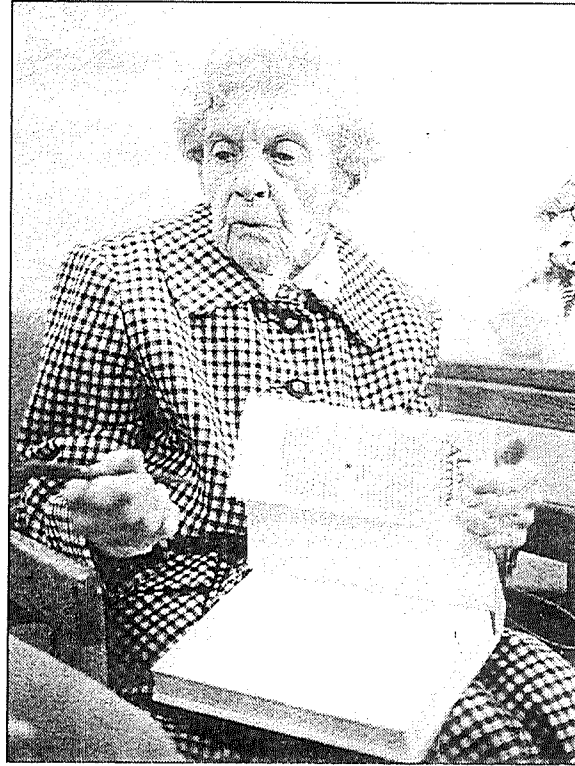
Wallace Grange was Wisconsin's first superintendent of game and later an agent for the U.S. Biological Survey in the nation's capital.

When the couple married in 1927, Grange showed little interest in wildlife. But animals later became a passion as she supported her husband and his dream to operate the sanctuary where he could restore native habitat for fowl and other wildlife.

"I never would have chosen it myself," she says. "But Wallace was the wildlife (enthusiast), and he was my man."

The Granges moved from Washington, D.C., to Wisconsin in 1932 and established the Sandhill Game Farm. Wallace Grange was a pioneer of modern-day conservation science, a friend of leading naturalists such as Aldo Leopold and Sigurd Olson.

"He was a very well-known man, and then he moved to North



Hazel Grange signs a copy of her book for a visitor at the Maple Manor nursing home in Langdon, N.D., last month. Grange's memoir concerns her efforts to build wildlife sanctuaries.

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Dakota," Johnson says. "He dropped out of sight."

Not out of mind, though.

In 1955, Wallace Grange's book "Those of the Forest," which was published by his wife, won the nation's most coveted award for nature writing, the Burroughs Medal.

A field of white snow geese in 1969 attracted the couple to Calio, a community in northeastern North Dakota where Grange continued his research and his wife befriended the animals.

"They were kind of curiosities," Johnson says. "They were well-liked, but they certainly were

different than wheat farmers."

Over the years, Grange became a bit of a novelty, attracting visitors who wanted to see her pets and movie companies that wanted to use them.

One special pet was Silver, a sandhill crane.

"Silver traveled with me wherever I went," she recalls. "We'd have a good conversation no one else could understand."

After her husband died in 1987, Grange stayed in Calio and cared for about 20 cats. Two years ago, she moved into Maple Manor, not far from Calio.