

Millstoner recounts history of 'Rising Sun' farm

Property once backed up to Sunny Heights nudist colony

BY JANE MEGGITT

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MILLSTONE - Betty Sinha said her late husband always expressed a strong interest in seeing their township property remain "forever farmland."

Sinha said his sentiment made the July preservation of their 28-acre Rising Sun Tavern Road field crop and sheep farm particularly poignant. The farm, located next to the Assunpink Wildlife Refuge, is familiar to many western Monmouth County residents for its red barn painted with a large, yellow, rising sun.

Sinha and her late husband, Sailendra, purchased the farm in 1967.

"It was my husband's and my favorite place to be," she recalled.

Her son, Eric, painted the rising sun in the mid-'80s, she said.

For many years, the family used the land as a weekend retreat, while living most of the time near her husband's business in Toms River.

After her husband's death in 1999, she moved to the farm and converted an 1850s-era barn there into living quarters.

Sinha recalled that the Sunny Heights nudist colony, which was once a local landmark, was still in operation in the tract behind her house when she and her family first moved in. Today, the former nudist colony is the Sunny Heights subdivision.

While she now has a few sheep "to keep the grass down" on the land, most of it is planted in sorghum and farmed by Upper Freehold farmer Dick Stern.

Sinha said she decided to preserve the farm because she is a conservationist and believes it is important to preserve the natural state of the earth.

"People grow faster than trees," she said, adding that overpopulation is something that concerns her.

She also decided to preserve the land because she wants people to know what life used to be like in this country. The house and one of the barns on the property were built before the Civil War.

The farm originally consisted of 180 acres, but the previous owner sold some of the land to the state to use as part of the Assunpink Wildlife Management Area, she said.

The Sinhas sold off 32 more acres of the farm further down Rising Sun Tavern Road in the 1990s.

Diane Rickman Davis has a small farm on Rising Sun Tavern Road that was also once part of the Sinha property.

When asked how she felt about the preservation of the Sinha farm, she said she thinks it is wonderful.

"I wish all of my neighbors who have farm parcels would do the same," she said.

Davis said preservation "definitely improves the quality of life" and helps to keep "the rural nature of the area."

"It is a beautiful stretch of road," she said, "and their picturesque, historic farm is a big part of that rural look."