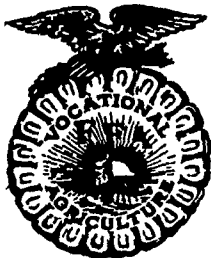


## From Local Ag Teachers:



## Thoughts in Passing



The article for this week was prepared by Clifford Grube, teacher of agriculture at Warwick High School.

This Fall on several occasions absolute strangers drove in our lane and inquired as to whether we would sell any building lots. I was a bit surprised since I'm not exactly in the real estate business, and the answer was a quick "no". It does make one think, though, and after a less-than-bountiful year, that money would have come in handy.

Many farmers are faced with the same situation. Some sell, some don't. I believe that for the benefit of your operation and the farming community in general, you should not sell. My argument, I realize, is weak when challenged by a farmer with a desk full of unpaid bills; however, one who stays solvent by selling land is a realtor and is farming only as a pastime.

Previous to teaching at Warwick, I was farming in Bucks County and saw some interesting events take place in a matter of a



Clifford Grube

few short years. The community was basically agricultural with no heavy industry but was within 25 miles of Philadelphia. Things were fairly stationary and had been for quite some time. Suddenly, a few farms were sold to developers and up very quickly

went ranchers and splitlevels. Now this was not urban sprawl, this was urban jump. Suburbia had jumped 10 miles of countryside only to settle in my township which, as far as I could see, had little to offer. The developer had purchased the land cheaply and knew that 25 miles was not too far to commute to work.

These new residents, I discovered, were not big city people, but suburbanites who wanted a more rural suburbia. More farms were lost and more houses sprang up in their place, and I still can't figure out where all the people came from.

Now things began to change in addition to the landscape. Most of these new residents were educated people with good jobs and were eager to get involved in making our community a "better" place to live. They demanded sewer and water, bigger and better schools, faster clearing of snow in the winter, and finally, a police department. Instead of taxes for the farmer going down, they went up. They went up to the point where we would have to be getting \$5 per bushel of corn to make a profit. They enacted zoning to prohibit hog enterprises from being started or even resumed after a period of no-profit pork prices. You actually risked your life to transport farm machinery on the roads, and to top it off, the new policeman tried to give me a ticket for towing an elevator through town behind the pickup.

What may seem to be liquid gold to the farmer who is spreading it on his corn stubble may not be appreciated by your new neighbors. The air being discharged from that new controlled-environment poultry or hog building may be offensive too. Public pressure has been known to force farmers out of business even though the farm was there first. Many farmers who are farming lands bordering on towns or developments tell me of refuse thrown into their fields, trails made through small grain fields by the great invention, the minibike, cornfields pre-harvested before the picker, and on and on. These are the things

that must be considered before selling building lots off your farm.

How can you be sure now that you won't be sorry 10 years from now? As entire farms go into development, we see the whole community change as I described before. It is no longer agricultural, and farmers become less and less important. If you were operating a snowplow for the township and you had 50 people calling up hourly demanding that their street be plowed open, you, too, would probably go there first to shut them up even though a milk truck may not be able to get down a rural road to serve one farmer. Let's face it, Mr. Farmer, you're going to have to take a back seat unless you're willing to stand up, speak, and be heard. Get involved in your community planning, zoning, township supervision, etc. If you don't look after your own interests, no one else will. How many merchants make their livelihood by supplying farmers? They're going to go too.

Community planning is being given a lot of attention lately. There are dozens of recognized concepts from recreational cores to concentric rings which consist of belts of suburbia separated by strips of unhappy farmers. All of

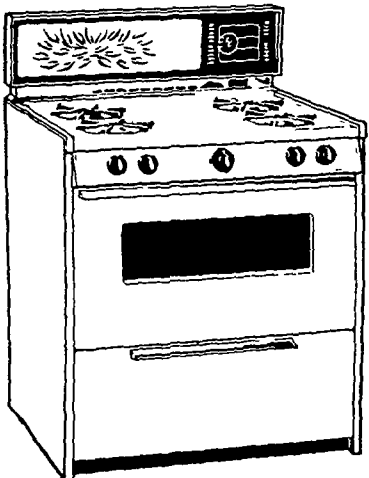
these systems are alike in that they provide open space areas for the appreciation of all. Suddenly people have become aware of good old Mother Nature, or better put, the environment. People want to escape from the concrete city to buy look-alike houses on half acre lots. Human nature is funny. People want to have their cake and eat it too. They want to move to the country, but have the conveniences of the city. The best example of this new breed is the camper who hits the highway for a weekend with Mother Nature pulling his \$10,000 air-conditioned compact house.

I want you to imagine a fictitious situation, which, if it is similar to a real situation, is purely coincidental. A small town exists surrounded by farmland. A developer buys a 100 acre farm a few miles from town with considerable road frontage and begins to subdivide it into half acre lots. Full acre lots would be much too large because the purchaser would have to spend all Saturday afternoon mowing the lawn and might miss a football game on TV. So, half acre lots it is. Besides, more lots can be sold, and each is equipped with a well and a septic system. After a few years, there is some

(Continued On Page 17)

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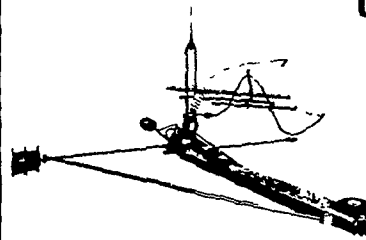
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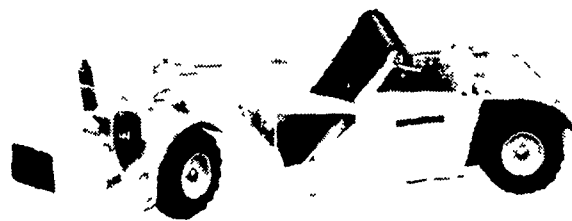
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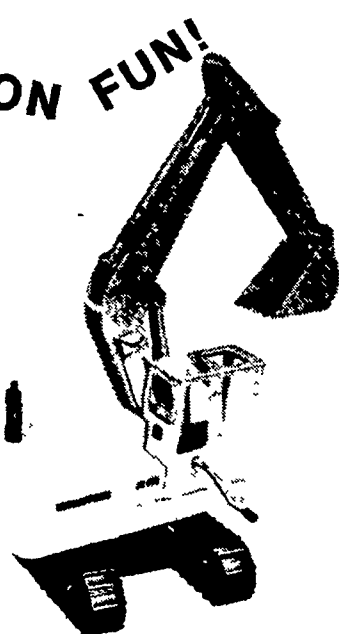
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