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From Local Ag Teachers:



**Thoughts
in Passing**



The article for this week was written by Clifford Grube, teacher of agriculture at Warwick High School. Grube owns and operates a 120 acre farm in Berks County, where he presently is raising 28 head of Registered Angus.

What's Wrong With Farming?

One question that has been troubling me lately is why more and more young people, especially our farm youth, are not going back to farming as a career. Maybe their parents are discouraging them, citing long hours, hard work and low return on investment as reasons why they want more for their children than they had. Perhaps a neighbor or relative is making "big money" as a tradesman or professional person and has plenty of time to have fun. Or maybe the image of a farmer doesn't quite fit what they think they are or want to be. I guess this boils down to the old "grass is greener on the other side of the fence" syndrome.

At the same time thousands of young people, mostly from urban backgrounds and well educated, have discovered the "back to nature thing" is filling a big void



Clifford Grube

in their lifestyle and want to learn about farming. Books and magazines covering these subjects are selling at an unbelievable rate.

To illustrate, the most recent issue of "Mother Earth News" covers such subjects as growing vegetables, raising rabbits, raising ducks and geese, how to be a hired hand, home curing of beef, and homesteading. The organic garden, whole grain breads, natural foods, goats milk and the like are the "in things". The whole idea of living in harmony with the land has amazing appeal, especially with those that we might call hippies. Like it or not, these style-setters are the ones responsible for the present long hair, patched blue jeans and other miscellaneous rags as well as some more undesirable conduct which has occurred in the past five years. They may very well be an influencing factor in changing the attitudes of our farm youth toward their own heritage.

Let us examine the favorable aspects of farming. First, farming is a family business which unites its members through common interest. This is unlike many of our modern families where everyone is doing their own thing and they're usually distant pursuits. Remember that many off-farm jobs mean overnight travel and evening work that disrupts family life.

Farming is honest work. Good farming practices are non-exploiting of nature or man. Many jobs are based on deceit or are immoral. Farming means relative independence. There is little worry about strikes, lockouts, layoffs, transfers, plant closings and the like.

Farming is challenging. Any job done on the farm today can undoubtedly be done better. There is a never ending challenge for those with ambition.

Farming hours are flexible to a degree. I know that cows must be milked and animals fed at certain times but if you want to go to that farm sale or get a haircut or even go fishing in the middle of the day you can arrange your work so you can go. Farming doesn't necessarily mean working outside in bad weather. At least you have a choice. Many workers must stand out in the rain until quitting time. A farmer can arrange his work schedule and if he's working in the rain it's because something needs to be done and he wants to do it.

Farming is not boring. I've never known a bored farmer and I don't have to tell you why. Farming is satisfying. Big and small satisfactions abound for a good farmer; just don't let the disappointments get you down.

Now that I've said a lot about an occupation that you know even more about, maybe we should discuss another as a comparison.

Try to imagine this situation. You overslept by a half hour and now race to get ready for work. You leave without breakfast, jump in your car and race through traffic only to find the parking lot full. By the time you find a space, run in to punch the time clock, you are five minutes late and the boss tells you that you will be docked 30 minutes for lateness.

O.K., you get to your machine with which you will punch six holes in a piece of flat metal until 10 o'clock when you will have 15 minutes to stand in line at the coffee machine only to return for 105 minutes of hole punching. It is now noon and the big thrill is to eat lunch on the loading dock because from there you can see the sunlight.

The buzzer goes off at 12:30 and you return to 240 minutes of non-stop hole punching. At 4:15 the foreman comes around and tells you that you have to work an extra hour overtime.

At 5:30 when you walk out it's now dark and you head home, knowing that tomorrow will be exactly the same. This man has earned his wage but life must be more than a mere existence.

I realize that I've painted a pretty picture of farming and you probably didn't think it was all that glamorous but I've worked at a number of different jobs and none comes close to farming in comparison. I strongly believe that there is a real future in farming as it is the world's most important occupation. If you like the work, enjoy a rural atmosphere, desire a close-knit family life and are willing to take on the responsibilities of a husbandman and steward of the land, don't let that family farm slip away from you.

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