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"But I sure don't regret having them. Even with no-till, I think you could get some washing and gullies. I don't have any problem at all."

The terraces on Groff's farm were laid out in 1968 by employees of the Lancaster County Soil Conservation Service, and installed by Frank Burkhart, a conservation contractor from Lancaster. The waterways were installed in 1969. The diversion terraces were put in the following year, after the waterways were covered with sod.

The terraces are designed to slow the flow of water from the fields. They are actually mounds of earth which operate somewhat like the spouting around a house roof. When it's raining, water flows downhill until it comes to the bottom of a terrace. If enough water collects at the bottom of a terrace, it will flow slowly to one of the grass waterways. The terraces are designed so that the water moves so

slowly it cannot carry soil particles with it. Soil collects on the uphill side of the terraces, and can be moved back uphill if necessary as the fields are plowed. When water runs from Groff's waterways into the stream that runs through his farm, it's clear water.

Groff said his corn crop was off during the years he was establishing terraces, but figures it was worth the price in reduced yields. "I may have lost the equivalent of an acre of crop a year for about two years," he pointed out. "At first, there's not much topsoil at the bottom of the terraces. The bulldozer has to scrape clear down to the subsoil at some spots. The corn there the first few years looked pretty sick - it was yellow and some of it didn't get any ears. But now, you can't tell the difference between the corn at the bottom of the terraces and the top. The corn at the bottom might even be a little better."

The relatively minor loss of corn was a small price to pay for the added benefit of the terraces, Groff feels. And he figures that the dollars he invested were well-spent, too. "The whole project cost about \$5000, but I didn't have

to pay the whole thing. ASCS put up about 80 percent of the money. I don't know if I'd have had the work done if I'd have had to pay the entire cost."

ASCS is the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, a federal agency which is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. ASCS personnel administer the programs which channel funds to farmers, mainly for crop subsidies and land improvement.

On his corn ground, Groff aims for a 24,000 plant population, and figures he's getting 25 tons of silage to the acre. Just before planting, he chops the rye crop, puts it in upright concrete silo and feeds it to his heifers and young stock. He tries to keep the mature cows on silage the year around. He produces most of his own roughage, but buys his grain.

At planting time, the corn goes in with banded insecticide and fertilizer. And before it comes up, he goes over the fields with herbicides, nitrogen and Paraquat. After the corn comes off in the fall, he discs the stubble several times before planting the rye. "I have somebody come in to plant my corn," Groff said, "because I don't have a no-till planter. The first year he was here, it was pretty rough planting. But the soil seems to be getting better and better every year, and this year we didn't have any trouble at all in planting. And I haven't plowed since I went to no-till corn."

Not only does he not own a no-till planter, Groff also uses custom operators to fill his silo and bale his hay. "I've always figured that with my limited acreage, it just doesn't make sense to put a lot of money into machinery."

One important factor in the improvement of his soil, Groff feels is the fact that he drives over the ground very few times with heavy machinery. The exception would be the heavy forage wagons when the silo is being filled in the fall. He doesn't even drive over the fields to spread manure.

When Groff built his present comfort stall barn in 1970, he installed a manure pit big enough to hold the output from both the cows and the milk house for about a month. He already has some 3500-feet of irrigation pipe which he had used from

time to time during dry spells, and figured that he could use that pipe to get the manure from his pits out onto the fields. In order to do that, he needed a special kind of pump, which he bought from Oregon, and which has been giving him good service.

Was it expensive to set up a system for irrigating with manure? "I already had the irrigation pipe, so all I really needed was the pump," Groff said. "If I hadn't bought that pump, I'd have had to buy a pump anyway to get it out of the pit, plus a

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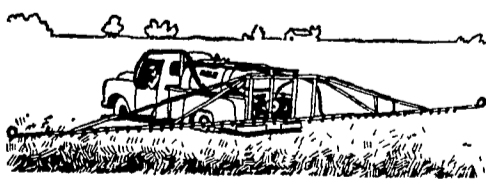
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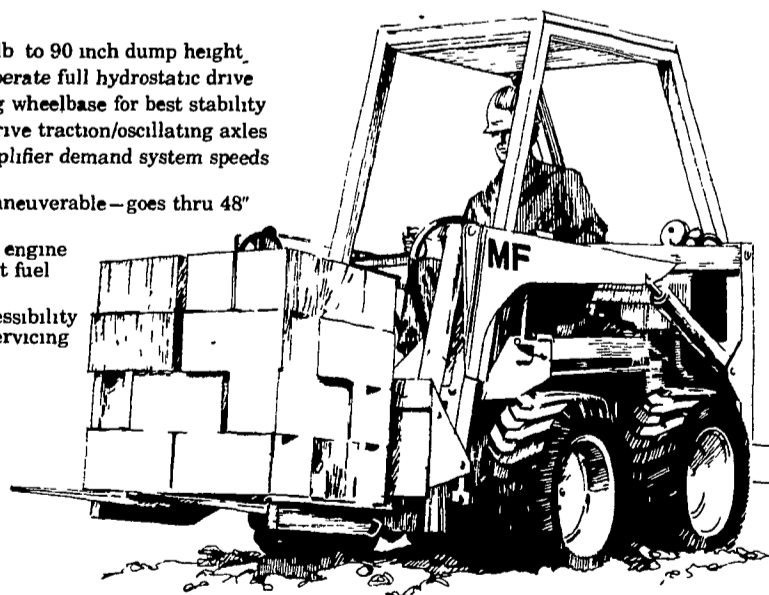
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