

Dale Herr

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Conscious of the value of his resources, Herr has followed conservation programs diligently and says "I'm doing everything the soil conservationists recommend - I get along with'em real good." To date he has installed 2,350 feet of diversions and 4,120 feet of sod waterways on his farm. Fields are being contoured as crop rotations permit. He serves as a director in the Octoraro Watershed

Association, and is a member of both the Colerain Planning Commission and the Solanco Long Range Planning Commission.

A husky man with curly, reddish-brown sideburns nearly half the size of his hands, Herr began farming on his own in 1966 - four years after graduating from Solanco High School. Prior to that he had worked for his father by the week.

When he and his father agreed to farm on the halves, he recollected, all he owned was his car and two pigs - one of which he had won in a contest at school. He eventually sold both pigs to buy a refrigerator. Gradually, beginning in 1966, he acquired ownership of the cows. By 1970 he owned the entire herd and also one of the family's three farms. He presently rents the other two properties from his mother, the widow of the late Abram Herr who had purchased the main farm 45 years ago.

Asked how he liked farming, Herr hesitated a moment and then answered: "It's a challenge and all I've ever known. Also, it makes me feel good and satisfied to know I can feed more than 50 people besides myself." When asked to list some discouragements in his business, he hesitated even longer, grinning sheepishly as he thought about his answer.

"There's a lot of'em," he began, "like when we have hay to put in and it looks as though it's going to rain, and then something breaks down and the implement shop is closed and we were planning on going away for the evening." His wife, the former Fay Fryberger, nodded in agreement. "And it's always the good cows that you lose," he added.

In spite of the problems which arise from time to time, Herr likes his profession and the competition which is associated with it. Not sure of what kind of a future is in store for agriculture as a whole or the dairy business in particular, Herr believes simply that "They're going to have to have the farmer for as long as there are people - the farmers are the backbone of our nation."

Commenting briefly on prices, the award-winner said he likes to think of a farmer being his own boss, but that it's not entirely true because "we pay what people ask us to pay, and take what we're offered when we go to sell." A member of Inter-State Milk Producers Cooperative, Herr looks forward to more stable prices in 1976 - not only for milk, but for feeds. He cites more on the farm storage of grains as a major reason for the stabilization of grain prizes.

The most important management tool in farming is a good and complete system for keeping records, according to Herr. He has his cows on DHIA and maintains articulate records on each of his fields.

Agronomical records include a schedule on crop rotation, complete annual soil tests on each field, fertilizer and lime expenditures, and crop yields. In addition, he carefully evaluates his tillage practices and continues to experiment with recommended ideas such as chisel plowing and minimum tillage.

Herr has been following a prescribed, long-range conservation plan for the past five years and continues to work closely with his district conservationists. Minimum tillage practices became a part of his farming program two years ago, and more recently he began using the chisel plow - a tool he has learned to like a lot, he said. Level sod fields are plowed, he explained, and chiseled after corn. Included in his crop rotation program are corn, alfalfa, small grains, tobacco, and potatoes. A four-year rotation program is generally followed, except for alfalfa, which he likes to keep for five years. Herr plants his alfalfa along with a nurse crop and is cautious about putting the seed into the ground too early. "Not before the first of May," he recommends, if best results are to be expected.

To be continued next week.

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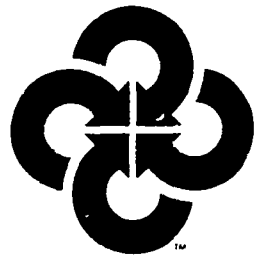
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