

# Farm wife seeks consumer understanding

By MELISSA PIPER

HERSHEY - Appearance-wise Laura Heuser looks like any other farm woman and wife. Her face and arms are tanned a healthy golden color and her hair has been naturally bleached by hours in the sun. She has a pleasant smile and is genuinely charming to all she meets. But Mrs. Heuser's one attribute which makes her stand out among people is that she is an outspoken advocate of farmer's rights and presents her ideas with vigor and a convincing tone of voice - often tinged with her Michigan accent. During a speech at the National Peach Conference held here this week, Mrs. Heuser made firm her stand on agriculture and encouraged other farm women to become involved in changing the farmer's image.

Mrs. Heuser told the farm women that work must be done and soon if farmers are to receive their fair profit as well as survive. "As fruit growers you are often told what you will get as far as a price goes," Mrs. Heuser stated, but "no one buys products that way and it isn't fair."

The farm wife expressed adamantly that the farmers image needed to be corrected as far as consumers were concerned. "Five years ago farmers had a rotten reputation," she exclaimed, "Today it isn't much better but it sure has improved."

"Urban consumers and especially legislators see the farmers as people too stupid to do their own marketing, so they feel a need to market our products without giving us a fair chance."

Mrs. Heuser facetiously chided the women present for not wearing calico dresses, "you know that you're running our image," she heckled, "people have that mental picture of farm wives and until we tell our story it will stay that way."

The farm wife has been quite interested in helping the urban consumer learn about agricultural production because in her words, "urban consumers have the vote and if they don't understand our needs think of the legislation that could be passed - not in our favor."

Also critical of the legislative action and "beauracrats," Mrs. Heuser has visited the governor of Michigan, several legislators and also made her way to the office of George Meany, as a director of the Ag Council of America. "We have to be more forceful and show these people that we are very capable of making our own decisions on marketing ag products," she said, her voice wavering with emotion, "if we don't the beauracrats will vaccum us to ruin."

"You've got to remember," she noted, "most urban consumers and legislators are agriculturally illiterate and they are making the decisions for us."

Mrs. Heuser called the farm wife "a very brave person" and encouraged the women to become involved with farming's story. "Farm women have had to be brave and although it means being scared to death at times - we proved that we have guts!"

"Set your priorities", she stated "and work diligently toward them," women shouldn't be colorless ornaments and if we understand the needs then we can do a good job."

Leaning quietly against the podium, Mrs. Heuser concluded her remarks by stating, "we don't have much time and we must work for understanding and legislation before our freedoms get plucked away."

"I remember hearing that another bunch of rebels once staged a tea party to get people's attention and maybe that's what we need - a party of our own."

"Women were the first farmers you remember, it was the men who went hunting and we still have to do our part to survive."

Mrs. Heuser is the wife of a fruit grower in Michigan and helped to organize the American Agri-Women program to promote understanding of agriculture. She is also a member of several other ag and farm women associations and is currently on the board of directors for the Ag Council of America.



Mike Morton (left) representing the Ag Council of America looks over the program during the National

Peach Conference with Gail McPherson, York County, and guest speaker, Laura Heuser.

## York Lamb Club meets

A demonstration on tanning sheep hides, given by Laurie and Lisa Dobrosky and Donny Flory was the program at a recent York County 4-H Lamb Club meeting held at the 4-H Center near Bair Station.

Following the demonstration the President Linda Ebaugh, opened the meeting. She reminded the members to get their project books from their local clubs.

It was then discussed whether or not to attend the Peach Festival at Maple Lawn Farms and set up a booth to sell something promoting lamb. A motion was made and a committee appointed. A committee was appointed to plan the meetings for the coming years and the meeting was adjourned.

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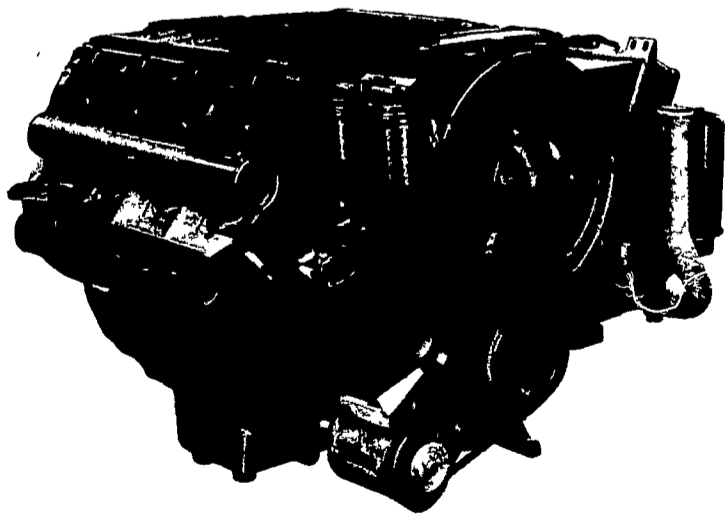
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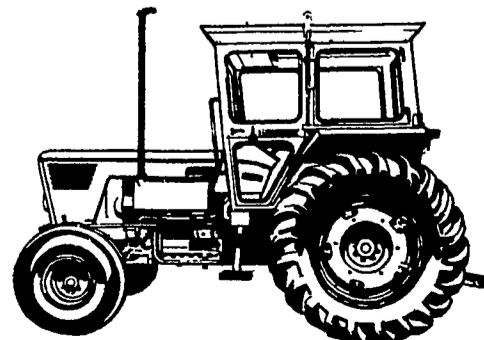
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