



My Thoughts (and welcome to them)

For the first holiday in my life, I felt like a Scrooge or the Grinch that stole Christmas. Relatives and friends were jumping around screaming, "It's snowing, it's snowing," and there I stood in the midst of all the merriment, biting my lip and rueing the slip-up I'd made earlier in the day when I'd caught myself absent-mindedly humming "White Christmas." Well, maybe I had been dreaming of a White Christmas with every Christmas card I wrote, (which I happened to have finished writing on Christmas Eve), but there were several stipulations which I had forgotten to mention as I hummed along. First of all, the snow had to stay off the roads and walkways, and couldn't turn black with age as cars sprayed exhaust fumes all over it.

But, when the first real snow of the season started coming down on Christmas night, I knew I couldn't have my way have been only too glad to hold the bag while the Grinch stole all the toys from the Whos in Whoville who had asked for the snow.

Then, Sunday morning arrived, and my family put the topper on the cake by awakening me in the wee hours of the morning, saying, "It's so pretty outside, wouldn't you like to go see it?" "Hardly," I thought. But, I got up anyway and pulled out my camera just in case I'd need it, and went for what I thought would be a short walk.

It only took three steps away from the house for me to completely transform to a snow lover. Early in the summer I had found a peace and solitude by getting up early and going outside to watch the morning arrive, but I'd never quite experienced such a total peace as I did that morning. The snow formed a womb around the farmland and buildings and added a whole new dimension of beauty

to the spidery, ghostlike trees in the field as the sun glinted off the layer of white on the branches.

The first thing I thought of was my father coming in from the barn in previous years with the water pipes frozen and the cattle bawling, and the milk truck not being able to reach the farm in the days when we still used cans and a cooler. But, most of all, I had visions of the rural roads staying shut for days as they often do when the roadmen are busy cleaning heavier traversed areas.

How was I going to get to work? And, if I did, how was I going to get to the farms and do stories? Needless to say, at that moment, I completely understood the psychology of Scrooge, and would

I had taken a roll of color film before I realized that all my pictures would simply be white and that the film or the camera could never capture the beauty I was experiencing at the moment.

At the same time, I was again reaffirmed in the belief that farmers have some of the greatest opportunities of all working individuals to experience the awesomeness of nature as they do. Snow creates hardships from time to time, but the beauty of the new fallen snow is a sight that is hard to surpass. City and town dwellers are lucky to catch a fleeting glimpse of a layer of new fallen snow on the ground before a merchant sweeps the sidewalk or a city snow plow hurriedly makes way for the bustling traffic.

So, regardless of the problems of being snowed in and having trouble with the water pipes, I still think living on a farm adds to the appreciation of the winter season

Hog ID opinions mixed

HARRISBURG - Swine exhibitors at the Keystone International Livestock Exposition held here at the Farm Show Building this month were asked to comment on the desirability of a national identification program for all hogs for the purposes of disease control. All slaughter pigs could be tagged or injected with an identifying capsule under the neck skin.

A national system that would enable traceback from slaughter animals to the farm of origin would be good for the hog industry in the long run, said Doug Weller, a hog producer from Dwight, Ill. Elimination of some of the disease problems would mean more efficiency and therefore more profit.

Mark Stehr, co-owner and assistant manager of the Brooks End Farm, in Beavertown, Pa., also thought that a national program would be valuable enough to pay for at the slaughter-house, as long as packers do not take advantage of producers by condemning carcasses, then using them. Stehr went on to say that government intervention is becoming a problem in the swine industry, however.

"A national identification program would be a tremendous asset, but the bookkeeping would be incomprehensible," said an Extension agent from Penn State. "Thousands of pigs are killed every day - there are over 9,000 hog breeders in Pennsylvania," her continued, "and the paperwork involved would make the system awkward and ineffective."

Clyde McConaughey, of Smicksburg, Pa., also felt that the program would be good but too costly, and would result in more administrative tangles in return for too little progress in disease control. He said that if the old vontrol program had been effective, we would have eliminated some of the current disease problems. "Before we institute a new program, we should junk many of the old ones," he said.

"A national identification system would be nice, but you could never get it to work," according to W. F. Ruoss from Lancaster. Cooperation between government sources is critical, since "identification without control is useless."

Several producers said that they thought a national program would make too much information available to the wrong people. In their opinion, government knows enough about existing farm operations now.

John Strawbridge, of Strawbridge and McCleary, in Stewartstown, Pa., felt that too many rules already exist, and over-regulation especially hurts the small packer and producer. A national identification system would simply cost the producer more money.

It would mean extra work and greater costs," said Rob McKissick, of Slippery Rock, Pa. "There's enough going against the hog industry as it is. We don't need anything more."

Preston Bankert, from York agreed that a national identification program would be "too much work for the advantaged." The in-

cidence of disease in hogs is too low, in Bankert's opinion, to justify the expense on every hog.

Swine men at the Keystone International, for the most part, thought a national identification program would be beneficial in

disease control, but not be worth the financial effort and time it would require. Few producers have the confidence that the federal government would efficiently carry out such a program in the farmer's interest.

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