

LIFE on the farm

By Dieter Krieg, Editor

Even before I stepped into the barn, I knew that a problem, a messy situation and some extra hard work were waiting for me. Water was flowing along the manure gutter and down into the pit where the spreader was kept.

A fiercely cold wind swept around the corner of the barn as I strained to shove the door open. Ice crystals along the bottom were holding it fast.

The gutter behind the cows looked like a swamp. Straw and manure were floating on top of water as the accumulation formed little dams here and there. The overflow crept onto the litter alley, turning the white limed area into a slippery brown.

My first order of business was to shut the main valve off. After that, any number of things remained to be done, including the morning milking and feeding. I opted for a quick inspection of the pit and manure spreader. The spreader needed to be moved, but with the hired man having taken the tractor home with him the night before, I had to leave it set. An accumulation of several inches of brown water sloshed around my boots as I walked back out.

Before entering the barn again, I checked to see that the barn cleaner wasn't froze up. It wasn't, so I turned it on and left it go through several strokes to help lower the water level in the gutter. After all, I needed a place to sweep water and wet feed into.

The cows watched attentively as I pushed the slop out of the feed

Marvin, our hired man, didn't say a word when he walked into the cow stable. Cupping his hands in front of his mouth, he blew into them and then rubbed vigorously. The flaps of his black patent leather hat encircled his red face. He seemed a bit stiff as he walked.

I asked the obvious question - "What's the matter - is it cold out there?" just to hear Marvin's colorful answer. He blew into his hands some more and then proceeded to give me his opinion of the weather. It was an attempt to start the day on a lighter note - something to take away the sting of the wind and chill. We both needed something to smile about, for a water pipe had broken overnight and the stable was a bit messier than usual.

"Hitch your tractor up to the spreader, Marv, and pull it up so we can clean the barn, I suggested.

Outside, the wind was sweeping icy bits of snow across a white and frozen landscape. The barn windows were artistically decorated by Jack Frost himself. I felt sorry for the lower producing and dry cows for which there was no room in this barn.

Marvin walked back into the stable, bringing a burst of cold air with him, and a detailed description of the sloppy mess I had checked out earlier in the morning. He turned on the barn cleaner and the mess in the gutter was on its way out. We could hear the watery mixture splash loudly as it hit the spreader. Several of the many

manger and into the gutter. Occasionally one would bawl to be milked or receive new feed.

Water was still dripping from the source of the leak - a broken rusty pipe at the point where it fit into the cast iron drinking bowl valve. It wouldn't take too much to fix that, I thought, if the pipe wouldn't break at the top when I tried to remove it.

Not wanting to have the cows be out of water for too long, I went to get a pipe wrench and proceeded to carefully take things apart. I removed the water bowl, then the valve, and then carefully proceeded to apply pressure to the damaged pipe. I feared having it break off at the top, as had happened on other occasions. I clenched my teeth and hoped for success.

Luckily, it came off alright. A plastic nipple and a short piece of plastic pipe were installed in its place. A spare water bowl valve was attached since the other one was unusable until the broken bits of pipe were removed from the junction. That could wait until later. It could have been much worse. Of course, this day wasn't over yet either.

I swept the feeding area one more time and then offered the cows a fresh batch of silage and grain. I took off my jacket to stay a little cooler at this accelerated pace. I was trying to make up for lost time.

Next, the litter alley had to be cleaned up and some new barn snow applied to keep from slipping. After that I was finally ready to milk.

ugly sides of winter on a farm were going to make themselves known for the remainder of the morning and a part of the afternoon.

First of all, we had to get the tractor and spreader out of the barnyard. It looked like an impossible task, and just about was. Numerous tries at the slight, yet extremely slippery incline resulted in failure. The tractor's tires spun as wildly as the wind, turning hard-packed snow into ice. Then the entire rig slid slowly backwards and Marvin had to try his best to keep it from jack-knifing.

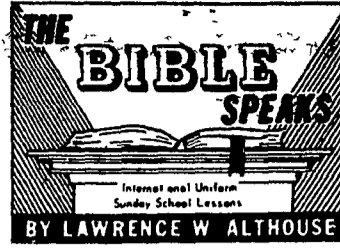
The lower route down through the loafing barn and up around a less frequently used land was worth a try. But it would take two tractors to get through the snow.

"Big John," in "hibernation" for most of the winter, was too cold to want to start. The flywheel spun around slowly and in spurts, until finally it quit without making the tractor "cough" even just once.

"We have to pull the 630," I hollered to Marv from afar. "That tractor is no good," he teased, keeping alive a verbal battle that lasted for all the days we worked together.

Once "Big John" came to life, his two pistons thundered loudly and unevenly. A brief warm-up period straightened things out. We were ready to go.

But our ordeal wasn't anywhere near over as will be described in the next installment of Life on the farm



INTO THE WILDERNESS

Lesson for January 9, 1977

Background Scripture:
Mark 1:4-13; Luke 3:1-22; 4:1-13.

Devotional Reading:
Hebrews 4:12-16.

If you and I were given the opportunity to re-write the Bible there would certainly be a lot of changes! Unfortunately, we probably wouldn't be able to agree on what should be changed and what shouldn't be. Of course, lots of people - including preachers - "change the Bible" by misquoting it or being very selective in what they choose to use from it. Some parts of it we find embarrassing, other parts confining, and still others contradictory to what we have already determined to be the truth.

The heavens opened. One of the portions of the Bible we might be tempted to re-write would be the Gospel accounts of John's baptism of Jesus. The problem with these passages from all four Gospels is that they seem to have the chronology all wrong - "wrong" at least in terms of the way we would like for life to be arranged. Each of the four Gospels tells us that Jesus came out to the Judean wilderness, was baptised, and then was led into the wilderness to be tempted. If we could have our way - for both Jesus and ourselves - we would like to turn it around so that the trial in the wilderness would come first, then the baptism and an assurance that "they lived happily ever after."

None of the writers tell us what is in Jesus' mind as he comes up from Nazareth to Judea. Neither do they tell us what he has been thinking or how he has viewed himself in the first thirty years of life. Apparently he knew that John was baptising for repentance and he responded to this need in some way. Perhaps he was drawn to the River Jordan and the Baptist without quite knowing why. At any rate, it seemed to him that he needed to be there, that something significant would happen - and it did!

"You are my son!" Whatever John's baptism meant to Jesus, as he came up out of the river, he saw a vision and heard a heavenly voice, saying: "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased" (Mark 1:10). To Jesus this was a call or the confirmation of a call he had already been considering. It was one of those rare ecstatic experiences that was to change his whole life.

How strange then to realize that immediately following this mystical experience of the highest order, Jesus is led into the wilderness for temptation. And that's the part that is hard for us to swallow. As we see it, let the wilderness come first and then, when we have endured it and come through it, let us have the vision and the voice (and happiness "ever after").

Often, however, it does not work that way. The high moments of inspiration in



NOW IS THE TIME...

Max Smith
County Agr. Agent
Telephone 394-6851

TO PROVIDE SALT AND MINERALS

A recent question as to why steers were eating soil reminds me of the need of ample supplies of salt and minerals for livestock at all times. Salt is not expensive and can usually increase the water consumption of most animals; also, water is one of the most essential ingredients of efficient milk or weight production. Loose salt is suggested rather than block salt because it is more palatable and not likely to make sore tongues. Minerals are very essential to good

digestion and we suggest free choice minerals in addition to limited amounts in the ration. There are many mineral mixtures on the market and some producers mix their own; information is available

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Farmers are reminded that the tax guides for them are available at all county Extension Service offices. They may be picked up there in person, or will be mailed to them upon request.

Farm Calendar

- Sunday, Jan. 9**
Pennsylvania Junior Guernsey Breeders Association holds annual meeting, 1:30 p.m. in Parlor A of the Farm Show Building.
- Monday, Jan. 10**
Pennsylvania Farm Show officially opens to the public. Please refer to other portions of this newspaper for complete details and schedules of events. The show lasts through Friday.
- Tuesday, Jan. 11**
46th annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Guernsey Breeders' Association, Schindler's Restaurant, Camp Hill, 10:30 a.m. business meeting; banquet at 12 noon.
- Wednesday, Jan. 12**
Pennsylvania FFA Mid-Winter Convention, 12:00 p.m. at the Forum in Harrisburg.
- Thursday, Jan. 13**
Red Lion Young Farmers meet 8 p.m. at the high school. Topic: Farm business analysis and records.
- Friday, Jan. 14**
Delaware-Maryland No-Tillage Symposium, Tidewater Inn, Easton, Md., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. lunch will be served noon, dinner at 5:45.
- Friday, Jan. 14**
Chester County DHIA annual dinner meeting, East Brandywine Fire Hall, Guthriesville, 7 p.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 12**
National Farmers Organization meeting, Room B, Farm Show Building, Harrisburg, 6 p.m.
- Wednesday, Jan. 12**
Lebanon County Conservation District Board of Directors meets at 8 p.m. in Room 207 of the Lebanon County Municipal Building, Lebanon.
- Friday, Jan. 14**
Maryland Ag Commission meeting.

RURAL ROUTE

By Tom Armstrong

