

# Neighbors pitch in after barn fire

By JOYCE BUPP  
York Co. Reporter

AIRVILLE, Pa.—Every farmer worries about it. To most, it never happens. To a small percentage, it does. The Ellis Crowl family, Airville R2, has joined that tragic percentage.

Twelve-year-old Gary Crowl was home from school on February 14. About 2:30 p.m., he glanced toward the barn and saw the telltale wisps of smoke. Alerting his mother, the two quickly chased heifers away from the barn area.

The phone lines were already burned off by the

time Joyce Crowl tried to call the fire department. She raced to a neighbor's house to use their phone. Ellis was on business at Joyce's parents' home, and drove the two miles to his property he recalled later, "doing 90 miles an hour."

But by the time he drove in the lane, the barn was engulfed in flames. He tried several times to chase out four remaining hogs which were determined not to leave the pens, and at the last moment, he finally succeeded.

The barn had been built in 1935; and, at 120 by 100 ft., it

was one of the largest in southern York County. In less than an hour after the first smoke had been seen, it lay in a collapsed pile of smoldering hay and broken black timbers.

Before sunset, neighbors, unasked, began appearing. Some came to chase the 60 loose heifers back into makeshift pens in the Crowl's recently completed new dairy barn. Others loaded homeless hogs onto trucks and took them to auction. And down the road came the first of the seven loads of hay shared by neighbors in the first week.

"Whenever anyone needs help, the Crowl's are the first to be there," explained Kathy King, Delta R2. "We all wanted to be a part of helping them after the fire."

Then, a week later, neighbors turned out in full force for a massive clean-up effort.

"I just don't know how many are here," offered Crowl, emotion telling in his voice. "There's no way we can name them all or thank them as we'd like." An unofficial count by a member of the kitchen crew at lunch tallied 28 men, 13 women, and a few youngsters accompanying their parents. Neighborhood farm women had piled the table full three times to feed the soot-blackened shifts of workers.

The volunteers brought with them a full line of heavy

duty equipment to make the cleanup assembly-line efficient. Nine large dump trucks roared over the lane, carrying away loads of the debris. Two bulldozers knocked down scorched and sagging walls, scooping the ashes into the waiting line of trucks.

By late afternoon, all that remained was the smoke-stained foundation, a charred and partially cracked cement stove silo, and clusters of the remaining workers completing final clearing away chores. But as remnants of

the old barn disappeared, the determination of the Crowl family to continue on their dairying operation grew.

Hay for the cattle remains a concern. The Crowl's had been buying hay all winter and saving the more than 200 tons in the barn for Spring feed when hay prices would rise. Every bale put up last summer was lost. Only a very tiny amount of three-year-old hay in a distant storage barn is left.

But perhaps the saddest aftermath of the tragedy is the loss of seven registered

Holstein calves. The calves, July and August born, were being groomed as potential 4-H and FFA project calves for the three Crowl sons, Leon, 17, Glenn 15, and Gary. How the calves will be replaced, or if project replacements can even be found, is the major concern for the young men.

A farmer works hand in hand with fate and faith. Fate has dealt a harsh blow to the Crowl family. Faith, bolstered by the kindnesses of neighbors and friends, will see them through to rebuild anew.

## Outlook conference evaluated

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The people who attend the National Agricultural Outlook Conference feel they get "significant" information from the meeting, but they would like to see some changes in future sessions.

Changes suggested by conferees include a tighter grouping of topics, more on water and irrigation, energy, weather, the environment, institutional

constraints on agriculture and more on legislative developments. Conferees would also like general sessions of the outlook conferences to assess the impact of domestic and world developments on individual commodity markets.

These and other comments were contained in an evaluation of the Outlook Conference by people who attended the session last November.

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