

Hershey celebrates 50th anniversary

Truth is key in feed sales, says veteran

By JOANNE SPAHR
PARADISE — "A good feed salesman has to tell the truth and be trustworthy," believes Clarence S. (Dick) Hershey, a 50-year-old employee of Hess Mills, 100 South Vintage Road, Paradise, distributors of Purina hog, chicken, and dairy feed.

"That way, if he tells the truth, he never has to wonder what he said," he added at a golden anniversary party held Wednesday night in his honor at the Revere Tavern, Paradise.

At 68 years of age, Hershey has woven half a century of life around the feed business and the livelihoods of his 80 to 100 faithful customers in eastern Lancaster County. During that time he has seen a tremendous amount of change occur in both agriculture in general, and his feed business, in particular.

In 1928 when he first started on the job, he was hired as a truck driver. At that time, the mill at which he worked was water powered and produced flour. And, two men on 12 hour

shifts were able to run the entire milling operation.

"Back in those days there wasn't nearly as much livestock, so we didn't handle the amount of feed we do now," he points out. For instance, Hershey estimates that at that time Hess's handled approximately 1/2 a ton per month. In comparison, the feed salesman says that today the amount has risen to 80 tons per day.

In keeping with the increase in feed production, the amount of livestock raised on farms has multiplied as well.

According to Hershey, the average size for a farm back in the "early days" was, on the average, about 10 cows, two hogs, 10 steers, and a few horses. Today, that same farmer would have 40 to 50 cows, 300 hogs, and 10,000 chickens.

"Everything has doubled or tripled," the 50-year salesman remarked.

And, along with the tremendous increase in production came what Hershey considers to be the most significant change in agriculture over the past half century — efficiency.

"Instead of being

haphazard, most farmers have become really skilled at management," he notes, adding that it was through the help of feed salesmen, Extension agents, and other farm advisors that agriculture advanced in this manner.

But, the efficiency and production didn't increase overnight. After pausing a minute to reflect on his years in the agriculture scene, Hershey stated that, in his estimation, progress in the feed business was gradual and went hand in hand with genetic upgrading of livestock. However, there were some outstanding periods of time when research set agriculture ahead in spurts.

For example, according to Hershey, the feed industry went into an extensive experimenting stage about 30 years ago. This enabled it to upgrade its broiler feed to the point where it now takes half the amount to produce one pound of meat.

"Of course, during the last 10 years, agriculture has really accelerated in its efficiency," Hershey added as an afterthought.

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John J. Hess, II, (right) of Hess Mills, Paradise, congratulates Clarence (Dick) Hershey, who celebrated 50 years with the company recently. Hershey's wife Henrietta looks on.

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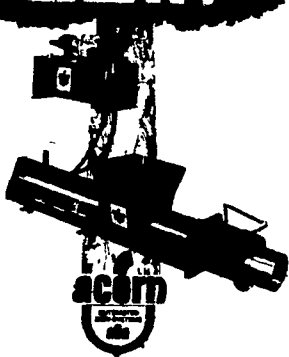
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