

Amos Herr

Lancaster Co. farmer donates land for park

By SALLY BAIR
Staff Writer

LANDISVILLE — Amos Herr is a retired farmer and schoolteacher whose great concern for the community around him has enriched the lives of the people of East Hempfield Township.

Herr, who lives in Landisville, has willed his 55 acre farm to the Township for use as a recreation area and park, and through his generosity, 14 acres have already been developed. In use already are a baseball diamond and a general purpose pavilion which includes lavatories and storage.

In the near future a tot play area will be created and tennis and volleyball courts. Landscaping is already underway, with the planting of many trees which have been donated.

Herr said that he and his wife, who died in 1974, often discussed the possibility of making such a provision in their will. He said a number of things contributed to the development of their thinking in terms of a park, but one large factor was the extensive foreign travel they enjoyed together.

He said they observed that nearly without exception foreign countries were far more concerned with the development and use of parks than this country. He added that they were impressed with the number of parks and the amount of use they received.

Herr said he and his wife noted the number of people from Landisville who simply wanted to walk over the fields or down to the creek for enjoyment.

He also has a sympathetic view to the conservation movement and expressed dismay about the loss of thousands of acres of farmland each year. When asked to express his views on land use, however, he declined, saying that he can understand the farmer's viewpoint on selling his land.

"One person or family can't do much to keep the loss of farmland in check," he stated.

With the seemingly unending development of land surrounding Landisville, Herr said they could easily envision the need for open space, greenery and a park in the area. So the Herrs came to the joint decision to write their wills so that at the death of the survivor the land would go to the Township for recreation. The Herrs have no children, and he has no brothers and sisters. He is the third generation of his family to farm at that site.

Once the decision was made, he said he went to the supervisors and asked if they were interested in it, because, "We didn't want to give it to them if they didn't want to use it." The supervisors were delighted, of course, and the wills were made.

As the wills were written, the land would be made into a park at Herr's death, however, a quirk of fate and



Amos Herr recently donated the land from his farm so that a park for the public use could be constructed.

his own generosity made it possible for 14 acres to be developed in his lifetime.

Through discussion with the supervisors and the availability of a federal grant for the development of the land, Herr eventually deeded the initial 14 acres to the Township. "The Township has and owns the 14 acres," he said. There was a provision made for Herr to receive the going rent for the land as an income during his lifetime.

A real plus of donating the land now is that Herr has been able to enjoy seeing his dream become a reality. Before any work began, a comprehensive plan was drawn up and submitted to the county planning commission. While Herr noted that some changes may be made as it is developed, he is very happy with the plans as they were drawn up. A large map showing the proposed use of the farm is hanging in the Township office in Rohrerstown. Eventually there will be plaque designating donations of trees made to the park.

In addition to the present facilities, the final plan includes another baseball/football area, a second pavilion and comfort station, picnic areas, stage and dancing area. There will also be skateboard areas and bike trails. A lake is planned, complete with an island. Along with wooded space and open areas, there will be space provided for parking.

"It's made me very happy," Herr noted. I am particularly happy to see its inception and am very happy that the supervisors have done a marvelous job in planning the park. They have such a personal interest, not just a casual approach to it."

Giving the community a nice park is something which makes Herr very proud, but he adds that he is delighted with the community response, with service organizations taking the lead in helping develop the different areas.

Herr, who retired from teaching at Hempfield High

School in 1963, taught social studies and coached "various sports." He introduced soccer at the school and coached basketball and baseball. He said he gradually retired from his general farming about the same time. The land is under cultivation.

Herr resides in a lovely brick farmhouse built in 1852 by his grandfather shortly after he married and bought the farm. He noted that the farmhouse has had alterations throughout the years but remains basically the same. He also said that large farmhouses in that area were a necessity because in addition to the three or four children in a family most families would include a maid and a hired man. "They also needed more space for food preparation then," he noted.

Herr reminisced readily about the Landisville he knew as a boy, and remarked that before World War II, he could identify the families which lived on every farm he could see from his windows. This sense of knowing one's neighbors has changed, with the influx of people.

Herr's retirement can only be described as "active." He is deeply involved in the Landisville Church of God, taking part in the church on a local, state and national basis. He is also a member of the East Petersburg Rotary Club, and he served six years as a Township Supervisor.

A seasoned traveler, Herr has gained extensive knowledge through experiencing life in other countries. He has made seventeen trips to Europe and has visited every continent. He calls Austria a favorite country, and said he enjoys taking a Winter vacation to the ski areas. While he doesn't ski, he likes to hike on the ski trails. "I enjoy all kinds of travel." While he occasionally travels on tours, he also travels a lot independently.

Herr has been honored for his contribution by the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society and by East Hempfield Township, with a plaque which states, "for his commendable and dedicated generosity to the community."

The East Hempfield Lions Club also presented him with a plaque expressing "sincere thanks and appreciation for the devotion of time, energy and interest to the affairs of the citizens and youth of East Hempfield Township and for his generous contribution of land to the Township for purposes of creating a community recreation park."

The honors and accolades are a nice tribute, but it is clear that to Amos Herr, the real joy is seeing a small part of his dream become a reality and having the thrill of seeing the acceptance of his gift by the community.

Sheep club holds meeting

CARLISLE — The Cumberland County Condogunet 4-H Sheep Club held their January meeting at the Penn State Extension office in Carlisle. New officers were elected for 1979.

The following members were elected into office: Ray Holtry, president; Rick Clelan, vice president; Mindy Brandt, secretary; David Baker, treasurer;

Tom Lebo, news reporter; and Paul Wynn, social chairman. Also elected were: Ray Holtry and Mundy Brandt as Cumberland County 4-H Council representatives; Dwayne Haus, council alternate; Angie Fought and Clark Capozzi, song leaders.

The February meeting will be held at the home of Rick Clelan.

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