

This feedmill on the Konhaus farm grinds corn and other feed ingredients into a complete ration, then sends it automatically to the turkey pens.

paid to have the commercials broadcast five times a day in the three weeks remaining before Christmas.

Konhaus sold every one of his turkeys at a profit, and he hasn't looked back since. It's been 29 years since the A&P buyer called. Konhaus now has a flock of 40,000 turkeys, all of which he sells at retail.

In his early years as a retailer, Konhaus, with the help of his wife and children, sold turkeys and baked goods from a small roadside stand outside the house. He's convinced that retailing is one of the most challenging, but rewarding, options open to family farmers.

A roadside market, where a farmer can sell at least part of what he produces, makes a lot of sense to me," Konhaus said. "I'm not saying every beef producer should open a butcher shop on his front lawn. But I know a lot more farmers could sell fresh fruits and vegetables through roadside markets. Or they could run a pick-your-own operation."

Konhaus's philosophy may not be for everybody, but he's living proof that it can work. His farm operation today covers 600 acres. Some of the acreage is covered with buildings, a processing plant and turkey pens.

About 50 acres are given over to sweet corn which is retailed through the three Konhaus Farms stores. The rest of the acreage is planted to corn, some of which is fed to the 40,000 turkeys reared annually, the rest of which is sold.

A determined streak of independence permeates Konhaus's farm operation as well as his marketing methods. He grinds his own turkey feed according to a formula worked out for him by a Cornell professor. His farm manager, who's been with him for 30 years, pretty much runs the farm.

"We need some extra help during the harvest season, but this is a man-and-a-half operation," Konhaus said. "I'm the half."

From the well-kept pens, the turkeys are moved when they're mature to a tidy processing plant operated with part-time help. Birds that aren't sold fresh are frozen.

Like every other turkey grower in the business, Konhaus sells most of his birds at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Unlike most growers, Konhaus does a brisk year-round business in turkey parts. "We sell about 300 birds a week as parts," he said. "We just thaw them out, cut them up and put them in the meat cases."

Turkeys are still an important part of the Konhaus Farms business. But from a small roadside stand, Konhaus has developed into an independent grocer with two complete supermarkets, one in Lemoyne and one in Windsor Park, near the farm. There's also a smaller convenience store, butcher shop and bakery at the end of the road leading to the farm.

One man runs the farm operation. Konhaus Farms has 175 people working on the retail side of the business. Red meat sales and even chicken long ago outran Konhaus's turkey sales.

Most of the retail growth has come within the last four years, when Konhaus made a determined effort to expand from his small store.

He first bought a suburban store from one of the country's biggest grocery chains. It had been limping along at an unprofitable rate for years. By laying out the store differently, using everything he'd learned operating his roadside market, by selling fresh baked goods and good meats and produce at competitive prices, Konhaus and his employees and managers increased the store's sales volume by ten times what it had been.

Earlier this year, Konhaus Farms bought another store from the same chain. It, too, was limping along with mediocre sales. Almost at once, the store as a Konhaus Farms store, quadrupled the business it had been doing before.

"You couldn't expect a farmer or anybody else to just open up a store and run it profitably," Konhaus said. "But the things I've learned running a roadside market have made it possible to expand."

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"Is it Thanksgiving already?" this turkey seemed to be asking Paul Konhaus on Wednesday when he visited the pen. Not yet, turkey. But soon. Soon.

Turkey farm

(Continued from Page 1)

redoubled their flock and their small processing plant.

The year Paul Konhaus's brother died, they had 8,000 turkeys in the pens, all committed to their biggest buyer.

That's when A&P called. "They wanted to pay 10-cents a pound under our cost of production. I didn't know what to do. My brother had been handling the financial end of the business. I was looking after the production side. I got a quick and rude introduction to the business side.

"Was I going to go broke trying to sell turkeys to A&P? At their prices, I would have gone broke. But I decided to sell those turkeys myself. At retail."

Konhaus called a local radio station, had them write 30-second commercials, and



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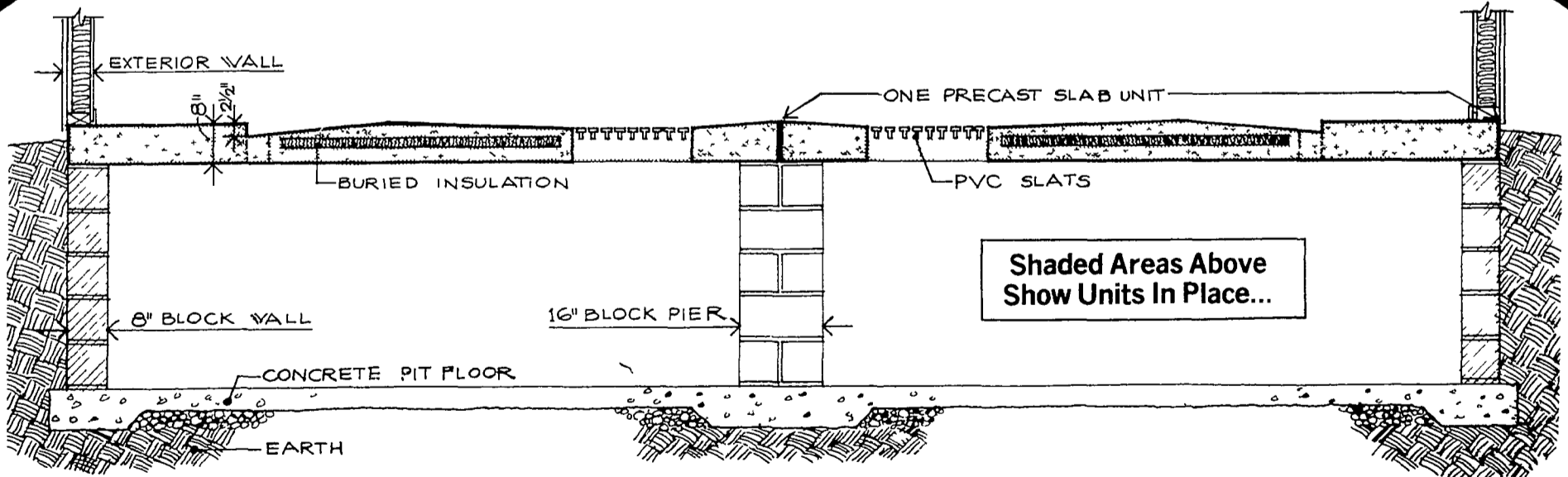
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