

Why one Ephrata Twp. farmer wants to preserve farmland

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN
EPHRATA — Slowly, ever so slowly, he sinks to one knee.

Reaching down, he scoops a handful of soil into his right hand.

Gently, almost caressingly, he feels the soil with a light rubbing motion. A small clump breaks open in his palm and gradually dribbles between his fingers.

At 78, Ivan G. Martin hasn't worked the soil on his Ephrata Township farm for a decade and a half.

But he's as close to it today as he was throughout the more than 40 years that he did farm the land.

Now, he wants to make certain that this land continues to taste only the steely slice of the plow or disc and not the more brutal bite of the bulldozer or the backhoe.

Owner of 123 acres in Ephrata Township, he wants to be among the first farmers to join the fledgling movement to preserve prime Lancaster County farmland.

"I'm ready to sign up now and encourage my neighbors to sign up, too," Martin said.

This slightly built steward of the soil, who had to give up the life he loved in the mid-1960's due to arthritis, was in attendance when the Lancaster County Agricultural Preservation Board formally proposed to help Ephrata Township officials form the county's first farmland preservation districts. Under the program, use of prime agricultural land would be reserved for farming under 25-year deed restrictions.

"This is top-notch farmland," Martin said.

"It just goes against my grain to have it used for anything else.

"A lot of people don't understand. They think that land is just land and all of it is the same. But it certainly isn't.

"I remember once at a family reunion, we started talking crops like farmers do when they get together.

"Two of my wife's brothers said they had one of the poorest oat crops they ever had. Well, we had a full oat crop at the same time.

"But it had been a wet spring and their sandstone soil didn't drain. Our limestone soil here drained

easily and we had a good crop."

Martin just can't understand selling off good farmland for development purposes.

"Good land is valued so high now for agriculture," he said.

"Why must it be sold off for development just to get some extra money?"

"Money must be awfully important to do that."

He looks at farmland preservation from another economic point of view, too.

"A farmer must make such a large investment in a crop now," he said.

"There's seed, fertilizer, herbicides, insecticides, equipment, machinery and other costs. With such an expense, it's more important than ever that he get a good crop. And for a good crop, you need good land."

Martin has had experience with soils in other parts of the country.

His own personal first crop was some pumpkins grown shortly after the turn of the century when his parents farmed in northwest Iowa.

"I hadn't even gone to school yet when I put in those pumpkins," he recalled.

"Ever since then, farming has been my only work. I never considered doing anything else. I helped an uncle once for about a week during a winter to build a barn and that's the only time I worked off the farm."

He remembers that Iowa soil, too.

"It was so sticky, you had to clean the plow every night," he said.

"If you weren't going to plow the next day, you had to oil the plow to keep it from rusting. Or else, it wouldn't scour."

Moving from Iowa to Michigan, the Martins came "back" to Lancaster County in 1923 when Ivan was 21 years old. His ancestors earlier had been part of the Mennonite migration to Canada following the Revolution.

From the Fall of 1923 until the Spring of 1966 he worked the 123-acre farm located in the area of Sunnyside and Hackman roads in Ephrata Township. Now, the land is tenant farmed.

Methods of farming changed quite a bit over those years. He recalls that haying was one of the

toughest jobs on the farm. He remembers one day in particular.

"We always had a hay loader," he said.

"Working on the wagon in front of the loader was just as hard as pitching the hay.

"The hay just kept coming and you really had to work to spread it around the wagon.

"We usually had two men on the wagon and more than once someone got stuck with a pitchfork.

"One day, I stuck the fellow I was working with in the calf of the leg. I just yanked it out and we kept on working.

"That night, he went to the doctor and when he probed the wound, he found the fork had gone completely through his calf.

"But it never even became infected. We were back haying the next day.

"It's things like this that show the work wasn't the easiest, but once farming gets into your blood, you just don't even consider anything else."

Martin believes in proper care of the soil.

"Our land was so phosphorus hungry when we first came here, you could notice in the wheat in spring just where the fertilizer hopper on the drill ran dry," he said.

"We always believed in fertilization though and the yields proved it value.

"If you treat the soil right, it will treat you right."

Today, fruit trees and a large vegetable garden literally serve to keep Martin's hands in the soil.

But his thoughts are always back on the farm and the land he wants to stay in farming even if he can't farm it.



The agricultural heritage of Ivan G. Martin is as deeply rooted in the soil of Ephrata Township as the crops he grew there over a span of more than four decades.

"Even more than today, this land is going to be needed for the use it was intended — the production of food," he said.

"I think it should be natural with people to see things preserved rather than always just consumed."



"I think it should be natural with people to see things preserved rather than always just consumed," explains Ivan G. Martin as his personal belief concerning farmland preservation.

400 may lose market

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processes 1.5 million pounds per day.

The milk which stays within Pennsylvania has not been a problem as far as shipping weights. It's the interstate milk shipments which are collecting Goldman a basketful of fines.

The question of truck size, as Goldman sees it, is simply one of economic efficiency.

He points out that most dairy cooperatives take a sizable deduction, 40 to 50 cents, from a farmer's milk check for hauling.

"I can't deduct. I get no kick-in from farmers. The law won't allow it.

"I have to be efficient," he says. And efficiency in hauling means larger trucks hauling bigger loads.

Goldman has drawn strong support from a number of farmer groups, including Pennsylvania Farmers' Association which lobbied strongly Tuesday at its legislative banquet for higher truck limits.

PFA President Eugene Thompson called the 73,820 pound limit "a major trade barrier."

He said the barrier must be eliminated not just for agriculture but for all industries in Pennsylvania.

Fenton Murphy, treasurer of NEDCO and a member of the State Grange's dairy committee, has spoken out forcefully for higher truck weight limits.

Grange policy currently supports raising the weight limit on trucks to conform with that of surrounding 30,000 pound states. Only six states east of the Mississippi have not raised their truck limits.

"I get calls from senators, congressmen, farmers, farmers organizations, and they all say they are fighting for me," Goldman said. "But I'm the one on the hot seat."

Goldman said he also is irritated at the Pennsylvania state police department's use of portable scales to weigh his tankers.

He said the police are stopping his big trucks only on the federal highways and not on state roads.

He questioned how the state police figure they can get an accurate weight on portable scales of a tanker with its milk sloshing back and forth in the tank.

Goldman pointed out they use platform scales at his processing plant and even then it is difficult to get accurate weights until about a half hour after a truck has been parked and the load has settled.

He said weight readings often will vary by a couple of thousand pounds on the same load.

"I'll bet if I fought it in the courts I'd be able to beat it," he says, but so far he has taken no action against the portable scales.

Most of the hope with in-

state farmers seems to rest with getting the legislature to move to increase the gross vehicle limit in the state to 80,000 pounds.

PFA figures state farmers could lose at least \$32 million a year in milk sales if Goldman does cut off his Pennsylvania shippers.

Whether the state takes

any action to save the farmers, Goldman, and other industries, remains to be seen.

What those 400 northeastern Pennsylvania dairymen are hoping fervently is that Goldman doesn't wake up one morning and decide to call it quits.—CH

March egg production up 15%

HARRISBURG — March 1980 egg production in Pennsylvania totaled 369 million, according to the Pennsylvania Crop Reporting Service. The March production was 15 percent above the 322 million eggs produced in March 1979.

The March average of 16.5 million layers was 11 percent higher than a year ago. Egg production per 100 layers

was 2,240 compared with 2,158 in March 1979.

The nation's laying flocks produced 5.95 billion eggs during March 1980, one percent more than a year ago. The number of layers during March averaged 284 million compared with 289 million a year earlier.

Egg production per 100 layers during the month was 2078 compared with 2042 a year ago.



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