

## Franklin couple

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Barbara said, really made the youth think about their lives and community situations.

Currently the Project, now in its third and final year, has expanded to 57 farm couples from the 23 states where Farmers Union is located. Twenty-four couples were added the second year.

Where does the American Farm Project go after the completion of its third year?

Bob and Barbara say that it will be up to the individual state and farm couples to continue the program on a smaller scale.

"We could sponsor small programs through Farmers Union. We have the materials and resources here to draw from for training new couples, said Barbara.

"But for a large scale program involving large numbers of people, for example a folk festival stressing the humanities or a large training session, we would need to apply for grants from the State Endowment for the Humanities.

"Some states have already received grants for their own programs," said Barbara.

The Project not only has had an effect on those people Bob and Barbara come in contact with. It also has had an effect on them.

"The Project has been good for us," stated Barbara, with Bob echoing her words.

"We, along with the other farm couples, are the instrument to strengthen the humanities and bring them across, we try to create a public awareness in our rural communities."

"The people who are affected are many times not the people who are making the decisions" said Barbara. "Our programs give people a stronger identity with the problems affecting them.

Instead of not doing anything because they feel they cannot, people are starting to act.

"For example when the gas allotment came into effect here in the Valley, we were given less gasoline because our population is small. But we travel more.

"People knew that we were involved in the Project so they called us and wanted to know what they could do. We helped them go to their legislators with the problem.

"They knew by being exposed to the Project that there are avenues of reaction to take instead of not taking any action. You cannot use random numbers when tackling a problem. You must look deeper because lives are most always affected" concluded Barbara.

## Micropropagation — having your cake and eating it too

**UNIVERSITY PARK** — Having your cake and eating it too may not be possible today, but if it's an apple, a strawberry or asparagus, you may someday be able to — if you save a small piece.

It sounds like science fiction, but the technology exists today to reproduce almost any plant from any section of the plant, including the fruit, and the new offspring will be a perfect replica of the parent.

"The technique is centuries old," says Chico Haramaki, horticulturist at Penn State. "Many Plants can be reproduced by taking cuttings, but today only a few cells are needed and all parts of a plant have been used."

Called micropropagation, tiny plants are grown in specially prepared mixtures of inorganic nutrients and

organic compounds like sugars, vitamins and hormones. The technique eliminates the potential variation in offspring that often occurs with seeds.

There are several reasons for reproducing plants through micropropagation.

One is to produce and maintain disease free plants. There are several techniques in which the plants can be made virus, fungi and bacteria free.

Another is to rapidly multiply plants which normally take a great deal of time to reproduce.

"It is possible to produce

hundreds of thousands of plants in a year, which by conventional methods would produce just two plants," says Haramaki. "This means that someone who spends years to perfect a certain orchid can now reproduce vast numbers of exactly the same orchid in less than a year, whereas before only two plants could be grown the first year."

It means that someone could steal just the tip of the bud of the orchid and grow thousands of identical plants without the owner realizing it.

"There are vast economic

implications," cautions Haramaki. "For example, a couple of years ago the market was flooded with Boston ferns, because ferns are one of the easiest plants to reproduce using only a small part of the plant in a nutrient culture."

It is also possible to cut off a portion of a plant, put it in a plastic bag, mail it anywhere, then a few days later grow new stock from the mailed piece. This could eliminate packaging and handling problems.

Instead of maintaining rows of plants in a greenhouse for cuttings, plant cultures can be maintained in a few culture test tubes in a corner of a room. These plants can be used for plant breeding.

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