

Lutz decries vanishing farmland

UNIVERSITY PARK — William Lutz, Jr. recently won the state Future Farmers of America speaking contest at Penn State and the tri-state competition for New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania. In September he will compete in the Eastern Regional Nationals in Massachusetts. The son of Mr. and Mrs. William Lutz, R1 Sugar Run, he will be a freshman in agricultural education at Penn State this fall. Excerpts from his speech follow:

WHERE ARE YOU GOING, LITTLE ONE?

By William Lutz, Jr.

The year is 1990. The little, dark-haired boy standing beside me on the porch of the farmhouse reaches up to take my hand. In his other hand, he clutches a little, red plastic tractor. He wants to be a farmer like me. He's my son.

I look through the early morning mist of summer over my green fields to the hills across the valley. Five years ago, Bill Williams had a 300-acre farm over there. I remember his three silos towering above the barn that he was so proud of.

Bill and Alice Williams aren't there anymore. Neither is their farm. Two years ago a developer from the city came through here; he offered Bill a price he couldn't refuse, so he sold out. Now the rolling hills across the valley are dotted with new homes and laced with macadam roads. Guess there's about 250 houses over there now.

I look south to the huge gray cloud

over the hill. Looks like the new factory is really going strong this morning. Ben Owens called a couple of days ago to tell me to watch for tumors in my stock. He said some fella from the extension office told him the gray dust covering all out pasture land causes malignant tumors in cattle.

Gotta call the vet to come over and check a growth on that heifer I bought from Tim Smith last winter.

Tim sold out last week. The spring floods ruined his orchards and covered his fields with gravel and boulders. He and Betty and the kids had worked so hard. This was to be the first year they would have realized a profit from all their hard work.

Some lumbering outfit bought him out. They're going to strip the back mountain. Guess our days of turkey hunting up there are over forever.

Nobody ever remembers our little creek coming up so far and so fast. One of the township supervisors said it's because of all the run-off caused by all the development in the valley.

We can't let the boy play out in the front yard anymore because of the traffic, and it takes me an hour each week to pick up the broken glass, papers and cans before I can mow the grass.

Last fall was the worst. Those hunters from the city raised can around here. They tore up and down the road, threw bottles and cans out of their cars and when they left, they

dumped their garbage in the glen up the road.

When Seth Miller left his farm to his son, Jerry, he never thought it would be sold to a group of city fellas for a hunting club. Jerry had planned to farm it after he finished college, but he just couldn't pay the inheritance tax on it. Jerry's teaching agriculture in some school near the city and the city folks are up here.

Son, I don't know if there will be a farm for you when you grow up. From 1968 to 1977, 5,000 farms disappeared in Pennsylvania, along with over 600,000 acres. It wasn't only because of the high costs, but because of development, pollution, taxes and lack of conservation. And it seems there is a lot more loose money for everything but farming.

By the year 2000, the Department of Agriculture estimates, Pennsylvania will lose 21 percent of its prime farm land. That's 966,000 acres, which is more than all the land in this country put together, and you

can bet it's that way all over the United States.

The Department of Agriculture says the United States is losing 5 million acres of prime farm land each year, and by the year 2000 we won't be able to export any foodstuffs.

Somebody has called the loss of all this farm land a "national crisis." but nobody seems to be too concerned about it or is doing anything about it. Will Rogers said, "Put your money in land, son, 'cause they ain't making anymore of it..."

Well, son, they aren't making anymore of it, and we are losing it so fast. The loss has been so subtle that most folks aren't aware of it. One day the farms are here, and the next day they are gone. What's the most frightening of all of this is that this farm land can never be reclaimed.

When it's gone, it's gone.

One thing's for sure, son. If the young people of America expect to have a future in farming, they're the ones who have to put a stop to all of this, and soon.

Peninsula hort society sets two meetings

DELMAR, Md. — Dates have now been set for the 1980 meetings of the Peninsula Horticulture Society.

Greenhouse day will be November 11, from 9.30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. at Delmar

Convention Hall in Delmar, Md. Fruit and Vegetable day will be December 2, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. at the same location.

The program for greenhouse operators and nurserymen has again been

advanced in order to leave them free for marketing of holiday plants later in the year.

The morning session November 11 will focus on ways to deal with the energy crisis, including the economics of growing and selling smaller potted plants. There will also be a talk on what to grow in a cold greenhouse.

The afternoon session will focus on nursery stock. Topics to be discussed then include: fact and fiction of fast growing trees, fall fertilization of ornamentals, and problems with Japanese black pines.

The main emphasis of the December 2 program for fruit and vegetable growers will be marketing.

For further information check with your county extension agent.

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