

The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

WHAT MAKES A MASTER FARMER?

The Pennsylvania Master Farmer program each year recognizes a few farm operators who stand head and shoulders above the crowd. Five of the 1981 winners are dairy farmers.

Are they extraordinary people? Are they doing an extraordinary job? Winners must surely be doing many things right, so let's see what we can learn from these top notch farmers.

First of all, a Master Farmer has to be a big operator, right? Not at all —, the 43 milkers in the E. Wayne Beshore herd would be disqualified on the basis of numbers alone. In today's world it would be considered a small herd. The point is quickly made that it's not the cow numbers that guarantee success in the business or that impresses the neigh-

bors, the bankers and the judges.

It's the quality of the product that counts. The 20,000 pound herd average is one testimony to the superior ability of the Beshore management.

A Master Farmer should own lots of land? False.

The classic example of a very successful dairy operation is Galen Crouse, Lancaster County farmer who doesn't own a single acre!

He has an agreement with the owner of the land he farms that permits him to erect needed buildings and write them off in 20 years. He's using the land to produce the feed he needs at a reasonable price. The economics of trying to buy \$4000 an acre land at 12 percent interest is very questionable. In fact, it's downright ridiculous to

expect corn and alfalfa to pay off that kind of a mortgage.

Anyway, Galen Crouse is one good example that proves you don't need to be a landowner to be a Master Farmer.

A Master Farmer should be a man, — preferably with a good strong back. Well, take another look at the list.

Mary Rice, of Blaine, Perry County, has been the mainstay and prime mover at Blaine-View Farm for over 50 years, and I don't think she owes her Master Farmer award to Womens Lib. She earned it by simply practicing a whole list of very simple and sound business principles, backed up by a strong faith that surmounted many difficulties down through the years.

She has earned a good reputation as a top Holstein breeder, family financial manager and community leader.

Master Farmer Nevin Rice is a top notch crops man, which is also an essential ingredient of success in the dairy business. Good crops and good cows go hand in hand. But I'm sure that Nevin would be first to credit the guiding spirit of his mother, Mary Rice, for the success of Blaine-View Farm.

A Master Farmer doesn't need outside help or information — after all, he's a smart cookie and therefore

very self reliant. This may be quite true, but look closely at how Bill Sutton of Kent County, Maryland, operates and you'll see the reason for his shrewdness. He uses every available source of good information he can get.

His dad was a County Agent (I hope that this was an asset), he uses the Extension Service program, is active in Soil Conservation, Holstein Association and Resource Development Council. And he's not alone in this kind of activity. Every Master Farmer is active in these and other good organizations, and recognizes the value of keeping up-to-date on the best in modern farming technology.

Now, the list of qualities and attributes which are needed to become a Master Farmer can go on and on. I haven't even attempted to recite the many individual accomplishments of this year's winners.

We can always point proudly at the 20,000 pound herd average, bull stud contracts, embryo transplants, 200 bushel corn yields, etc. These are exemplary of the use of modern technology. Many progressive farmers are using them to good advantage.

The only thing that really sets the Master Farmer apart and above his (or her)

fellows is that he (or she) has learned how to put a lot of very important little practices together into a very significant bundle.

To be a Master Farmer, you don't have to be a big operator, you don't need a lot of land, you don't necessarily need a college degree, and you don't even have to be a man. One or more of these qualities might help, but as we've

seen, are not essential. So, study the success stories of the Master Farmers. Glean from them the more evident ingredients, and look deeper for the less conspicuous but significant actions and attitudes. Put them together in a way that registers a measurable impact on your fellowmen, and you too will be a Master Farmer.

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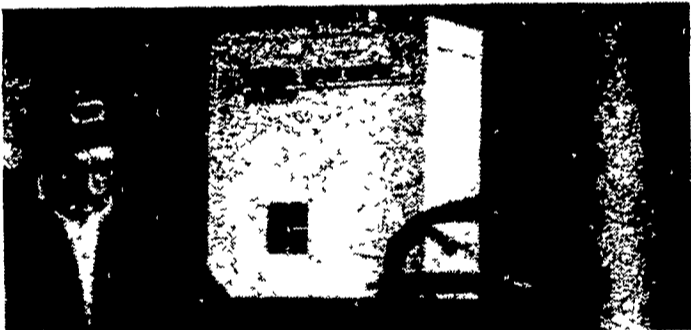
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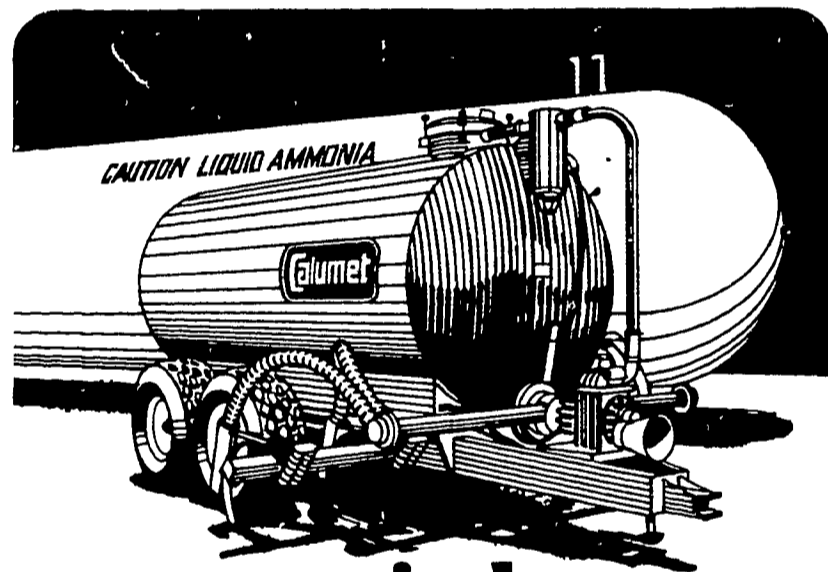
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