



Farm & Home Center banquet features roast mortgage

BY SALLY BAIR
Staff Correspondent

LANCASTER — It was a moment of intense pride for Lancaster's agricultural community when Commonwealth National Bank President John Biechler touched a candle flame to the four corners of the mortgage of the Farm and Home Center and set it afire.

The mortgage-burning ceremony was the highlight of the 17th annual meeting of the Farm and Home Foundation held Thursday night and represented the realization of a dream which began decades ago. Nearly 260 people came out to witness the burning, including many early leaders in the campaign for a center

and many elected officials. Larry Skromme, vice-president of the Board of Directors and co-chairman of the fund drive for the Center, recalled that at times it seemed an "impossible dream."

He added, "The history reads so smoothly but those of us involved know the

obstacles we met along the way. This week we see dreams come true — all the hostages were returned safely and the realization of another dream that at times seemed impossible."

Before torching the mortgage, Biechler said, "I had no feeling that they thought it was impossible

when the committee came to me with the plan I saw people who make things happen."

Adding a moment of humor Biechler added, "I am genuinely happy to have this mortgage paid off because in the mid-sixties a

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John Biechler does the honors of putting the flame to the Farm and Home Center mortgage. The ceremony in Lancaster Thursday night marked the end of an era for the County's ag foundation.

Legislative roundup

House takes first steps on ag areas bill

BY CURT HARLER
HARRISBURG — A bill to allow establishment of agricultural areas in Pennsylvania was presented to the House Agriculture Committee Tuesday.

The bill also authorizes counties to buy and sell development easements in those areas.

Although the measure was held in committee for further consideration, it is

likely the bill will be reported to the full house as written with few amendments other than technical changes.

The bill, HB 143, defines an ag district or ag area as "a unit of 500 or more acres of land used for the agricultural production of crops, livestock and livestock products under the ownership of one or more persons."

The bill is sponsored by 27 members of the House including the ag committee's majority chairman and vice chairman, and the ag minority chairman.

As written, HB 143 has the support of Pennsylvania Farmers' Association. The Grange has indicated it would like to see penalties for early removal of land from the program. As written, there is no penalty provision in HB 143.

A 500 acre area would not have to be contiguous to form an ag district under the bill.

Land used for processing or retail merchandising of crops, livestock, or livestock products could not be included in the ag district.

The bill will allow any local government body to establish an Ag Area Advisory Committee to render expert advice relating to formation or termination of ag areas.

HB 143 specifies two active farmers, two ag businessmen, and one member of the local government as members

The measure is completely voluntary throughout.

HB 143 will allow any landowners to submit a proposal for an ag area provided the owner or owners own at least 500 acres or at least 10 percent of the land proposed to be included in the area, whichever is greater.

Provision is made for ag areas which will extend over township lines.

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A total of 32 farms have been quarantined since the beginning of the outbreak a year ago, according to Dr. John W. Cable, Head, Swine Health Division, Bureau of Animal Industry.

Presently 22 herds are under quarantine. Dr. Cable said, mostly in Lancaster County. Of the 22 quarantined herds, 18 are in the county, three in Lebanon County and one in Schuylkill County.

"The disease has hung on mostly in the same original area and has not spread throughout the state," Dr. Cable said.

Among the 22 presently quarantined herds, 11 are finishing operations which received pigs from infected herds.

A new problem — spread of

the disease to cattle causing fatalities — has resulted since the advent of the colder weather.

"This problem started about mid-November," Dr. Cable said, "when farmers started mingling their hogs and cattle, causing a number of steer deaths."

Steer losses on one Lancaster County farm numbered eight and on another farm there were 13, according to Dr. Cable.

"It usually happens that a farmer will lose a few cattle before it's found out what has caused it," Dr. Cable explained.

"Then, the hogs and cattle are separated and the problem generally clears up within three to five days."

Both Dr. Cable and County
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Education Secretary quashes vo-ag scare

BY DEBBIE KOONTZ
HARRISBURG — Earlier fears and misconceptions of vocational agriculture's diminishing administration were dispelled at a Thursday morning meeting between Secretary of Education Robert Scanlon, Representative Samuel E. Hayes, Don Evans of Penn State and 18 vo-ag teachers. Said Hayes of the meeting,

"It was very good and just what we hoped to accomplish. Secretary Scanlon was very receptive to what the vo-ag teachers were saying and was very sympathetic. He further proved himself to be interested in and supportive of the needs of the vo-ag program, the adult farmer programs and even FFA."

Secretary Scanlon showed his "interest" by assuring that no more positions in the vocational agricultural administration would be diminished.

"That was the purpose of the meeting, to save and keep in place all administrators and specialists of vo-ag and to keep them working in the extent that they have been serving," Hayes said.

The "diminishing role" that those present were concerned about was the possible deletion of Vocational Agricultural

Education Adviser, now being filled by Charles F. Lebo. Before the meeting, there was talk of reassigning him with other duties.

The Secretary further showed his support by requesting that the teachers of vo-ag say what they believe the Education Department is doing to help vo-ag and then to again rate its work six months from now at FFA week at Penn State. Secretary Scanlon will be attending this event as will almost all vo-ag instructors in Pennsylvania.

"Secretary Scanlon gave every indication that he wants his staff to be supportive. He is concerned about having the program flow smoothly because he is very outgoing in trying to reach down to the classroom level. He understands education takes place in the lab and the classroom by these instructors and not

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LITITZ — Lancaster County's annual agricultural waiting and guessing game concerning tobacco ended this week.

Buyers finally moved into the field in force beginning Monday and started purchasing the 1980 crop at a price of 85 cents per pound.

This initial flurry of buying activity was much later than last year when purchases began before the holidays. The late-January opening of buying activity was even much later than the traditional post-holiday start.

This week's most-quoted price of 85 cents for Pennsylvania-type filler was above last year's average of 72 cents. But it is quite a bit below earlier grower talk that had centered in the \$1 range.

Selling activity reportedly varied quite a bit across the county.

Areas of greatest selling activity were primarily in

the southern section of the county and around East Petersburg and Manheim.

There were spotty reports from the northern sections of the county.

And in western sections growers appeared to be holding their crops to a much greater degree.

Among buyers in the field this week were those from all major companies, including Lorillard Corp., American Tobacco, General Cigar and Tobacco, Lancaster Leaf and Owens Tobacco.

As expected with the excellent curing weather, the quality of the crop was reported as good. Good yields were also achieved with many running about a ton to the acre.

Earlier in the buying season a limited quantity of the so-called fancy tobacco went for prices around \$1 and the small amount of Maryland-type went as high as \$1.15.