

## “Farm Show’s in my blood” says director Horace Mann

BY SHEILA MILLER

HARRISBURG — If you notice some improvements surrounding the 66th Pennsylvania Farm Show this year, you can thank the man that made them all possible — Farm Show Director Horace Mann.

Mann, who had 10 previous Farm Shows under his belt before returning to Pennsylvania’s largest agricultural show last year, is using his experience to whip the show back to being the ‘best ever.’ Mann’s first stint as Farm Show director came in August of 1963 and ended in 1972.

When asked how it felt to be back in the driver’s seat, Mann exclaimed, “It’s great. I guess I have it in my blood.

“I missed the association with exhibitors and all that’s involved in planning the show. It’s time to turn Farm Show around to where I had it.”

Since taking over the show last year, Mann said his task of revamping the format of Farm Show was made easier by the cooperation he received from staff. “When I first ran the show, I was in charge of everything — from stalling the livestock to planning the equipment areas. Now we each have an area we’re responsible for,” he said.

One of the changes that went into effect this year was a 15 percent across-the-board increase in premiums for exhibitors. “Of course, premiums are always changing,” explained Mann. “We try to keep up with other shows and update our present needs.

“For instance, when I first started directing the Farm Show, there were a lot more home economics exhibits in the sewing category. Now the emphasis has

switched to crafts and art. So we apply the premiums where they’ll do the most good for the exhibitors.”

Helping to pay for this increase in premiums will be the \$2 parking charge - raised from the former \$1 fee collected in previous years. Admission to the show still is at no cost, and said Mann, he has no indications this will change in the near future.

There are more exhibitors at Farm Show this year than ever before, and with this increase in numbers comes the problems of squeezing them in to the limited space provided by the complex.

“We’ve utilized every square foot of space, and are using the lower concourse area for commercial exhibits this year. This ‘valuable’ space wasn’t utilized last year,” said Mann.

Although he’s whittled down the waiting list for exhibitors wanting to win a space in the big show, Mann said he’s only been able to catch up to the 1977 applicants. He said he reduced the waiting list by about 100 by just “purging” those applicants who were still on the list but had ceased to exist. To do this, he directed his staff to send out registered letters to all those on the waiting list, asking if they still desired a space.

To fit the large numbers of commercial exhibitors onto the main exhibition floor, Mann said the spaces allotted to each were reduced to either a 10 x 10 or 10 x 15 section. And they were laid out so that all the supporting pillars on the main exhibition floor would fall either in back of the exhibitor’s space or somewhere inside. “Last year the columns were on the corners which required all the large equipment to be pushed to

the center of the space — making the area much smaller than it should have been,” he said.

And commercial exhibits were scheduled for both sides of the east end of the dairy barn this year, where previously only one side was used.

“That set up caused a lot of problems,” explained Mann. “Having cattle on one side and commercial exhibits on the other wasn’t very conducive.”

One thorn in Mann’s side is the 20,000 square feet of “wasted space” needed for the required fire corridors between the poultry room, small arena, and hog and sheep barn and the main exhibition floor. This space was provided during the time Mann was away from Farm Show. “It’s a shame to have lost that amount of space when we have those people who would like to participate in the show.”

This year’s main exhibition floor will be taking on a new “face” thanks to Mann, with all related types of equipment being grouped in one area. “Exhibitors are here all week, but a farmer only has a limited amount of time when he comes to Farm Show,” said Mann. “If they get their questions answered, they’re better satisfied — that’s an advantage to both the advertiser and the spectator.”

Mann expressed his willingness to listen to all the comments concerning Farm Show — from both the spectators and exhibitors in an effort to make adjustments for continually improving the show. He said he’ll personally be making his rounds all week, talking to the people and finding out their likes and dislikes.

Even before this year’s Farm Show gets off the ground, Mann

and his staff are already working on the 1983 ‘ag-stravaganza.’ They are coming up with a long-range development plan for the show and the complex which will hopefully include additional space.

“When you look at what Farm Show was when this building was constructed in the 1930s and what it is today, there’s no comparison. And yet we’re dealing with the same basic buildings to carry out the event in style.

“If we had more space, I’d like to see an area set aside to feature the latest in agriculture — a Futurama — displaying the newest developments in farming.”

Thoughts of abandoning the site and relocating the Farm Show complex in a new place, however, are not in the director’s plans. With even 10 percent of the monies it would require to construct a new facility, a great deal of improvements could be made on the present building.

About \$4 million are earmarked for renovations of the complex over the next 3 years. These will include an expanded parking area (moving closer to the creek and railroad), improved ventilating equipment, and a new heating system which will permit different areas to be zoned thus saving on fuel costs.

An on-going expense is painting the walls of Farm Show. The ramps received a fresh coat of brown paint this year — covering up the traditional graffiti and making it less inviting for visiting ‘artists’ to dabble on the walls.

Mann, who comes to the director

ship with undiminished enthusiasm each year, also hopes to improve the show with a color-coding system. “People will be able to follow a certain color to find their way around the complex,” said Mann. “I’ve seen too many people who have circled the main concourse around the large arena and don’t know where they got on or where to get off.”

When asked the inevitable question about what the weather might hold in store, Mann replied, “I don’t want to hear the forecast. I was baptized with 20 inches of snow my first year as Farm Show director.”

No matter what the weather forecasters have in store, this year’s Farm Show will be another example of Mann’s continuous endeavors to make each show better than before.

### Now is the Time

(Continued from Page A10)

opportunity for showing animals and the purchase of new ones. To those who are exhibiting animals, and to those who might buy a bred gilt, or other animals, I’d say be sure to separate these animals from the rest of the herd or flock for at least 30 days. The other alternative is to treat all animals in the herd or flock for the same infections as the new animal has received. Sanitation and separation are two very important items in good livestock health programs.

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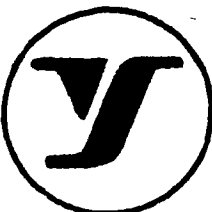


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