



# Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

## Enough to curl your corn

Baking under the merciful rays of a July sun, corn fields took on a different look this week. Broad green leaves were rolled up tight as the plants defensively shielded themselves from excessive moisture loss. Roots searched deep into ground etched with cracks and crevices for much-needed water as the parched plants felt the effects of the season's first dry, uncomfortably hot weather.

This is not a new experience for farmers in the humid Northeast which has had its share of droughts over the years. But it serves as a constant reminder of just how precious water is for farmers and their crops.

Water and how to conserve it was one of the key topics discussed by the Northeast's secretaries and commissioners of agriculture during their meeting in Hershey. All of the states' farm leaders remarked that the rain-rich Northeast must beware of taking this natural resource for granted or else suffer a fate similar to the moisture-starved Southwest.

But how? Pennsylvania farmers have already learned an unfortunate lesson in water politics, and not from scenes on television depicting ranchers fighting over watering rights for their cattle and sheep. They learned farmers hold the low spot on the totem pole when it comes to dishing out water during droughts — with residential water use considered more vital.

That lesson was learned during the drought of 1977-78 when agriculture's water rights were essentially shut off by emergency rationing rules that ensured water to homeowners for sanitation rather than to farmers for crop irrigation.

Farmers had a hard time understanding political priorities then, and things haven't changed since. To guarantee farmers and their nonfarm neighbors have enough water in the future, much has to be done to conserve and preserve its quantity and quality.

Although pricing, metering, public education, and water conservation devices are all methods that can be used to encourage people to conserve water in the home, people tend to revert back to their old, wasteful usage habits once the water shortage crisis is over. There needs to be continual education and conservation plus legislation that provides clear and unquestionable water rights for farmers, and not what's left over after industry and residential users drain their "preferred" shares.

Water is so essential to farming's future that we can't afford to wait for an emergency situation to act. George Wolff, who's president of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and a Lebanon County farmer, learned at an early age just how easily water can be taken for granted.

During the mid-1940s an ice storm knocked out all the electrical service to his family's beef

farm for an entire month. That month probably felt more like a year for Wolff as he carried bucket after bucket of water to quench the seemingly insatiable thirst of 100 steers.

"I believe the steers drank twice as much when the water was carried than when it ran through the pipes," claims the Pennsylvania Dutchman.

Wolff, like other conservationists, places great importance on the soil's ability to hold enough water deep within its layers. He is a strong advocate of chisel plowing which he believes helps to save soil from the ravages of erosion and, at the same time, permits water that falls on the surface to "percolate in." The trash on top acts as a wick, he claims.

A water conservation program that will have the rights of farmers in mind can only be effective if planners have an idea where the greatest demands will be for water in the future. Where are the greatest concentrations of livestock, the largest acreages of irrigated cropland, and which farming enterprises demand the most water daily?

The effects of intensive agriculture on water use and quality must continue to be studied by conservation districts and others. At the same time, water's effects on agriculture still raises many questions.

Conservation districts in the Northeast are encouraging continued investigation of the long-range effects of acid rain. At their national meeting held earlier this year, the districts passed a resolution addressing this "increasingly serious problem . . . that is now adversely affecting water quality, dams and other concrete structures, fish and wildlife habitat, forest production, and agricultural soils in many regions of the nation."

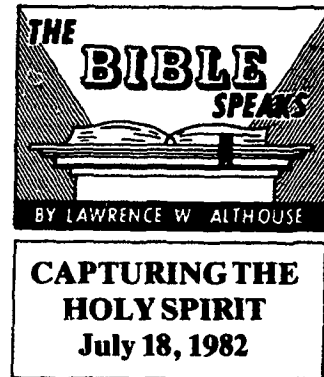
Unfortunately, the conservationists' concerns are not equally shared by the Northeast's ag secretaries and commissioners. Pennsylvania's Penrose Hollowell, instead, stresses his belief that acid rain is beneficial for agriculture — providing soil nutrients.

Maine's Stewart Smith, however, does not share Hollowell's "not-a-top-priority" attitude, citing studies conducted at the University of Maine which confirm acid rain lowers the soil pH and requires more lime to be applied.

"Acid rain should be slowed immediately," he says. Most agricultural people, he adds, are not concerned with the problem because it can be counteracted and it poses its greatest danger to forestry and fisheries.

"Maybe farmers should make it their concern," he remarks.

We think so too. Water — acid or alkaline, abundant or inadequate — is a concern for all farmers. Agriculture's water supply can't be left to popular politics. A plan for statewide and regional cooperation must be developed before another major drought leaves farmers high and dry.



Background Scripture  
Acts 10  
Devotional Reading  
Romans 10:5-13

Kathryn Kuhlman, the late great evangelist and healer, once said that she used to teach that, if a person had faith, they would be healed, and, if they weren't healed, it was because they didn't have faith. But she had to stop making that pronouncement, because, as she put it, "God didn't cooperate with me."

Many of us have made similar discoveries in our experience. Whenever we become too smug about our religious beliefs, whenever we assume that we have God pretty well boxed-in by our doctrines, rituals or religious lifestyles, we are likely to be rudely awakened to the realization that God far transcends even the best of our religious convictions. God is too big to be fitted into our hip pocket—the place where so many of us seem to think we've got him.

"No, Lord!"

Simon Peter had such an experience. In his dream/vision on the rooftop, Peter is instructed to kill and eat some of the animals that have been lowered from heaven in a great sheet. But Peter cannot bring himself to do so: his strong convictions as a Jew make it seem impossible to eat animals that, according to the Jewish law, would make him spiritually "unclean." So, despite the heavenly command, Peter says, "No, Lord; for I have never eaten

anything that is common or unclean."

Obviously, Peter's Jewish concepts are strong enough so that he is willing to deny the heavenly voice. Although God says to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat," Peter feels it necessary to remind God that the animals would desecrate his purity. Peter decides to hearken to his traditions, instead of to his revelation.

This is still a very common experience. Much of the evil that "good people" do in this world is the result, not of not knowing what God wants of us, but of saying "No" to him because his will does not fit into our preconceived ideas. Our concept of what is "common" or "unclean" in God's sight is usually a reflection of our own prejudices, not the heart of our God. "What God has cleansed you must not call common."

**The Holy Spirit Fell**

At last, Peter obeyed the vision that told him to go to Joppa. There, another surprise awaited him, for while he was preaching to these Gentiles, "the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word."

And the people who witnessed this were dumbfounded: "...the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit has been poured out even on the Gentiles."

They had assumed that the Holy Spirit was their private possession. They believed that they knew all about the workings of the Holy Spirit.

And they saw it, the Holy Spirit operated within their little man-made systems and was captive to their religious convictions.

But they were wrong—dead wrong—for the Holy Spirit belongs to no one group or person. As Peter finally realized: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality." Only people do that.

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Belated thanks

A belated thank you for the excellent "write up" Donna Tommelleo did on me and on the (dairy sanitation) programs we as fieldmen feel are so important for the production of high quality milk. ("Marvin helps keep milk a quality product," On the Road series, Lancaster Farming, June 26 issue.)

I have received numerous

comments about the article and they were all complimentary. Donna did a very good, informative and interesting bit of journalism. We need these refreshing kinds of items to "talk up" our "sometimes overlooked" vocation.

Andrew A. Marvin  
Fieldman

Inter-State Milk Producers' Co-op

## NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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### To Keep Poultry Comfortable During Hot Weather

Ventilation is most important during hot and humid weather. During hot weather out broiler and layer houses need more air movement inside the house. I would suggest placing circulation fans inside the house to move more

air across the birds. This will definitely give relief. In weather reports it's known as the "chill" factor. If you move air at the rate of 500 C.F.M. across the birds, it will reduce the temperature — to the bird — by 10 degrees F.

I know if the temperature is 95 degrees F. outside, it will not be any cooler than 95 degrees inside,

but the chill factor would make it feel like 85 degrees to the bird.

Another very important factor during hot weather is to ventilate the attics. The best way is to have an inlet at one end and an exhaust fan at the other end. If you don't move the air out of the attic, the temperature can rise to over 150

(Turn to Page A12)

## HAY HAWS



"Didn't happen to give any thought to moving the truck, eh Leroy?"