



Off the Sounding Board

By Sheila Miller, Editor

Spreading yourself too thin

Anyone who has ever had to sweat over physics books, memorizing boring laws and ancient physicists in fear of failing the next exam, will surely remember one very important law of nature — that for every action there is an exact-opposite reaction. Don't ask me which physicist discovered it, though, because I just simply can't remember. (I guess I didn't "sweat" enough in science class.)

I do remember enough about the physics law, though, to know it not only applies to physical reactions that occur in experiments, but to events that can be witnessed almost every day on farms throughout the country.

Actions and reactions on the farm — what are we looking for? Well, for instance, take the action and complementary reaction of what happens when a farmer gets too involved in the rat race of "bigger means better."

The action of buying more land, bigger tractors, milking more cows, farming more acres brings with it the reaction of less money in the bank account, less time with family, and less time to properly take care of livestock and fields. Everything and everyone (except the banker) suffers.

Unfortunately too many farmers are caught up in this drive to take on more work, whether for financial gain or just personal satisfaction. But while they may be getting the "steal" of a lifetime when they purchase that additional farm just 10 miles down the road, they're actually "robbing" themselves and their families. With more acres to farm or more livestock to feed, there'll be a inversely proportional amount of time available for the farmer to spend resting and relaxing with the family.

We've all heard the saying, "All work and no play ..." and that applies to farmers, too. Quality time spent with the family, playing together, can make the long hours of working on less pleasurable chores much easier to accept.

According to Delaware Extension family living agent Pat Wilson, time is possibly the resource most demanded of parents. "It takes

time to teach children, to show them love, and to discipline them. In fact, every aspect of parenting demands time, and these demands can restrict other necessary activities.

"Parents must be especially careful when planning time use. Children should be high on the list of priorities."

Although most of us claim that a farm is the best place to raise children because they learn responsibility and patience through taking care of animals, it isn't the best place if their parents are working out in the fields or in the barns from dawn to long after dusk.

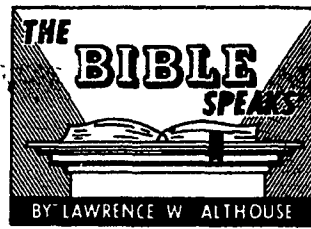
Not only is that kind of schedule hard on kids, it's tough on farmers. Workhorses usually have four legs and die at the age of about 30, but some farmers go through life trying to emulate their equine counterparts. Some would seem to prefer an oats bag over their face instead of sitting down to a nice evening meal.

When some farmers finally decide to take some time to spend with their children, it's usually too late — the kids are grown with farms and families of their own.

Still other farmers never slow down to enjoy their families, even when their bills are paid and the necessities for spending long hours in the field have disappeared. That's when these farmers find a "bargain" to buy, putting them right back into the banker's debt for another decade.

That old law, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," would probably apply to the workaholic farmers who refuse to learn how to enjoy life and their families. A lifetime of hardwork has marked them with callouses and stiff kneejoints along with a fear of taking it easy.

Is it worth it? Is the biggest farm with the most acres tilled and the largest herd a true sign of a successful farmer? Even though that would seem to be the measuring stick that's used to determine a farmer's true worth, bigger is not necessarily better. It may be just a sign of spreading oneself too thin. To find out, just ask the family.



AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN
October 17, 1982

Background Scripture: Exodus 32:1 through 34:10.

Devotional Reading: Exodus 20:1-17.

Those who insist that the words in our Bible are the literal words of our God should have some grave difficulties with the story of Moses and his encounters with God on the mountaintop. For the picture we get of the Lord in this story is a picture that is obviously somewhat distorted by very human perceptions.

For example, according to this story in Exodus, God speaks and behaves in a very human fashion when he learns that the people of Israel have been worshipping a golden calf. God is so angry that he says, according to Exodus, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them" (32:10). This is not the God revealed to us by Jesus in the New Testament. What we are witnessing here are very human reactions to the sins of others.

Moses Besought The Lord

As Exodus portrays this encounter, it is only the arguments of Moses that persuade God to give up his anger and forgive the people of Israel. A man is persuading God to rise above human anger!

And, according to Exodus, Moses was successful in causing God to change his mind! "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people"

(32:14). The writer of Exodus would have us believe, not only that God changed his mind, but that he was sorry for the way he had felt toward them.

How ironic that, immediately after Moses persuaded God to forgive the people of Israel, he himself must be persuaded to cool his anger and forgive the people. This time it is Aaron who does the reasoning with Moses: "Let not the anger of my Lord burn hot" (32:22). These are virtually the same words which Moses was said to have spoken to God. (The writer of Exodus seems to be suggesting that it was man who taught God to forgive, rather than the other way around.)

Down The Mountain

Yet, despite this, the story tells us something very important about forgiveness: it is one thing to talk about it in the rarefied atmosphere of a mountaintop. It is something quite else to bring that lofty concept down to the foot of the mountain where the people are. That's where it really matters, for that's where sin is. That's where failure is, rebellion—you name it.

Sometimes it seems to me that we Christians have a hard time bringing forgiveness down the mountain. We proclaim it from our pulpits, we teach it in our Sunday schools, we pray it in the Lord's Prayer, but often at the foot of the mountain it seems as if we have left it on the upper slopes. We come to worship services and go home with our angers and resentments basically undisturbed. We pray, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors," knowing full well that there are certain "debtors" whom our grudges have never let go.

Mt. Sinai, it was revealed to Moses by God, but it wasn't until he came down to the foot of the mountain that he came to understand.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Store Corn Carefully

Corn harvested for grain is a very important crop for most farmers. Therefore, good corn storage is very important. It should be protected from the weather, given proper ventilation for drying, and then protected from rodents. This latter menace is one that needs more attention on many farms. Mice and rats like to make their homes in corn cribs and storage places when given the chance. Make an effort to eliminate all nesting places and practice good sanitation to keep the population down. All rat baiting stations should be located where children and pets can not come in contact with the bait.

Rats and mice are destructive and are costing farmers a great deal of money.

To Utilize Corn Fodder

Corn growers who are not making the crop into silage might consider the making of the corn stalks into bedding materials. The market value of all livestock bedding is quite high, and can be used on the farm or sold to others. After the corn is picked and the stalks dry, the corn can be shredded and baled.

This material makes very good bedding for box stalls and feed lot pens; the fodder absorbs water rapidly and when shredded gives less trouble in mechanical handling. When used on the farm as bedding, it can still be returned to the soil as added organic matter.

To Practice Good Public Relations
Farmers should be concerned about their image in the com-

munity. In most cases it is very good, and also the majority of non-farm people in the rural areas respect the needs and problems of the farmer. The image can be improved by getting better acquainted with your non-farm neighbors.

We urge farmers to invite their nearby neighbors to see their farm operations. In many cases a better understanding of the various farm operations will eliminate disputes and hassles about noise and odors. Also, I would encourage farmers to become involved with community activities.

To Save Your Leaves

In the fall, people are busy cleaning up the yard - raking the leaves and burning all the leaves and garden refuse. But this is a mistake - especially if you're interested in having beautiful plants and shrubs around your home and in the garden.

It's better to "leave the leaves" and make a compost pile. When leaves and branches are burned, all their soil-building properties are lost to the air. What's more, that good smelling smoke just adds to the air pollution problem.

I'd suggest raking the leaves from the lawn and piling them neatly in a corner of your garden. Add a little soil and fertilizer to speed up the rotting process. Other garden refuse that isn't diseased can also be added to the pile. And after a year or two - when it's well rotted - you can work this material into your garden to enrich the soil.

OUR READERS WRITE

Individual dispute

With the exception of the portrayal of me as a Pennsylvania Farmers' Association attorney, Debbie Koontz's article "Farmers Battle Threat from NFO" (Lancaster Farming, Oct. 2, 1982) was basically accurate. However I must object to the editorial "Battle of the Bullheads."

I am an attorney with S. Paul Mazza & Associates, State College and we are the attorneys for the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association Legal Service plan. We are not employees or agents of the PFA and all legal work from our office is done on an individual attorney/client basis with all legal

fees borne by the individual clients.

NFO's dues collection efforts came to my attention through approximately 12 farmers across the state. My work to stop the NFO collection efforts has been for the sole benefit of each individual farmer whom I represented without any consideration to its effect, positive or negative, on the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association.

While I applaud any support my clients may have received or will receive from the Pennsylvania Farmers' Association, this dispute will continue as one between in-

dividual farmers and the National Farmers' Organization and nothing more.

I fear that your characterization of this matter as a PFA/NFO dispute will only serve to enhance NFO's position in what was characterized as the NFO "exploiting the farmers it says it represents."

Louis T. Glantz
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