

Ramblections

True meaning of thanks

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

"Thank you" has become one of the popular phrases of the English language which has essentially lost its meaning. It is said so often and so matter-of-factly that the speaker rarely has any real intention of expressing true thankfulness. It's a lot like the traditional greeting of "How are you?" More often than not the questioner could care less about your welfare and more than likely you'll not answer your true feelings of how you really feel.

But what then is the real meaning of giving thanks? The true expression of thankfulness may be giving thanks when there doesn't appear to be any apparent reason to do so. Such situations may arise all too often in agriculture where farmers daily contend with variables that are beyond their personal control.

A number of years ago, I traveled through Texas on a combine-chasing trip. One stop was in Waxahachie south of the Dallas-Fort Worth area. That area -- normally very hot and dry -- was in the midst of one of its worst periods of sustained drought. Down there drought is measured in months rather than weeks and sometimes in years. (Some old-timers even maintained that it was one of the few times they can remember that even if it did rain the drops evaporated before they reached the ground.)

Our visit included a Texas farmer who had bought a new combine he'd never get to use that year. His milo crop just wasn't worth combining; it would be cut and baled to salvage as forage.

He took us on a tour of his parched fields. His weathered, sun-darkened face was nearly as deeply lined as his fields.

Milo that should have been brushing your chest and shoulders hardly reached your knees. The leaves were completely curled. They were as brittle as glass and shattered at the touch. You had to look hard to find any tiny kernels in the partially formed heads.

Just walking in the fields was difficult. The sun-baked grounds had deep ruts and cracks that resembled a loaf of bread or cake left too long in the oven. When you stopped, the heat seeped through the soles of your shoes and you kept walking like a barefoot boy who toddles quickly across a hot sidewalk.

"We've come to expect heat and dryness down here," said the weathered man in the cowboy hat and boots.

"It's a way of life for us.

"But this year it's been particularly bad. Not even our milo could take it.

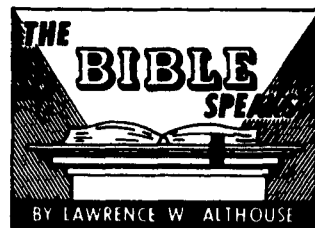
"I've been plowing these dusty, dry soils for more than 25 years. From the time you turn it in the spring until you combine it in the fall, it gets in your eyes and grinds like grit between your teeth.

"But these soils were put here for a purpose. Maybe, they don't produce like they could every year. But every once in a while, it all comes together and we have a bumper crop.

"In those few bumper years, it's easy to be thankful. In the many lean, dry years, it's a bit harder.

"But a lot of me has gone into these soils -- just as much during the bad years as the good ones. So, I've come to be thankful for both."

This grizzled Texas farmer had found the true meaning of giving thanks. It's a way of life -- just like farming is.



ENTRUSTED
November 27, 1983

Background Scripture:
Matthew 5:13-16; 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

Devotional Reading:
2 Timothy 4:1-5.

It is a sobering experience to be entrusted with something important. The more important that something is, the more sobering it is likely to be. Correspondingly, it may be unsettling to be reminded of something that has been entrusted to us and which we have largely forgotten or overlooked. How terrible to find that someone depended upon us and we have let them down.

Sometimes, of course, we have the opportunity to make good on our original commitment. There is still time left to fulfill someone's trust in us. Other times, we come to the realization all too late and all we have left then is remorse and shame and a disappointment with ourselves.

GIVEN A MINISTRY

This column is written to remind you of something which has been entrusted to you -- something which, perhaps, you may have forgotten or which needs renewed dedication and effort. It is an attempt to call this entrustment to your attention while there is still time to do something about it.

Writing his second letter to the church at Corinth, Paul uses these

words to remind the Corinthian Christians -- and us:

All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself...and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. (5:18-20).

Now, just in case you may think I seized without justification upon that word "entrusting," please note that, not once, but no less than three times in that one passage Paul reminds us that God is depending upon us to fulfill the task with which he entrusted us: he "gave us the ministry of reconciliation," "entrusting to us the message of reconciliation," and we are "ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." Clearly, our task: reconciliation. **BE RECONCILED**

Stop and think a moment: how well have you carried out that entrustment? How much reconciling have you carried on in the world about you? Are you involved in reconciling people to God and each other, or do your activities tend to divide people and drive them further apart? What kind of appeal is God able to make through you?

I don't know how well you did on those questions above, but I must confess that I don't think I've done so well. All too often I've been involved in efforts that divide and alienate people. Instead of healing rifts, I have often worked at widening them. And even when I have not really been hurting the reconciling work of God in the world, I don't think I've been helping it a whole lot.

To read this passage from 2 Corinthians 5 has been a sobering experience for me. I hope it will be for you, too.

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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To Be Careful When Cleaning Manure Pits

Many manure pits will be emptied at this time of year; it's an opportunity to clean out the pit before cold weather arrives. When this volume of manure is agitated there is greater danger of toxic and explosive gases being released. Every precaution should be taken. If there are animals above the pit, then maximum ventilation should be provided. When the pit is empty or partially empty, no one should enter the pit without a respirator or gas mask. There may be dangerous gases present. Also, no smoking or open flames should be nearby. These pits are the modern way to store manure, but they do present a hazard to both man and animal.

To Appreciate Harvest Completion

Once again we have come to the end of another growing season and

the finalizing of the harvest.

Although 1983 was an unfavorable year hereabouts for field, orchard and garden crops, there has been adequate production of food and feed, observes Arnold G. Lueck, Agronomy-Horticulture Agent.

The harvest is now 96 percent plus completed. There now comes a good feeling of satisfaction when all is safely gathered in. And it all brings rewards of a growing season gone by.

Rewards from crop production come as a result of a choice selection of seeds and plants; of careful preparation of the seedbed; of fertilizing, tilling and weeding; of cooperation from weather's rain and sunshine; and of the owner or manager inputs. Harvest time follows. A time of joy and thanksgiving should now prevail.

To Check Standby Generators

Your standby generator may be needed at any time. Is it ready? With all the uses of electricity on the farm today, we need this type of emergency equipment. We are in the weather season now when we can expect both snow and ice storms that can give us power outages. This means that activities on many farms will stop when the electricity fails. To have a standby generator is very good management; however, you need to run this generator at least once every two weeks to be sure it is in good running order when needed.

This kind of emergency equipment can be a life saver for both man and animal or poultry, as well as eliminate possible financial losses.

(Turn to Page A12)

KEEPING AMERICA ON THE GROW



Eddie Albert: Actor, Conservationist

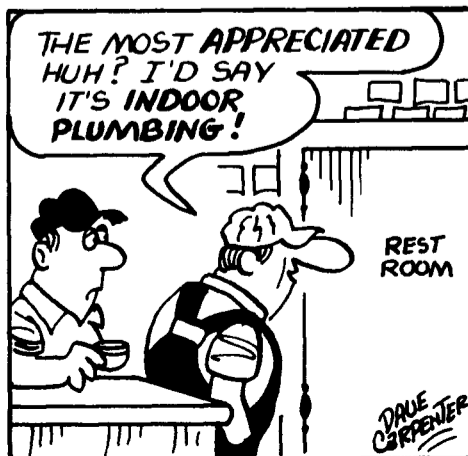
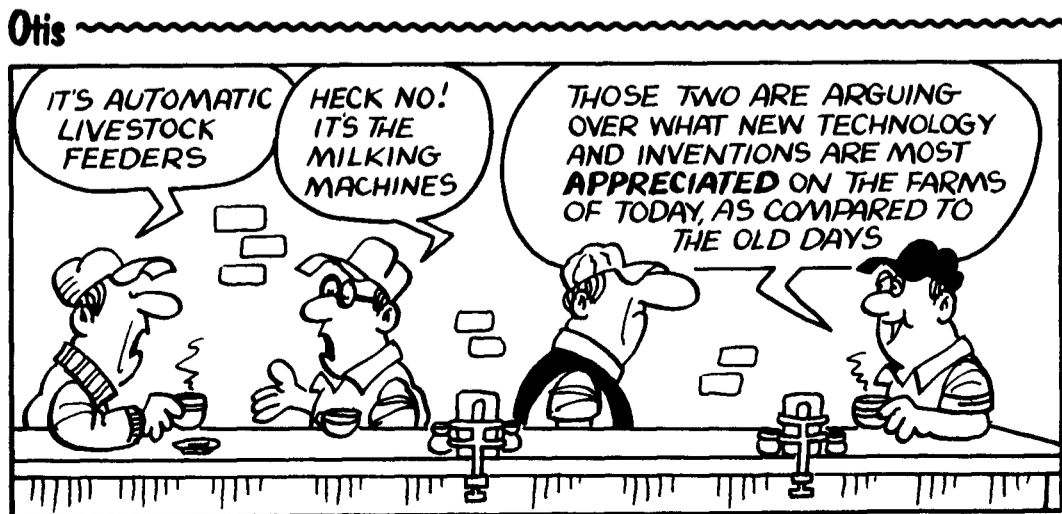
America is number one in agriculture because of a simple idea. In the past, we invested in our young people. Today, they lead the world in agriculture. Programs teaching production, horticulture, processing, sales and service, natural resources, forestry and agri-mechanics are essential. Through such educational programs, young people learn to use the modern technology of agriculture to feed our nation and the world.

We have to keep America on the grow. We have to invest in the people and technology that ensures our world leadership in agriculture.

That's why your support of vocational and technical education in agriculture, and the Future Farmers of America in your community, is so important.

Together, we're Keeping America on the Grow.

Future Farmers of America



Farm Calendar

Monday, Nov. 28
New England Vegetable Growers Convention, Sheraton Inn, Foxborough, Mass., continues through Wednesday.

Tuesday, Nov. 29
Conservation tillage conference and trade show, National Guard Armory, north of Trenton, N.J.

Thursday, Dec. 1
Third International Hog Trade

(Turn to Page A12)