

Ag's unsung heroes

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

In this era of government programs and high-powered farming are there any unsung heroes left in agriculture?

Well, for what it's worth, my vote goes to the vegetable and fruit growers here in Pennsylvania.

Without much fanfare and hoopla, hundreds of them gathered this week at the Hershey Convention Center for the respective annual gatherings of the Vegetable Growers Association and the State Horticultural Association.

High on the agendas of both groups were reports on grower-funded research projects and even the possible expansion of such programs. Some examples of such research are explained elsewhere in this week's issue.

And, it should be stressed that these projects are funded entirely by the growers themselves and any contributions they might get from industry or business. No tax payer funds at all.

These research projects are also relatively modest in size, too. Total annual programs generally run between \$20,000 and \$30,000.

That compares to the \$34,500 in unexpended research funds just found by the Pa. Department of Agriculture to fund Avian flu research projects at Penn State and the University of Pennsylvania.

But while these fruit and vegetable research projects may be relatively modest in size, they are just as vitally important to the future of growers.

Just ask a tomato grower who watches the leaves of his plants fall off due to early blight and his yields cut by 30 percent or more.

Or, a peach orchardist who can't understand why his peach trees are dying prematurely - even before they reach their mature fruit-bearing status.

Much has been said also during the past year of the effects of the drought. Usually it's in terms of the reduced corn crop and its effect on dairy producers and livestock feeders.

But quite a few vegetable growers, who were not fortunate enough to have irrigation, felt the bone-dry pinch of the drought last year, too.

Here in Pennsylvania, we're quick to point out that we're among the top five states in milk and egg production.

But, the Commonwealth is also among the top five states throughout the country in mushroom, apple, grape, peach, sweet corn, greenhouse and nursery production.

And let's be perfectly honest, too. Lancaster Farming has been just as remiss as anyone in concentrating ag emphasis on some at the expense of others.

It's true that, just like the research funds, the total overall dollar values aren't there - as compared to the dairy or poultry industries.

But neither are the tremendous government-funded programs, either.

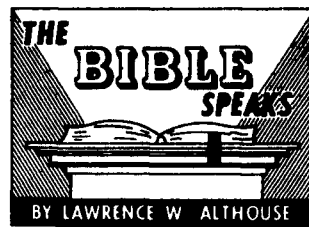
No, it's just a bunch of relatively small growers who are paying their own way and even financing their own research to try to take some of the uncertainties out of their operations.

On a year-in and year-out basis who in agriculture faces more uncertainties, crop losses and income fluctuations than the fruit and vegetable grower.

Proximity to markets and the renewed emphasis on fresh fruits and vegetables in the diet are shaping an expanded potential for area fruit and vegetable growing. That is if we can keep our abundant water clean enough.

The future appears to be out there. And, it's refreshing to see some in agriculture really trying to shape their own future - no matter how modest it may be.

To me, that's makes them real unsung heroes.



SAID THE CLAY TO THE POTTER...
February 5, 1984

Background Scripture: Isaiah 43:45.

Devotional Reading: Exodus 19:1-6.

Someone recently asked me what I thought was the single greatest religious problem in the world today. Without pausing to think it over, I replied: "I would say it is our tendency to forget both who we are and who He is."

On reflection, that may not be the "single greatest religious problem" facing us today, but it will do very well as a starting place. So many of our other problems - religious and secular - seem so tied to this one persistent flaw in human nature. "NO HANDLES"

This is hardly a new phenomenon in human history. In fact, from the very beginning of time it has seemed that God has had to remind us of who we are and who He is. That's what much of the first chapter of Genesis is about. That's what much of Hebrew and Israelite history is about, too.

Nowhere is this more pointedly expressed than in Isaiah:

"Wo to him who strives with his Maker, an earthen vessel with the potter! Does the clay say to him who fashions it, 'What are you making?' or 'Your work has no

handles'?" (45:9)

First, we must remember that he is the Creator and we are his creatures. There is a tremendous gap between those two poles. The Creator brings the created into being. Just in case we don't get the full impact of the difference between Creator and created, we are given the analogy of the potter and the clay. Everyone knows that it is the potter who molds the clay, not the other way around.

Secondly, we must realize that the difference in who we are and who He is has a tremendous effect upon the way we must operate in this world. Just as the clay cannot question the potter, just as it would be the height of arrogance for the clay to criticize the potter, so it is ridiculous when the creatures call the Creator to question. "MY HANDS"

The crux of the matter is not that we shall not ask the questions, but that we could not understand the answers if they were given. We cannot think God's thoughts or understand as he understands. Even our best human answers and understandings are not without holes. One cannot simply encompass the divine with human thoughts and words. The infinite cannot be expressed in anything that is finite.

This is not a put-down for human-beings. We must use all of our God-given abilities to their very utmost. We must ask all the hard questions that present themselves to us in life. But we must never forget that what He is and what we are sets some profound limits.

I made the earth and created man upon it; it was my hands that stretched out the heavens... (45:12)

This is not the first time God has had to remind us. Maybe this time we'll get it right!

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

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Farm Calendar



Saturday, Feb. 4

Annual Ephrata Area Young Farmers Banquet, 6:45 p.m., Mt. Airy Fire Hall
Delaware Horse Expo, 8 a.m., Lake Forest High School, Felton, Del.

Monday, Feb. 6

State Nurseryman's Conference, Penn State, continues through Thursday.
Peach Production Workshop, 10 a.m., Heidlersburg Fire Hall.
Hunterdon County N.J. Sheep Breeders, 8 p.m., Extension Center.
Luzerne County soil fertility meeting, 1 p.m., St. James Lutheran Church, Hobbie.
McKean County Crops Day, 10 a.m., Seneca Highlands Voc-Tech School.

Tuesday, Feb. 7

Kent County, Md., Tomato Commodity Day, 8:30 a.m., Tidewater Inn.
Estate Planning Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Adams County Extension Office.
Pa. Farmers Union annual convention, Hotel Hershey, continues through Thursday.
Hunterdon County, N.J. field crops meeting, 8 p.m., Extension Center.
Eastern Co-op delegate meeting, Liverpool, N.Y.
Gypsy Moth meeting, 7 p.m., Hartley, Del. Fire Hall.
Lebanon Dairy Day, 9:30 a.m., Prescott Fire Hall.

Wednesday, Feb. 8

Regional beef feeders meetings, Risser's Restaurant,

Stouchsburg: Dairy - 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; Beef - 1:30-4:30 p.m.; Part-Time: 5:30-9:30 p.m.

Mastitis Prevention School, New Holland Production Credit Bldg., continues tomorrow.

Pa. Young Farmers winter convention, Americana Host Inn, Harrisburg, continues tomorrow.

Improving Dairy Calf-Heifer Management, 10 a.m., West Street Branch, Gettysburg National Bank.

Luzerne Farm Tax Meeting, 1 and 7:30 p.m., Water Street Annex Extension Office.

Wayne County local government meeting, 8 p.m., Extension Office, Courthouse.

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Transfer meeting on March 15 - both at 7:30 p.m. in the Farm and Home Center, Lancaster.

To Plan Legume Seeding

It's not too soon to make plans for seeding clover or alfalfa on winter grains. Many of our good stands have been obtained by making a broadcast seeding in late February or early March. The value for seeding at this time is to take advantage of the alternate freezing and thawing to work the small seeds into the topsoil. Wheat is usually the best grain to make late winter or early spring legume seedings. Barley and rye tend to develop too much growth and increase the potential for lodging which smothers out the small legume plants. Broadcast seeding when the soil is "honeycombed" in early March works very well, but the use of a band-seeder may be a better way to establish a new legume stand.

To Protect Your Lungs

Be it in the coal mines or on the farm... dust can destroy lungs. Farmers who are exposed to dust over long periods of time risk a disabling disease called "farmer's lung". As the dust accumulates in the lungs the tissue hardens. This can lead to a variety of respiratory ailments including bronchitis and tuberculosis. If the condition is not diagnosed soon enough, irreversible lung damage may occur.

Preventing farmer's lung doesn't require any elaborate or expensive equipment... a simple mask will do. They needn't be worn all the time... just when dust can't

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