

Going, going, gone

BY DICK ANGLESTEIN

You probably have noticed that the public sale and auction ads have been running unusually heavy in Lancaster Farming during the past month. For the past five issues nearly an entire section has been devoted to them.

Not only are the number of sales higher but the peak sale season appears to be extended and lasting longer this year.

Reasons for the large number of sales are likely quite diverse and probably include a combination of the aftermath of a tough few years on the farm, the milk diversion program and the increasing pressures of non-ag development on farmland.

But whatever the reasons for the decision to sell out, each auction is a personal story of a farm family that carved out a niche in the total agricultural heritage of the area. It's a niche that is now being lost forever and its story goes well beyond the cold, impersonal black and white auction ad or public sale report.

For example, there's the decorated candle box found among some tools at a recent sale. It brought some \$3,300. Who decorated it? Did a bygone family member toss it in the tool shed when rural electrification came to the farm? Or perhaps a sharp antique buyer trying to disguise a bargain? How many discussions were conducted by the light of its candles -- both the good times and the bad down through the years?

Or, the tin coffee can that went for a top bid of \$250 at another sale. How many cups of good, steaming coffee did it provide down through the years to warm someone before they went off to the barn on a cold, winter morning?

Or, the Farmall H tractor that brought \$750, the walking plow at \$80 or the grain reaper at \$350. What kind of times did these implements see over the years -- both the droughty, the wet and occasionally the just right?

The china head doll at \$390 or the high chair at \$285. How many generations played with that doll or ate at that chair and then went on to become a segment in the continuing ag history of a farm?

The butcher kettle at \$98, the sausage stuffer at \$105, the crock at \$60. How many hogs or heads of cabbage went through them over the years to fill the canning jars lining the pantry shelves?

The horse-drawn sleigh at \$255. How many trips were made over snow-covered roads to visit family at holidays or provide transportation during courting?

Each item in an auction ad or sale report has a story to tell. Together, each of these little tales make up the total ag heritage that is slipping away each time the gavel falls.

And those prices the items bring -- which cause many a graying head to shake -- are attempts by both ag and non-ag people alike to hold onto just a little bit of that heritage.

Yes, the trinkets of ag heritage are being preserved on kitchen walls and corner shelves. But is ag itself being preserved? The land and the will and means of continued farming?

What will the auction ads and public sale reports of the future say?

What stories will be found behind the farm sale items of the future?

Let's hope that such future items and stories will be more than

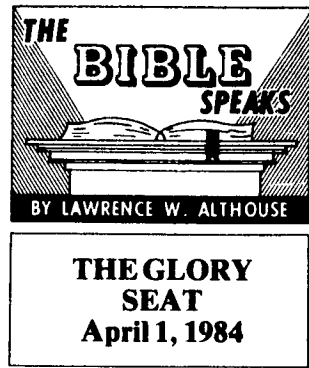
-- An Avian flu quarantine sign and a Task Force logo emblem

-- A copy of a report on a soil or well water study involved in the Chesapeake Bay program

-- A news clipping that a hazardous waste dump was located in the middle of a prime agricultural area.

What we do today will help determine what items will be included in the memorabilia going up for auction in the future.

And, what we do today will help determine what future generations will pay -- not for public sale mementos but for the coming overall ag heritage that results from actions and decisions of today.



Background Scripture:

Mark 10.

Devotional Reading:

Mark 10:23-31.

This may come as a surprise to you, but I want you to know that writing this weekly column is a rather dangerous occupation. And I'm not referring to irate readers, either -- there have been refreshingly few of them over the years.

What makes writing this column dangerous is that, in order to write it, I first have to read and reflect upon a passage of scripture selected by the interdenominational Committee on Uniform Series. It is in the reading and study of this assigned passage of scripture that puts me into a kind of weekly spiritual jeopardy.

THE GLORY SEATS

For example, when I read Mark 10 a few minutes ago, I felt a rather substantial stab in my conscience. Mark 10 fell on me like a ton of bricks. Here's Jesus laying it out with disturbing simplicity what it means to be his disciple. Of course, the twelve who are his closest followers don't seem to be able to absorb any of what he is saying. But the problem with Mark 10 is not that the disciples didn't seem to buy what Jesus says following him is all about, but that today we still don't appear to have gotten his message.

As I look about me, it seems that

little or nothing of the values Jesus lifts up in Mark 10 are very important in the life of Christianity as I know it today. For example, in Mark 10 Jesus confounds his disciples - and us - by emphasizing the importance of children in the kingdom of God: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me..." (10:37). I don't mean to imply that in my experience we've been unkind to children in the churches, but that it is very obvious in many that the really important people are the adults.

Then, in verses 17-22, there's the story of the man with "great possessions." Now that's just the kind of man most of us try to get in our churches and "elevated" to a position of authority. We wouldn't think of telling the man that "You lack one thing; go, sell what you have, and give to the poor..." Despite all our fund drives and budget campaigns, we try to take the bite out of membership in the body of Christ.

GETTING THE NEEDLE

And Jesus' saying about how hard it is for a man with great possessions to "enter the kingdom of God" (10:23-27) is even more difficult for us. Our objective is to find and build-up the affluent congregation, not to tear it down.

Worst of all, however, is what he told his disciples about power and authority: "whoever would be great among you must be your servant" (10:43). We've never really bought that one, have we? We play the same "power games" in the church that are played in the rest of society, no matter how sanctified we try to make them appear. There's at least one glory seat in every church on a Sunday morning.

If that's not your experience, then praise God! If it is, there's room on the mourner's bench with me.

Farm Calendar

Saturday, March 31
Adams County Beef Producers Association Ball, 6 p.m., York Springs Fire Hall.

Sunday, April 1
Northeast Dairy Conference, Hotel Syracuse, Syracuse NY. Continues through Tues.

Monday, April 2
Home Ornamental Tree, Shrub and Lawn Meeting, 1:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., Pleasant Acres, York.

Hunterdon County NJ Sheep Breeders Association, 8 p.m., Extension Center.

Tuesday, April 3
National Ayrshire Convention,

Columbus, OH. Continues through Friday.

Wednesday, April 4
Bradford Swine Producers Meeting, 8 p.m., Ag Room at Wyabusing High School.

Hunterdon County NJ Board of Agriculture, 8 p.m., Extension Center.

Hay Preservative Meeting, 7:30 p.m., Union Grove School, Terre Hill.

Thursday, April 5
Lancaster Conservation District Banquet, Harvest Drive Restaurant, Intercourse.

New Holland Environmental FFA

Banquet, 6:30 p.m., Blue Ball Warwick FFA, 6:30 p.m., Brickerville Fire Hall

Home Landscaping Workshop, 7:30 p.m., Adams County Extension Office.

PA Poultry Federation Fund-Raising Banquet, Hershey Convention Center.

Hunterdon County NJ Poultry Short Course, 7:30-10 p.m., Extension Center.

Franklin County ASC Committee Banquet, 7 p.m., Kauffman's Ruritan Community Building.

(Turn to Page A12)

NOW IS THE TIME

By Jay Irwin

Lancaster County Agriculture Agent
Phone 717-394 6851



For An Avian Flu Update
New outbreaks of Avian Influenza during March have slowed to the lowest level since October...only three as of this writing. A total of 287 flocks have been depopulated for a total of 11.5 million birds. Premises approved for repopulation now stands at 134 with 97 already repopulated. This is good news, but somewhat disappointing is the fact that three of the repopulated houses have broken for a second time. Monitoring efforts continue and hopefully the quarantine area can be reduced in size.

It is also important to note that the California Avian Influenza outbreak is not related. The Lancaster virus is the H₅N₂ type while the California virus is H₅N₃

and has been effective only in turkeys. In fact when the H₅N₃ was injected in chickens, there was no mortality.

I want to re-emphasize that everyone must continue very tight health security measures. This refers to pseudorabies and other diseases as well.

To Plan For Oats Planting

Some farmers are considering the use of feed oats for planting this spring, but this may not be a good idea. Feed oats may contain quackgrass, bindweed and other weed seeds. Planting feed oats will generally result in lower yields. You also have the problem that any weed seeds planted will be a problem for years to come. Keep in mind that high quality seed is the smallest part of producing a crop. So, saving a few cents by using inferior or weedy seed doesn't make much sense. On the other hand, home grown seed of varieties proven successful on the farm can be cleaned, treated and planted if the germination is 80 percent or better. You can use the old "Rag Doll" germination method where you place the seed between two pieces of burlap -- roll it and keep it moist and warm. Then count the seeds that germinate against the total and determine the percent germination.

To Control Soil Erosion

Think about the impact of one raindrop on barren soil. In its own

(Turn to Page A12)

Otis

