

# Planning ahead makes sense for Lebanon dairyman

*Farm supports 8 families*

**BY LAURA ENGLAND MYERSTOWN** — During the 1800's, Auguste Rodin emerged as one of the world's foremost of modern sculptors. Intrigued by the human expression, Rodin tried to mold into each of his sculptures the emotional character of his living model. The most famous of his creations was "The Thinker."

Expressing more than words could describe, Rodin's famous sculpture depicts a man seated, slumped over at the waist. The man rests his chin on his folded right hand, while his left arm lays flushed against his left leg. As the name "The Thinker" conveys, the man appears to be deep in thought, possibly contemplating his future.

If Rodin were alive today and working on a 20th century "The Thinker" sculpture, his figure may be standing or moving and not sitting as his 1800 creation. The figure would be thinking aloud with mouth drawn slightly open. The arms would be extended while a hand reaches out to plug numbers into a computer. On the face would be an expression of excitement mixed with the serious of a future plan.

The updated "The Thinker" could very well be modeled after Harold Myer, a Lebanon County dairyman, who constantly questions, "What's next? What's next?"

"I believe in planning your work and working your plan," Harold said of his farm operation. "I plan five years ahead."

To do this, Harold spends much time thinking and planning - nothing is done without a game plan. Listed in his game plan are

such factors as finances, family and future.

Considering himself a financial manager, although humbly admitting that he may not be "the best of farmers," Harold said the important thing in a farm operation is to establish cash flow.

"The idea is to keep the money going," he said. "Uncle Sam likes it (money) and we like it, too."

To keep his finances in check, Harold opted to include a computer in 1981 as a management tool. Helping to make him "a better financial manager," Harold uses his computer to file monthly and yearly financial statements. The computer is also used to develop feed programs and other farm needs.

Where finances are concerned, Harold said the farm budget is established on a monthly basis. Both a projected cash flow and a blank cash flow are determined. The blank cash flow reveals what the actual month's expenses were.

Harold uses a Visacalc system, a computer program, to set up his feed, labor and machinery costs in a "way that I can understand it." The bookkeeping system, managed by wife Susan, is modeled after the Pennsylvania Farmers Association accounting system.

Through their financial management program, Harold and Susan obtain an itemized monthly history of expenses and income. They monitor on a monthly basis what they have

"With the economics and the cost of money, we have to program ourselves," Harold said. "Money is an important part of our



The Harold Myer farm, with its 1,000 acres and 300 milking cows, supports not only the Myer family but seven hired hands and their families as well.

operation, and we have to project the cost of that money."

Believing strongly in the need for sound financial management, Harold said he spends much time during the winter developing cash flow budgets. Available cash flow, he added, is used to make purchases.

Through the computer, Harold projects his cash flow. With financial records available at the touch of keyboard, he is able to compensate on a month to month basis where money needs to be spent.

As an example, Harold incorporated a computer program to analyze his feeding program. Listing in his program are monthly herd milk and butterfat production records, available feed and feedstuffs and daily nutritional requirements such as protein, dry matter and total digestible nutrients.

Feeding a total mixed ration based on Penn State forage test recommendations, Harold said he can easily change his feed ration and get the best feed for the best cost. The computer allows him to make these changes readily and decide on a ration, considering costs at the same time.

"I like to compare the costs of feed," Harold said. "I like to get the better bargain."

Getting the better bargain and the most for his money is important, Harold contends. This

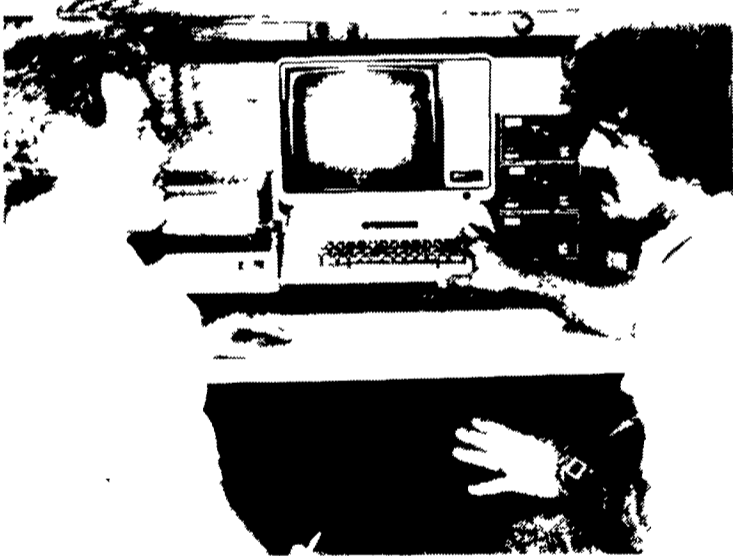
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## Next generation in wings



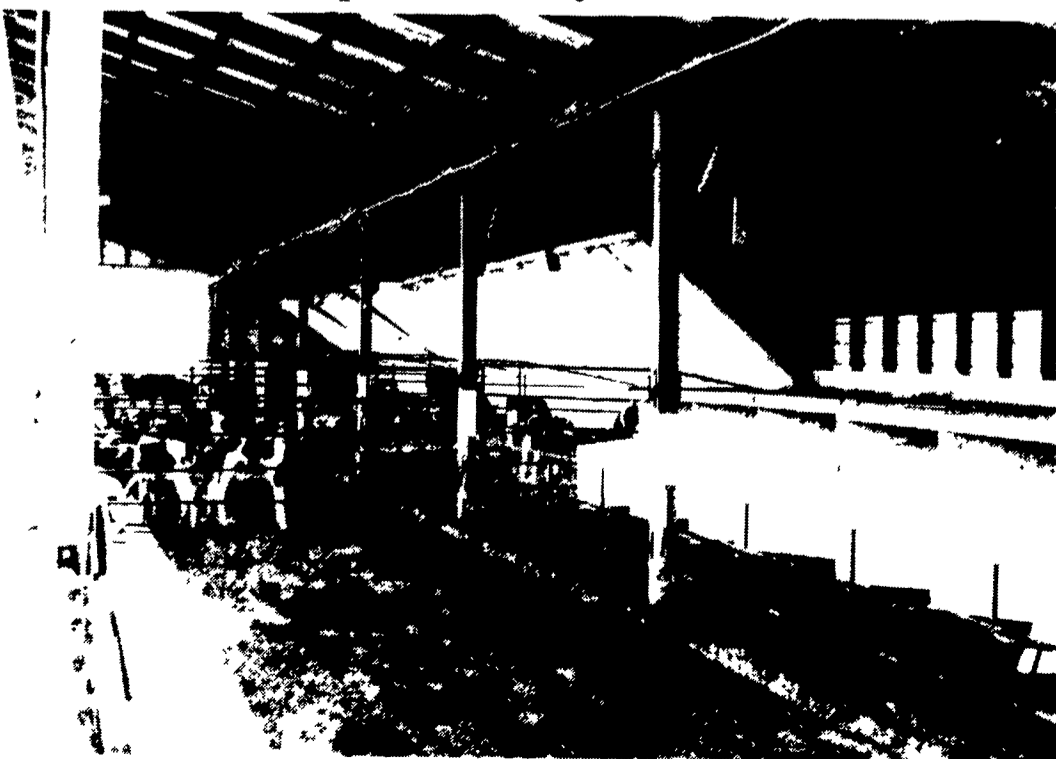
Like many farm couples, Susan and Harold Myer hope their sons, from left, Josh, nine, Seth, seven, and Aaron, six, will continue the family farm.

## Computer is hired hand, too



Dairyman Harold Myer, right, explains his computer program for feed to Lebanon County extension agent Ken Winebark.

## Open-side calf barn



An open-side calf barn provides a healthy environment for young stock on the Myer farm.

## Six - hour milking shift



A one-man team milks a six-hour shift in the Myer's double-eight parlor.