

How innovative ingenuity pays off

If we don't have it, we'll make it

BY ROBIN PHILLIPS
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ROBESONIA — Ag progress: farmers appreciate it and consumers take advantage of it every day.

Encompassing dairy, livestock, crops, and machinery, the agricultural progress of the United States has far surpassed that of any other nation. Much of the credit goes to the American farmer. With dedication to the land, America's farmers are also part scientists, doctors, mechanics and researchers.

Believing that there is always an easier or better way to do something, and crops and livestock can grow bigger, better, healthier, and quicker, the determination and innovative thinking of the American farmer has made American agriculture equaled by the envy of the world.

There is a farmer with four sons in North Heidelberg Township, just outside of Robesonia, who exemplifies much of this innovating thinking that has characterized American farmers throughout history. Lester Gelsinger, R1 Robesonia, and his

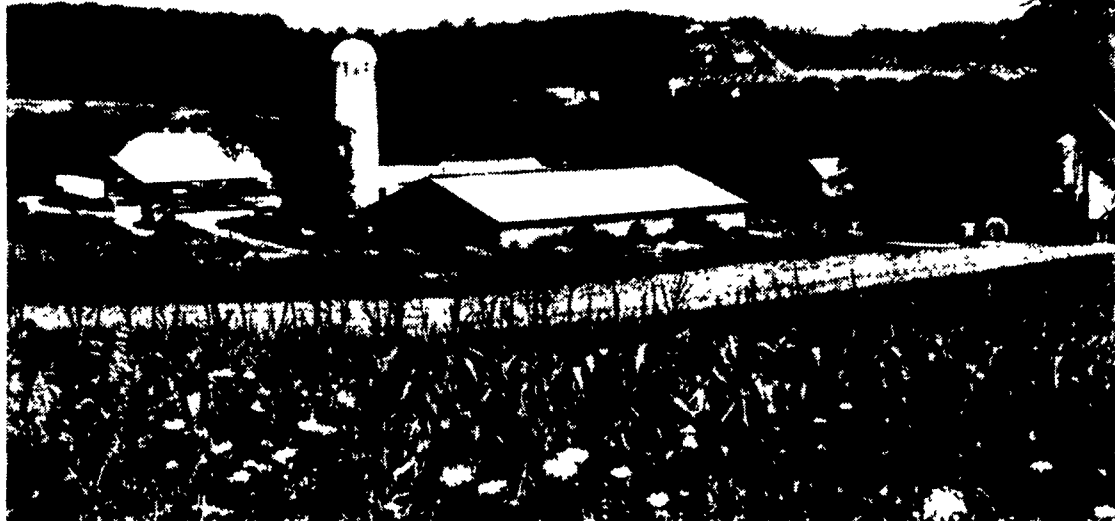
sons, Richard, Harold, Ernest, and Michael, farm 800 acres and operate a 100-cow Holstein dairy and also finish out about 125 head of dairy beef a year.

"We operate as a unit," Gelsinger says proudly.

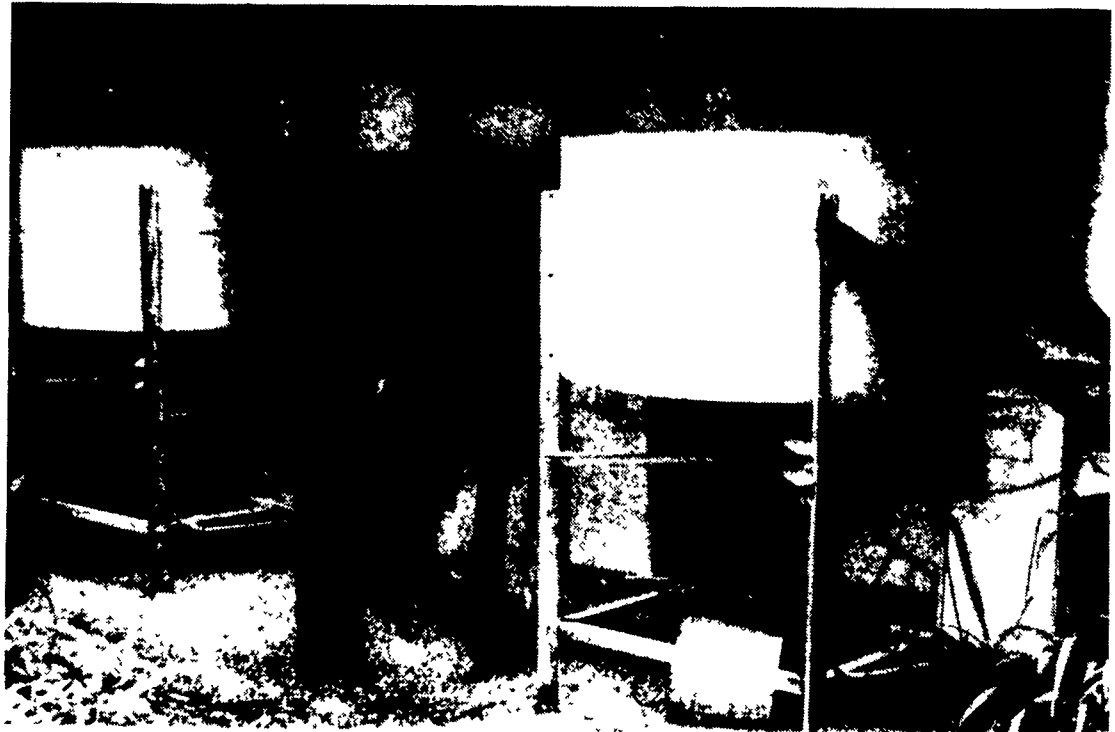
The Gelsinger "unit" is well equipped. Lester Gelsinger received valuable training when he was younger working with the National Youth Administration on government projects. His oldest son, Richard, is an Albright College graduate and takes care of the feeding and field work. Ernest just graduated from Penn state with a degree in Dairy Science. Harold is the mechanic, with 17-year-old Michael following his lead with Vo-Tech education in school.

Of his sons and farming operation, Gelsinger explains "you don't worry when something breaks." The mechanical abilities of his sons, "takes some of the worry out of it," he admits. "If we don't have it, we'll make it. I haven't bought a new tractor since 1967. We can't afford to. We buy this other stuff and adapt it or fix it up," Gelsinger states.

Gelsinger points to their sprayer



The Gelsinger farm includes the large 200' X 48' freestall barn that covers a manure storage pit measuring 50 feet in diameter and 12 feet deep.



Computerized feeding system for dairy herd includes middle, box with augers to mix high moisture shelled corn with supplement.



Harold Gelsinger is the mechanic on the farm and usually can be found repairing or adapting equipment.

truck that he and his sons "built from scratch." With an old truck cab on hand, the Gelsinger men designed their own sprayer truck that features complete hydraulics, foam markers, acreage, pressure, and flow monitors inside the cab, shock absorbers in the boom, and a siphoning system to load that permits no backlash of air or spray to the operator.

"We looked at a few others, went up to Watertown, N.Y., to see one,

made a few sketches, then built the material to match it," Gelsinger states. The 350 gallon tank is completely sealed and takes two and one-half minutes to fill. With the shock absorbers on the 40-foot boom, spraying is done at 20 miles an hour. "It's made to last," Gelsinger adds and states that many grease fittings were installed and all rubber or PVC plastic pipe were used.

"It was just a pile of iron," Gelsinger says before work was begun on the sprayer unit. "We worked about six weeks steady to do this," he adds. Gelsinger credits his son, Harold, with the mechanical knowledge necessary for the design and building of the

machine. "He'll just go and wire anything up. He'll look at a book or diagram, lay it down and go make it," he says about Harold.

Gelsinger also says that Harold was the one that "figured out" the phase converter that they use in their machine shop. The "shop" on the Gelsinger farm is equipped with industrial machine shop equipment purchased years ago as area businesses dispersed. All this could not be used, Gelsinger explains, since it was on three phase service and they only had single phase service available. When Harold made the phase converter, "we started playing with the equipment," Gelsinger states, and

(Turn to Page F16)



With their custom-built sprayer truck, which monitors pressure, flow, boom adjustment and acreage from within the cab, are Lester Gelsinger and his son, Michael.



Lester Gelsinger demonstrates air compressor truck.