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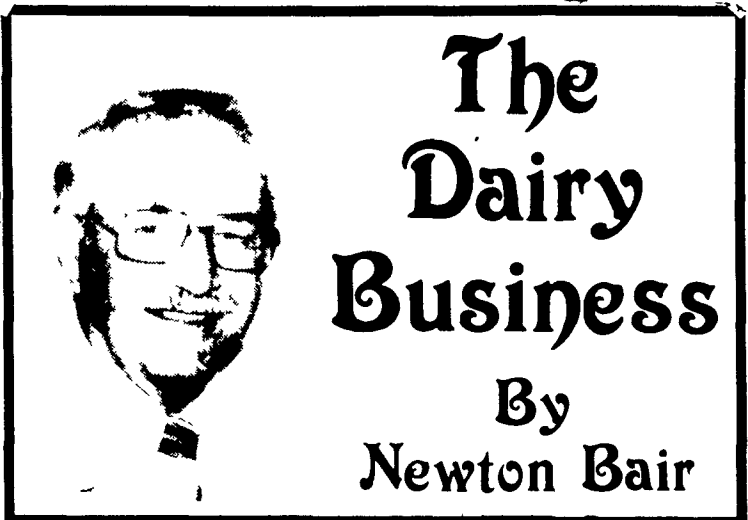
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The Dairy Business

By
Newton Bair

Silo Filling Time - The Way It Was

With the field harvesters humming all around me, I can't help recalling how silo filling has changed. Just like The Old Gray Mare, 'She Ain't Like She Used to Be'.

There were six farms in our little valley along the Yellow Breeches Creek in York County. Each farm had one silo, and there was only one silo filling outfit in the whole community, so silo filling became a community project.

The week after Labor Day, the old grindstone was oiled up to sharpen everyone's favorite corn chopper. Some choppers had the blade riveted on the wooden handle at a 45 degree angle, some were smooth and some were serrated on the cutting edge. A few fellows liked the long machete-like knives with a hook at the end, and others used a large butcher knife to cut corn. Everybody had a favorite hand chopper.

The silo filling rig was a combination cutter and blower, which had to be set up at the silo. The blower pipe had to be moved from silo to silo and set up in sections to

fit the height. The 'goose neck' attached to the top section of pipe supported a series of telescoping buckets extending down the inside of the silo, which we referred to as the 'down pipes'. This was to aid in distributing the silage as it was tramped and packed during filling. There was always a 'packer' inside, preferably someone who weighed at least 200 pounds, to hasten settling.

The whole operation of setting up the pipe was a hair raising affair. It was my job to climb a ladder on the outside of the silo to pass a rope through the pulley attached to a hoop near the top. The best ladder in the neighborhood was a forty foot wooden extension job with several rungs missing and one or two others tied on with binder twine. As if that wasn't bad enough, the extension rope was eight feet short, making it necessary to climb eight rungs and push the top section by hand to its maximum height. Every push snagged on a silo hoop and required the acrobat on the ladder to jump the whole ladder and push at the same time, so it would clear

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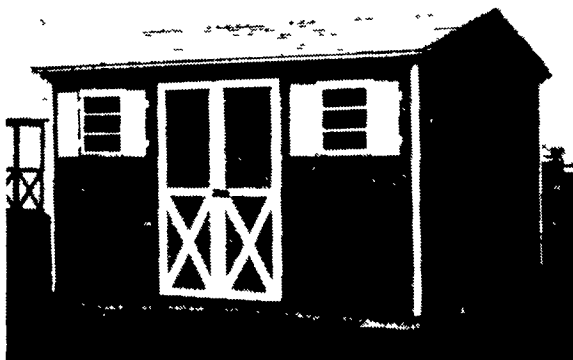
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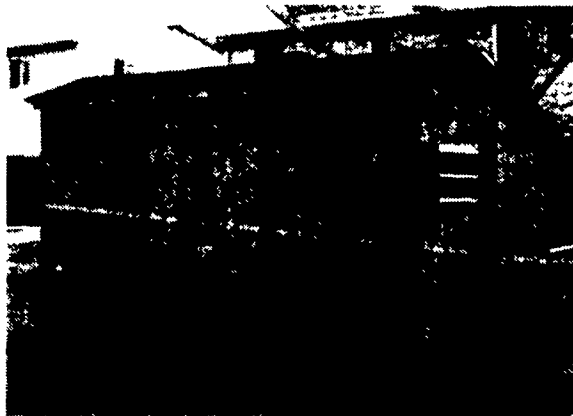
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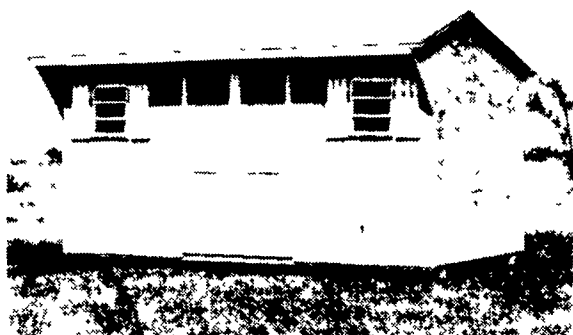
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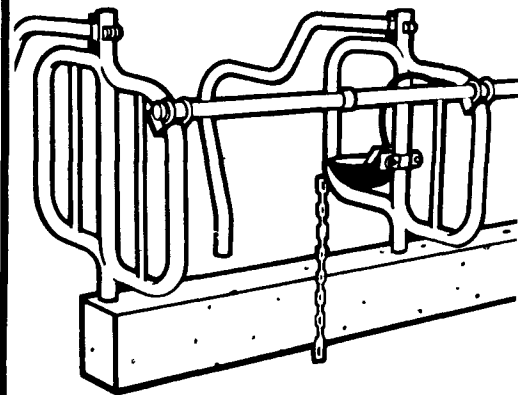


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