

**On being  
a farm wife  
- And other  
hazards  
Joyce Bupp**



Gee whiz. Seems everyone I talk with lately is into computers.

And I get lots of suggestions that a computer would probably be beneficial in our office. Given the ongoing ag cash flow crunch, it would likely tell us we can't afford high-tech, disk-drive hardware.

Still, with all the mumble-jumble of ag trends and economic uncertainties spinning around in our heads, a computer to sort them out might make sense. As it is, all they do is muddle up my thoughts; and dwell on these depressing facts can soon lead to a headache.

Let's look at some of the input data we might run through a computer trying to figure out where farmers are headed: punch-in surpluses, imports, reduced exports, rising costs, falling prices, projected tight-belt federal budgets, dairy herd buyouts and a deficit-slashing white knight named Gramm-Rudman.

Now input this additional data: a government policy to promote plentiful cheap food, and an off-the-wall trade policy that denied our excess production to other countries we want to punish...who then go elsewhere, and leave us with even fatter bins.

Feed in this, too, on our problem-solving disc: We want, we need, we must have, soil conservation. So we set up a Conservation Reserve. Enter the data that shows farmers who live on the land they till practice better conservation. Then, input the numbers that show farmers losing their land to financial stress, high interest, loss of trade, and additional statistics relating the amount of land being taken over by larger entities, many of them foreign investment operations, who may not give two hoots about saving soils.

Add federal proposed budget data: a USDA budget proposed

with a 17 percent cut. Key in that a full third of that budget is for the food stamp, nutrition and feeding programs and nutritional aid to Puerto Rico. Enter further budget cuts to such items as conservation, and farmer and rural education through extension.

Next, let's punch in the defense budget: a 37.8 percent boost in funding over the next five years, with a 1986 \$320 billion spending request. Add increased funding for friendly nations to acquire "modern military equipment."

And, don't forget cuts to jobs training programs, and reduced funding for education.

On a more personal basis, punch in a 40-cent milk assessment per hundred pounds, beginning April 1, to fund the buyout of neighbors' herds, and help reduce the production surpluses.

Then follow it with this data: an Irish investment firm preparing to put in five, two-thousand-head, dairy cow operations in Georgia

over the next five years - the same period of time we'll be buying out dairy herds to reduce production.

Feed all that into a keyboard, and onto a floppy disc, let the "brains" of microchips whirr in around for awhile, and then punch for a printout.

Would it read out a numerical revelation of an entity heavily

armed to defend a poorly educated, unemployed population, hoping to continue eating cheap food produced from eroded farmland owned by foreign money?

Or would the computer take the same way out my head wants to: "Does not compute."

It points to a headache. Until the pain starts slipping, and ends up closer to the heart.

**Petersen is FFA Member of the Month**

NEW BRUNSWICK, NJ - New Jersey FFA announced Kenneth Petersen of the North Warren FFA Chapter, as February's Member of the Month. Petersen, 16, of Blairstown, is a sophomore at North Warren Regional High School. Currently Ken holds the office of vice-president of his FFA chapter.

The FFA and vocational agriculture education allow students to explore and expand their knowledge of the fields of agriculture. Ken has had this

opportunity through several SOEPs (Supervised Occupational Experience Program). Raising beef cattle, working at a produce market and for a local florist have been some of Ken's practical experiences in agriculture. Ken has also learned about leadership and public speaking skills through FFA.

Ken's FFA advisor, Annette Shumaker, states, "Ken is dedicated to agriculture and the FFA." Young individuals, like Ken, interested in agriculture, have the opportunity to understand and gain knowledge from vocational education and the FFA.

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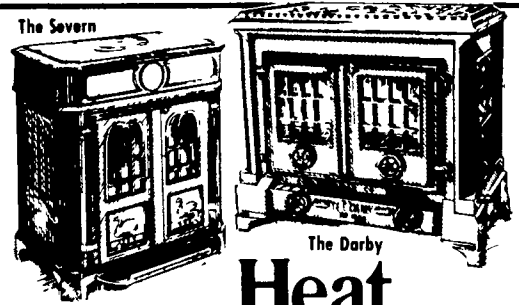
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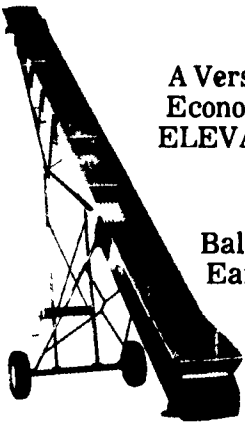
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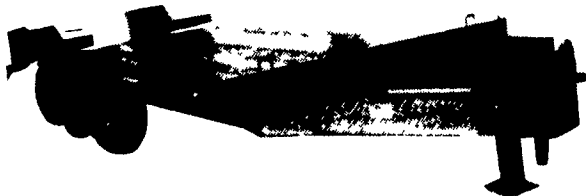


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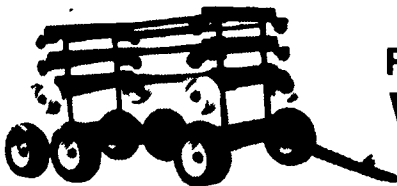


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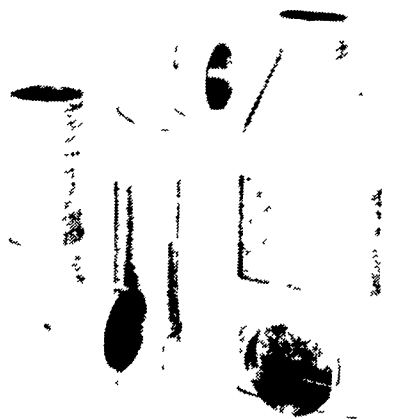
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