

Farm Philosophy

By
Newton Bair

Old Land - New Crops

Well, we finally sold the old homestead in York County. It will always hold a lot of memories, for it was my birthplace. Our children were reared there, enduring all the joys and hazards of growing up on the farm. They raised their 4-H animals, grumbled about the daily chores, and endured the sneers (and the envy) of their non-farm

peers. They have adopted other careers, but some part of the farm will always live in their hearts.

The place holds some historical trivia. It was the site of the old Hake Distillery, a relic of the days when it was easier and cheaper to transport corn in liquid form. The big barn originally had a large stable where cattle were fattened on the spent grain from the

Distillery.

An early photo, taken about 1865 shows several haysheds, and the Still house standing prominently across the road from the farmhouse. A Civil War anecdote recalls the antics of a small party of Jeb Stewart's rebels who discovered the whiskey stored in the cellar. There were large crocks of applebutter there too, and the scouts plastered the walls with it, after they got plastered with whiskey, themselves.

The farmhouse is built of hand-hewn logs, long since sheathed in weatherboard, and more recently in vinyl siding. The old dinner bell, salvaged from its crumbling belfry on the housetop, is now on its way to a more peaceful assignment than calling hungry farm hands in for dinner. The folding doors at the end of the living room once opened into an area big enough to accommodate 50 or more people for Sunday service. The sturdy but sagging floors, supported by hand-hewn logs, no longer allow the doors to fold. But the cross-paneled doors between rooms still swing, and

attest to the security that was treasured by their owners.

There is a "cave" outside the back door, a relic of the necessity to store fruits and vegetables underground. It was the only refrigerator that the early occupants had. It was used as a "butterhouse," because it was always cool enough in summer and not too cold in winter, for homemade butter to handle nicely.

The "summer kitchen," with its walk-in fireplace where two iron butcher kettles hung, is still intact. Only the trace of a foundation remains of the brick and stone outdoor oven that was demolished many years ago. We were tenant farmers then, and Mama baked bread for the whole crew. The old smokehouse is gone too, a casualty to progress. I can still smell the pungent odors that came from the smoke pit, long after the last hams and sausages were cured there. The woodshed too is gone, sacrificed to make room for the septic tank that the new bathroom would require. Nobody mourned the loss of the old two-holer with the crescent carved in the door.

The dairy business would not tolerate the presence of hogs in the barnyard, so the original hogpen that was so handy to the milkhouse, was an early casualty. Gone too is the whitewashed board fence along the lane to the barn, the one that Uncle Joe crashed his 1918 Studebaker into one dark night. Monolithic concrete steps still dot the pasture behind the house, marking the location of half a dozen extinct hen houses. No picket fence protects the garden anymore either, hence the cries of consternation from the chief gardener when the heifers got out. No, the Farmer is not much smarter than those critters when they get the urge to roam.

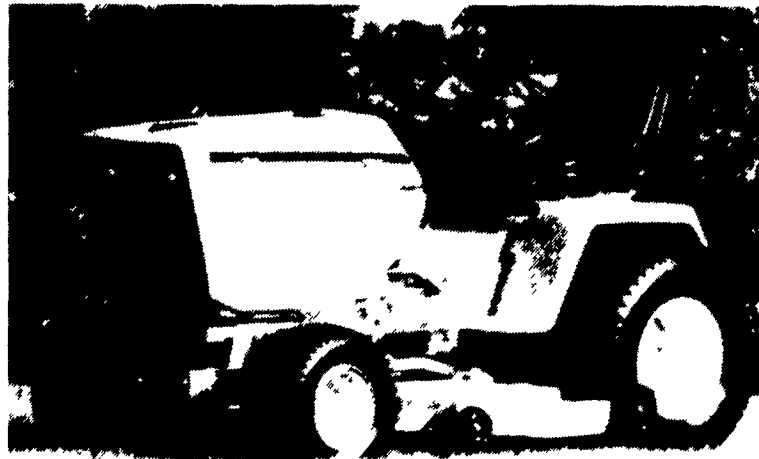
For two hundred and fifty years the land along Limekiln road was prime farmland, nurtured and loved by many owners and tenants. But the next crop will not be corn or alfalfa. It has already been surveyed for streets, sewers and water lines, in preparation for the next crop — a new generation that will consume the abundance produced on other farms.

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Bay Program Can Underwrite Agronomy Services

LANCASTER — Farmers with Chesapeake Bay contracts have the opportunity to be partially reimbursed for services provided by a professional agronomist or Crop Improvement Associations. The Lancaster County Conservation District, the agency administering the Bay Cost-Share Program believes that nutrient management is very important to cleaning up the Bay.

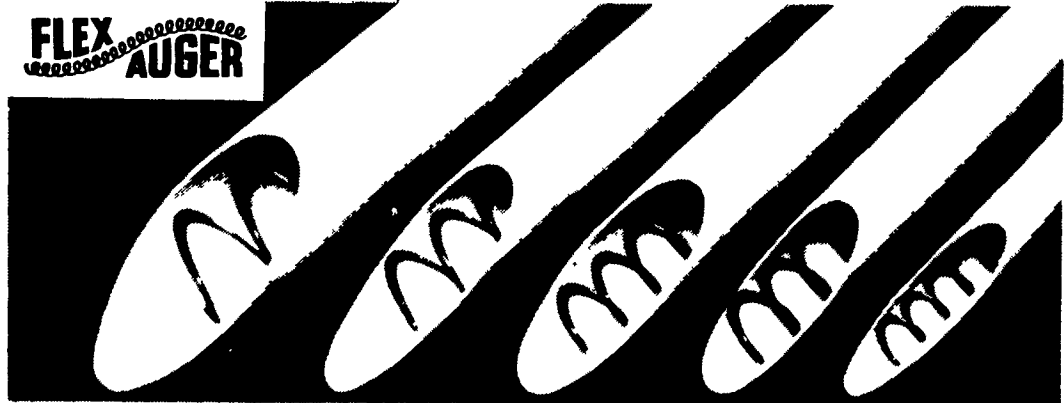
A Nutrient Management Plan helps a farmer make sure he is applying the right amount of nutrients for the crops he is growing. An agronomist or Crop Improvement Association is able to evaluate soil tests, see what nutrients are in the manure, and advise the farmer of any extra nutrients he should add to satisfy crop requirements. If there is too much manure for the farm there is

the possibility that a neighbor could use the excess to alleviate any nutrient deficit.

The nutrient management plan that the agronomist designs will become part of the District cooperator's Chesapeake Bay Plan. The Bay plan needs to address both the erosion and nutrient concerns of a farm. Since soil which is eroded into the streams carries nutrients with it, erosion control is as important as nutrient control on some farms. Cost-share monies are available for the construction of erosion control devices as well as manure storage. Any farmer wanting to sign up for a Chesapeake Bay Plan, or any agronomist wishing to be put on an approved list should contact the District at 717-299-5361 for more details.

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