

Farm Philosophy

By
Newton Bair

The Resurrection of Cicero

This is a tale of the "Magical *septendecima*". Ordinary folk like me and you use the more common trade name of Seventeen year locust. Entomologists seem to think it sounds better in Latin, which has merit when translated as "Magical Seventeen." The term "locust" is a misnomer applied by the Pilgrims in 1630; not too surprising, as they were frequently wrong about other things also. But let Cicero tell his own story. After all, how often do you get a chance to talk to an intelligent bug?

"My name is Cicero, which goes back a long way in my family. Some Roman guy by that same name wrote a poem about my ancestors over two thousand years ago, so I thought it would be nice to name myself in his honor."

"I was born in 1970, on a twig of the old apple tree that still stands along Route 501 north of Litz, Pa. The poor fellow who owned the tree at that time nearly went crazy

when the small twigs began to wither and break off. He thought it was the end of his Red Delicious. The tree needed pruning anyway, so I did him a favor. My personal twig was about 20 feet from the ground, and when it broke off I rode it gently to the ground. Being unfamiliar with the theories of Sir Isaac Newton in regards to the apple tree and the effects of gravity, I felt no fear and rather enjoyed the ride."

"Now, nobody told me what to do next. Luckily, I have a small computer built into my brain. It had all the necessary instructions built into it's memory, so I got to work right away. It's embarrassing to speak of it now, but I was only a tiny worm then, so nobody noticed me. No respectable bird wanted me, and I was only a curiosity to the bigger bugs and the mice that stomped over me. The soil was fairly loose, so I began to dig in."

"That first year of my life is rather vague in my memory. I dug lower under the tree until the roots became very tender and juicy, just about my size."

"The competition for food was terrific the first couple of years, as there were a lot of my relatives fighting among themselves for the tinnest, tenderest roots. To my surprise, I acquired a tough coat that enabled me to grub my way easily through the soil and find the new rootlets. I hated to do it, but sometimes it was necessary to punch out a couple of my obnoxious cousins and take away their dinner. They were sort of puny anyway, and wouldn't have survived for seventeen years."

"Then one day a crazy thing happened. My brothers had been kidding me about getting too fat, and that I looked like I was going to burst out of my britches. Well, they were right. My best coveralls split right down the middle, and I suddenly found myself standing in front of the whole family stark naked! It's a good thing it was so dark, or I'd have died of embarrassment. (I didn't know it then, but none of us had eyes yet, so it didn't matter.)"

"Well, this happened again and again, four times at least, until I became a teenager. By the time I was sixteen, I was eating some of the tougher roots nearer the surface, and had grown pretty big. I also had three pairs of sturdy legs, and a sort of useless hump on my back. I chose to ignore the hump, thinking that what it contained was none of my business. But it did bother me at times, when I dreamed that someday soon I would get too close to the warm surface, and be tempted to climb out of the dirty world and visit the old apple limb where I was born. I

was really very tired, and my newest coat was already too tight for comfort. Something warned me that I would never need a new one, once that one wore out."

"What a glorious place the old apple tree is! To think that I've finally left the cold, dark earth, and climbed to this heavenly place! My old, worn out coveralls are split down the back, and I'll never need them again! The hump I worried about contained the most beautiful pair of wings, and I can fly like an angel! And they make the most glorious music when I rub them with my legs. Much better than a harp. There are lot's of

friends doing the same thing, so I'm thinking of organizing a symphony orchestra."

"Cynthia Cicada has invited me over to see her beautiful wings. We sing together every afternoon. Neither of us eat anything. We are in love, and she wants to settle down and have a family. I am willing, just so I don't have to spend the next seventeen years raising a bunch of silly little worms."

I guess they'll have to take the fall from the Apple tree, grub their own way in the earth, and finally get into heaven, like I did! I hope the cycle never ends!

Soybean Hulls Found To Be Rich Source Of Iron

WASHINGTON - A form of dietary iron usually found in meat has been identified in fiber-rich soybean hulls by a U.S. Department of Agriculture scientist.

Nutritionists have known that soybean hulls were a rich source of dietary iron, but until now they didn't know why. The type of iron usually found in plant fiber is hard to digest. However, the newly identified dietary iron in soybean hulls, known as iron II, is easily digested in the body, said Joseph A. Laszlo, a biochemist for USDA's Agricultural Research Service.

"We were surprised to find iron II in the soybean hull," Laszlo said. "As far as I know, this type of iron has never been found in plant products with high levels of fiber."

Laszlo believes results of his analysis might promote the commercial use of soybean hulls to

fortify breads and other baked products with more iron and fiber.

He said that most iron in high-fiber plants is iron III, which combines with the plant fiber and is difficult for humans to absorb. "Finding iron II in plant fiber," he said, "is like walking through an auto junkyard and coming across a '57 Chevy without any rust on it."

Laszlo's research was carried out at the agency's Northern Research Center in Peoria, Ill.



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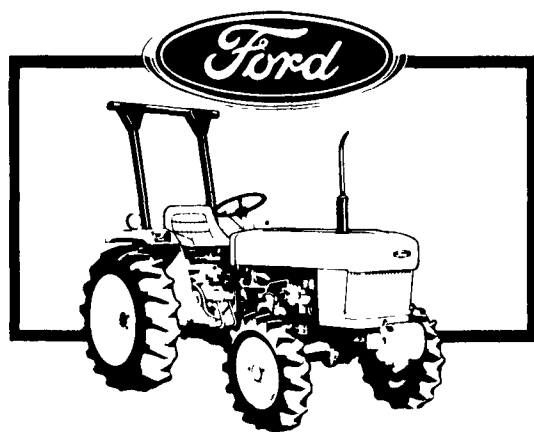
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