

Raver

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on his farm in Kentucky. The conditions there were so similar to conditions here and I thought we can do that, too. At that time there were no soybeans grown west of the Chesapeake Bay. We rotated the soybean crop with corn and that worked beautifully," said Bob.

"Soybeans are a legume and put nitrogen into the soil. This increased corn yields by five to ten bushels an acre. They have such a vigorous root system that helps to mellow the soil. Also, the bacteria in soybeans ravages a field of sod or weeds and feeds off the corn fodder left in the field and incorporates all that as part of the soil," explained Raver.

Although farmers were hesitant, Raver said in his county farmers were somewhat progressive and anxious to make changes for improvements. Many farmers

were unsure where they could market their soybean crop. But whether it was Bob's willingness to plant 100 acres of soybeans on his own farm or finding several buyers for the crop, he convinced several farmers to plant soybeans that year.

"The same people who were buying the corn bought the soybeans so we really didn't have a problem," said Bob. "Now soybeans and wheat are Montgomery County's biggest selling crops."

Raver retired in October after 30 years as Montgomery County's cooperative extension agent. He brought no-till to his county and as a result was instrumental in its spread not only throughout Maryland, but also to the surrounding mid-atlantic states. However, he was also a key figure in some other developments which shaped the future of Montgomery County.

In 1971 Bob took county officials on a tour of the farms using no-till. Besides initiating the

spread of no-till methods, this tour had some surprising results.

"What happened was that these county executives realized how valuable our agriculture is in this county. But the problem was that the county council was elected by the majority vote and the agricultural population made up such a small part of the voting segment. The council decided what was needed was an ag advisory committee to act as a conduit for farming issues. It was established and they hired an ag economist to head the committee and they have done some great things with that," explained Bob.

Montgomery County was one of the first counties to petition for an agricultural district which led to their farmland preservation program. Between 1965 and 1969, according to Raver, Montgomery County was losing 10,000 acres of farmland per year to development. County officials acted early to slow the urban expansion into



Bob Raver, now retired after serving as Montgomery County's cooperative extension agent, introduced no-tillage farming methods to his county in 1968.

farmland.

"Thirty years ago we thought Montgomery County was at the edge of urban fringe. It is not that way anymore. The urbanization is dispersed throughout our county. We are in the midst of it. Now Carroll County is on the urban fringe. And this is going to change farming."

"When I came here in 1957 there were 350 commercial dairy farms. Today there are approximately three dozen and we are shipping as much milk as we were with 350. We continue to have an excellent nucleus of farmers," said Raver.

Raver, one of nine children, lived near Hampstead, Carroll County, where his parents farmed. Raver was able to graduate from high school after 11 years and at the encouragement from his 4-H leader, Bob Shavinger, Raver enrolled in college. He graduated

just a few months after he turned 20.

After graduation he returned to work on his parents' farm. With three years on the farm, Raver decided to take the position as extension agent. He has seen many changes since he took the position 30 years ago.

He changed the way farmers tilled the land for hundreds of years. By introducing no-till farming Raver preserved and protected thousands of acres from ruin by soil erosion. The fruit of his labor is there for this generation of farmers and it will be there for the next generation. Of his accomplishments Raver said,

"It makes me feel humble and yet very proud. I know it will endure and it has been a worthwhile endeavor. To do something, to make a contribution, well, I feel very satisfied. I have no regrets and I make no apologies."

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