

# The Charles Good Family Talks About Passing On The Farming Tradition

STRASBURG (Lancaster) — When five out of seven children choose farming for their livelihood, you know their parents' attitude must have had some influence on them. Then, again, just because a child does not choose farming does not mean he or she rejects the values gained from childhood.

Charles Good, the father of the clan that hails from Strasburg, admits that he's prejudiced when it comes to farming. He said, "I think it's the best way. Families are closer."

He attributes his children's continuing interest in farming to the opportunities they saw in it. "You've got to make it appealing," he said. "You must keep things updated and not farm a rundown farm where they see no opportunities for a profit."

What do his children say?

**Don Good**

Don, the oldest of the seven children of Charles and Susie Good, said, he, his wife Phoebe and their four children rented a farm for 14 years. He loved it and it worked out well, but he felt "the Lord nudging me toward fulltime pastoring."

Don added, "The value of the land was beyond what I could see paying off for the rest of my life."

For many years he worked both in farming and in pastoring for the East Petersburg Mennonite Church. "It was a struggle not to respond to the wheel that squeaks the loudest," he admitted. And

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farm work with its demanding schedule and weather dependency often kept him from pastoral care and sermon preparation. He saw less and less percentage-wise of people remaining in farming. And Don felt less doors opening for him in farming and more into pastoring.

At that point, the daughter of the landlord from whom they rented was getting married and wanted to move in the farmhouse. Don believes, "If you really want to stay on the farm, it's best to own it."

In 1981, Don sold his cows, but continued farming until 1984 when he sold his equipment. The decision was made only after much soul searching.

He affirms, "The farming values that were passed on to me were excellent. It's an excellent place to raise a family and there is work for everyone. I miss that. Our four children don't have the things to do that they did while growing up on the farm."

A few times a year, he takes some time off to help fill the silo or assist in planting. "That nostalgic is there, tugging at me. That continual challenge that I could make it go if I had another chance at farming. But, it's a false picture. There's a heavy debt load and long hours."

Still, his farming background pops up in the illustrations he uses to explain biblical principals to the residents at the Landis Homes Retirement Center in Lancaster.

For those contemplating change, he believes it is essential to process the decision with the family. For him, the decision to farm or not to farm is based solely upon the principal that "For awhile



Charles and Susie Good (center) of Strasburg have passed on their love for farming to their children. Pictured

(left to right): Bob Good, Phoebe and John Good, Jane and Dave Hess, Glen and Millie Good.

God led us into farming, and then He led us away."

**Glen Good**

Glen, the second son, said, "Growing up I was always intrigued by the joy of home life on the farm. We didn't go on vacation, but we had good times at home."

Today Glen and his two sons, Dana and Dean, farm 165 acres

Jane added, "I really believe in the family farm. We want our children to feel land is important and that they shouldn't cover it with houses." Jane is married to Dave Hess and their 21-year-old son Dave now farms with them on their 150-acre dairy farm in Lancaster.

**Ruth Todd**

Ruth, the youngest daughter, recalls many good times growing up on the family farm. She said, "Daddy always stressed working together and that no one is finished with his work until everyone is finished." Another aspect that she thinks encouraged positive attitudes toward farming stems from their mother never complaining about the pressures of farm life. "I remember her as a real helpmeet who made sure Daddy's desires were carried out. She encouraged

and milk 115 cows. "It's encouraging to see my children take an interest in farming," Glen said. He believes that there is a future in farming although it may be tougher to prosper than it was during the past generation.

*The farm exudes an idealism, a romantic notion. The good memories come flooding back and I forget about the pressures of things such as getting the hay in before the rain.*

**John Good**

The third son of Charles, John Good, attributes his interest in farming to his father's attitude: "The farming soil was always dear to my father. He passed on a beautiful attitude that I cherish. I've enjoyed farming over the years and I've never considered anything else. He always taught that in raising a family it was important to be home with the family."

Today, John's nineteen year-old son Steve helps his dad fulltime on their 65-acre farm with 50 milking cows and 60,000 broilers. "There's more emphasis on vacation and pleasure now than when I was growing up," John said. "I don't remember staying away overnight while I was growing up; we were always back for milking. Today we spend some nights away even though we still need to work around a schedule."

**Jane Hess**

The eldest daughter, Jane, said that she recalls in her childhood, "Farming was always stressed as the most important thing—not education, reading, writing, and arithmetic. My father had a strong, but loving personality that conveyed if you do not go into farming it's the wrong way."

gradually, but when her children brought their classmates home from school, she said, "I began to realize how many children who are not exposed to seeds in the soil misunderstand how we get what we get."

Her daughters' friends are delighted and fascinated with helping make grape juice and picking produce from the garden. Ruth said, "I can't imagine what it

ting the hay in before the rain."

He recalls staying on the farm until 21 years of age. Then, he found the day to day demands of farming stifling and very controlled. He said, "It did not allow time to explore other opportunities or other kinds of people and work possibilities."

Although he found working with his hands enjoyable, he longed for more education, some-

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would be like if my children had not grown up on the farm. It teaches them to structure their time, and develops a work ethic that their friends often lack."

The Todds operate a beef and grain farm 500-acres in East Petersburg with Jay's brother. They serve other farmers by custom combining.

**Bob Good**

Thirty-three-year-old Bob, the youngest son, lives in Philadelphia. The city is a far cry from the tranquil country scenes of his Strasburg homestead.

It is with nostalgic thoughts that Bob recalls growing up on the farm. "I enjoyed the lifestyle, the sense of security and identity our family had together. Sometimes when I go back, I think this is what life is supposed to be. The farm exudes an idealism, a romantic notion. The good memories come flooding back and I forget about the pressures of things such as get-

thing beyond farm life. He left to attend college with no clear vision of where he was going except to follow his nose in studying history something he always loved. Now, he's been teaching high school history for seven years. Where did he get his interest in history? He answers, "My dad was always rich in oral history."

Bob said, "I think I could have been a very good farmer and enjoyed that life, but I felt like I had to break free. It was not easy to leave. Life requires a vital faith, a life that takes risks. People who want to pursue what's best for them must be willing to take risks."

Regardless of where people live, Bob believes they need an environment where they are free to pursue what best suits them. "Some are ideally suited to be farmers; others to different occupations. It's important for parents to allow that option."

## Do You Know?

... that the median family income for 1986 was \$29,460, according to the U.S. Census Bureau? Compared to 1985, this was an increase of \$1,725, or a 4.2 percent gain.

... that the Census Bureau also reports that 28 percent of all 18- to 34-year olds live at home with their parents? High rents, more divorces and a tight job market

were cited as contributing factors.

... that homeownership rates are dropping? 63.8 percent of all households owned their own home in 1986, down from 66 percent in 1980. Rising housing costs and the fact that young people are waiting longer before buying their first home are partially responsible for the decline.